

## The Slavery Museum as community anchor, eye-opener, and thought-provoker

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# SLAVERY MUSEUMS WORKSHOP

*Issues and challenges concerning  
representations of slavery in museums*



## **ATELIER SUR LES MUSÉES DE L'ESCLAVAGE**

*Les enjeux et les défis de la représentation  
de l'esclavage dans les musées*

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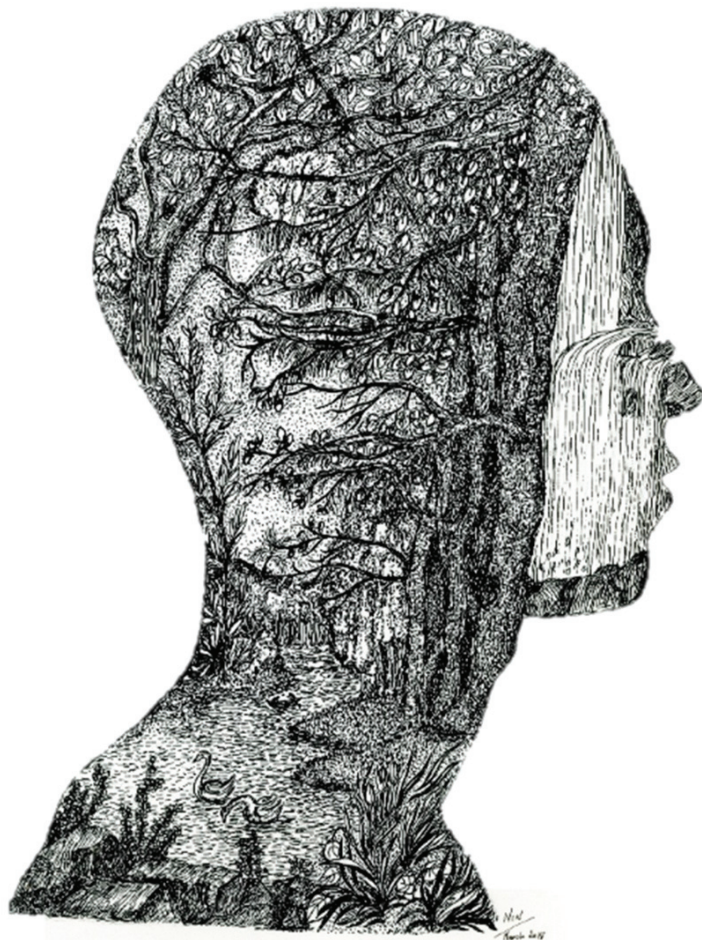
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2020

Issues and challenges concerning  
representations of slavery in museums

Les enjeux et les défis de la  
représentation de l'esclavage dans les  
musées

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# Préface

*Ali Moussa Iye*

*Ancien Directeur des projets La Route de l'esclave et l'Histoire générale de l'Afrique*

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Les actes que vous avez sous les yeux sont le produit d'une réunion d'experts organisée à Maurice en septembre 2019 qui fut elle-même le résultat d'une série d'échanges coordonnés par le projet La Route de l'Esclave de l'UNESCO pour réfléchir aux nouvelles approches à développer pour représenter la mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage dans les musées.

Le projet La Route de l'Esclave a entrepris cette démarche pour appuyer et orienter les initiatives lancées par certains pays, notamment l'île Maurice, pour se doter d'un musée dédié à une tragédie si longtemps tue et généralement si mal représentée. En octobre 2018, le projet a réuni à Charlottesville, aux Etats unis, une ville qui a montré la virulence des conflits de mémoire autour de 'esclavage, certains des plus grands spécialistes de cette question. L'objectif principal de ce séminaire international était de définir des orientations claires et concrètes pour aider les pays souhaitant mettre en place des musées dédié à l'esclavage dignes de ce nom.

Au vu de la diversité des pratiques observées à travers le monde et les difficultés rencontrées pour raconter de manière appropriée la mémoire douloureuse de la traite et l'histoire de l'esclavage les experts du séminaire avaient demandé à l'UNESCO d'effectuer une véritable recherche pour comparer ces expériences, identifier les bonnes méthodes et promouvoir les innovations qui pourraient guider tous ceux qui s'engageaient dans cette aventure.

Une étude approfondie sur la manière dont les musées interprètent, illustrent et mettent en scène les connaissances sur l'histoire et la mémoire de l'esclavage dans les musées fut donc réalisée et ses résultats ont abouti à l'élaboration d'un guide pour aider les professionnels des musées dans cette tâche difficile.

En effet comment illustrer dans les espaces publics que sont les musées un patrimoine immatériel, souvent sans artefacts et sur lequel pèse encore un lourd silence? Comment aborder de manière consensuelle un héritage qui continue à diviser?

La nécessité de parler de cette histoire dans les musées des pays qui ont été marqués par l'esclavage est soulevée à un moment où un débat très critique est engagé sur les rôles, les fonctions et les approches des musées en général et des musées de l'esclavage en particulier. On observe aujourd'hui une remise en question de certaines notions et présupposés des démarches muséologiques.

Le musée n'est plus seulement un espace où l'on conserve, expose, acquiert, étudie et transmet des œuvres et divers objets liés à l'histoire et à l'art. Il est un lieu où les différentes composantes de la société dialoguent et construisent des consensus sur les récits nationaux.

Le Conseil International des musées (ICOM) qui réunit plus de 45,000 professionnels issus de 20,000 musées dans 141 pays a essayé de proposer en juillet 2019 une nouvelle définition du musée pour répondre à ces interrogations.

*Les musées sont considérés comme « des lieux de démocratisation inclusifs et polyphoniques, dédiés au dialogue critique sur les passés et les futurs. Reconnaissant et abordant les conflits et les défis du présent, ils sont les dépositaires d'artefacts et de spécimens pour la société. Ils sauvegardent des mémoires diverses pour les générations futures et garantissent l'égalité des droits et l'égalité d'accès au patrimoine pour tous les peuples. Les musées n'ont pas de but lucratif. Ils sont participatifs et transparents, et travaillent en collaboration active avec et pour diverses communautés afin de collecter, préserver, étudier, interpréter, exposer, et améliorer les compréhensions du monde, dans le but de contribuer à la dignité humaine et à la justice sociale, à l'égalité mondiale et au bien-être planétaire ».*

Cette nouvelle définition n'a pas fait l'unanimité des membres de l'ICOM et son adoption a été reportée à une date ultérieure. Mais pour les musées consacrés à l'esclavage, cette redéfinition des fonctions fondamentales des musées, ouvre des pistes pour renouveler la réflexion sur la manière dont les sociétés ayant bénéficié et/ou souffert de crimes contre l'humanité peuvent raconter ce passé et éduquer les nouvelles générations à porter cette mémoire avec courage et dignité.

Les événements déclenchés aux Etats Unis et dans le reste du monde par le meurtre horrible de George Floyd perpétré par un policier nous ont rappelé l'actualité des séquelles de l'esclavage. Elles touchent au choix des figures et moments historiques à honorer, à la place à accorder à ceux qui ont lutté contre les injustices du passé dans les espaces publics et aux réparations à effectuer pour réconcilier et apaiser les sociétés post esclavagistes. Loin d'être confiné dans le milieu académique, ces questionnements interpellent les décideurs politiques à tous les niveaux, les communautés et tous ceux qui se préoccupent de la citoyenneté et de la justice sociale.

Le présent ouvrage sur les actes de la réunion de Maurice illustre la diversité des points de vue sur ces questions mais aussi la convergence des idées sur l'utilité de créer des espaces dédiés à cette histoire et les précautions à prendre.

L'île Maurice a été le premier pays où les résultats de l'étude entreprise par La Route de l'Esclave ont été présentés et discutés en vue d'enrichir le guide sur les

nouvelles approches pour interpréter et représenter l'esclavage dans les musées qui sera publié début 2021.

Le présent ouvrage sur les actes de la réunion de Maurice pourra, comme se propose de le faire ce guide, servir ceux qui auront la lourde responsabilité de mettre en place des musées de l'esclavage dans leur pays.



# Introduction

Vijayalakshmi Teelock,

Head, Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture

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This publication reunites the results of several discussions held over the past few years that took place in Mauritius in the context of the implementation of the Truth and Justice Commission recommendation to set up a Slavery Museum in Mauritius and culminating in the Slavery Museum Workshop of 2019. During that time, one other major development took place in the form of the setting up of a Concept Committee that would finalise the Concept of the future Museum. As Ali Moussa Iye has wished, the CRSI also hopes that this publication will serve as a guide to those who have the very heavy duty of setting up this museum. It would be an understatement to say that this project has been one of the most keenly 'followed' project, not only in Mauritius but overseas and especially in the countries where even speaking or writing about slavery and the situation of descendants (of the enslaved and their former owners) is still a taboo subject.

The first Consultative Workshop held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, on the theme: *"Slavery Museums: Memorialisation Perspectives / Mize Esklav: Memwar nou Zanset"* was organised by the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund, the University of Mauritius, the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the Mauritius Museums Council. This workshop was organised in line with the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent [2015-2024] and the Truth & Justice Commission Recommendation for the setting up of a *'Museum of Slavery in the capital city of Port Louis for greater visibility along the lines outlined in following Museum proposal. Although one 'Interpretation Centre' is projected at Le Morne. This should reflect the Maroonage aspect rather slavery which was a national phenomenon'* (TJC Report, 2011, Vol.1, p.19 & para.17. p. 395).

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 the Cabinet agreed to the setting up of an Intercontinental Slavery Museum, as recommended by the Truth and Justice Commission at the former Military Hospital in Port Louis. It was expected that: **"The Museum would give more visibility to slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, promote slave history, and emphasize the contribution of the African Diaspora in the world development.** The functions of the Museum would be, *inter alia*, to (a) Study slavery and slave trade in the Indian Ocean; (b) Gather, collect and preserve documents and oral history on slavery; (c) Create and preserve a catalogue of artifacts related to slavery; (d) Host a permanent exhibition and organize regular roving exhibitions; and (e) Promote

curricular development, scientific research, as well as the production of educational and pedagogical materials.

Assoc Professor **Benigna Zimba** from the Department of History at the Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique and Dr. **Chaplain Toto** from the Department of History at the University of Toamasina, Madagascar were invited as guest speakers for this first Workshop. Scholars, researchers and academics from Mauritius were also invited to speak on their vision for the future Museum.

Presentations included that of Dr. **Jimmy Harmon**, then Director, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund on the Truth and Justice Commission Report published in 2011. This paper was a retrospective of the TJC placing the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in light of the TJC Report. He also briefly introduced the concept of 'memorialising slavery'. Mr. **Vikash Rupear**, Director of the Mauritius Museum Council presented the mandate of the Museum Council, a non-profit making organisation that communicates, researches, promotes, and educates people about the cultural history of the island. His presentation also included an overview of the artefacts, remains and exhibits related to slavery that could be part of the future slavery museum. Fr. **Alain Romaine**, Anthropologist and Rector of "Séminaire Inter Iles" presented the project "*Le Saturne: Sur les traces enfouies d'un négrier*". The *Saturne* is a 'memorialisation' project and aimed at the construction of a small-scale model of *Le Saturne*. *Le Saturne* was a slaving ship which departed from the city of Nantes and traded and shipped 978 slaves from Mozambique to Port Louis in Isle of France in two expeditions between 1791 and 1793. His project aimed at shedding light on the traumatising conditions of the slave trade to the Mascarene Islands.

**Chaplain Toto** presented a paper entitled "*Quelques traces mémorielles de la traite d'esclaves du XVII et XIXème siècle: Baie d'Antongil Madagascar*", stressing the historical link between Madagascar and Mauritius. Antongil was discovered in 1503 by the Portuguese and since then, successive colonial powers have left permanent historical traces. His research is a Malagasy perspective on slavery and focuses on Antongil Bay situated in northwest Madagascar which was a gateway ('*porte de sortie et d'entrée*') to the other islands of Indian Ocean. It was one of the main ports for the slave route and of embarkation of slaves to Ile-de-France and America via South Africa. Archaeologist, **Jayshree Mungur-Medhi**, in her presentation, introduced the concept of Open Air and Living Museum in the Le Morne Cultural Landscape. She highlighted, firstly, the richness of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape and its buffer zone in terms of archaeological sites, tangible and intangible heritage and, secondly, the possibilities of preserving this richness while using it for sustainable social development through the concepts of open air and living museums.

The presentation of the late **Benjamin Moutou**, Head of Research Committee at Le Morne Heritage Fund, focused on the district of Black River as a place of memory of slavery and maroonage. He stated: « *Grand comme deux fois et demie l'île Rodrigues, le quartier de Rivière-Noire est la seule région du pays qui a gardé un cachet particulier, lié à son passé servile. Aujourd'hui encore, peu de 180 ans après l'abolition de l'esclavage, ce quartier reste un livre ouvert.* » His paper is included in this volume as a posthumous token of recognition for his enormous contribution to keeping alive the history of Afro-Malagasy Mauritians.

The last presentation was that of Guest speaker Professor **Benigna Zimba**, on Ilha de Moçambique, Inhambane, and Quelimane in Mozambique. Slaves were exported from ports of Mozambique to Mauritius. 'Mozambiques' is a term that applies to more than 180,000 slaves coming from several locations of eastern Africa, but exported from Mozambican ports. Apart from the ethnographic and topographic significance, the terminology "Mozambiques", she stated, must be applied to culture, language, ideology, and a whole range of other meanings embodied in the word "Mozambiques."

This first workshop also included the presentation of the findings of a mini public survey conducted by **Sophie Le Chartier** in collaboration with students of the University and other researchers in three Mauritian villages. They interviewed inhabitants, mainly composed of people of African and Malagasy descent. It allowed the CRSI to collect during two days the views of Mauritians from all walks of life and to refine the draft concept for the ISM Project. From 2016, further refinement of the Concept was undertaken at the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture and it was felt that the concept of ISM as a *Site of Conscience* was more appropriate for a Slavery Museum in Mauritius.

The second workshop in 2019 was proposed by the UNESCO Slave Route Project and followed a similar workshop held in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA and during which a number of recommendations were made concerning museums devoted to slavery and to representations related to slavery in public spaces. It was felt that as Mauritius was about to embark on a Slavery Museum project, the recommendations would be discussed to see to what extent they could contribute to the Museum proposed for Mauritius. The theme recommended by UNESCO was '**Issues and challenges concerning representations of slavery in museums**'. This theme fitted perfectly with what the CRSI had been working on for the past two years, and indeed namely to conceptualise a new iconography of slavery. Many of the papers in this volume, have addressed the problematical issue of the visual imagery of slavery in public spaces. **Jimmy Harmon, Audrey Emile** and **Stephanie Tamby** discuss how the history of slavery is currently presented and represented in Mauritius.

A second theme to be addressed in Part 1 of this volume is the role to be played by Slavery Museums in societies still enduring the multiple legacies of slavery. Who will 'own' this museum? **Nelly Schmidt**, long time member of the Slave Route Project and editor of the Charlottesville publication provides an in-depth overview of the multiple questions arising from establishment of Slavery museums in the Atlantic region. From the scholar-public interaction these past few years in Mauritius during conferences and workshops, it is clear that there are very many expectations for this Museum. There is a common desire expressed by all authors that the Museum be driven by contemporary concerns: how will the museum address the trauma inherent in any depiction of the history of slavery? **Rosabelle Boswell** who has written extensively on the contemporary history of Afro-descendants in the Indian Ocean region offers her views. How will the museum engage the community and its concerns at all levels? How will the museum implement the principle of restorative justice, asks **John Stanfield**, Chair of African Studies at the University of Mauritius? Papers by historians of slavery **Preben Karsholm** and **Klara Boyer-Rossol** discuss issues of identity and role of the Museum in engaging in and provoking discussion while **George Abungu**, with his vast experience of museums and heritage in Africa pleads for an 'indigenous' approach to the creation of the Slavery museum.

In Part 2 of the volume, the discussions centre on representations as well as the contents of a future Museum. **Myriam Cottias** addresses the issue of the use of terms and the need to change certain terms. How societies 'manage' and represent enslaved histories in museums in practice and the challenges they face are discussed by **Chaplain Toto** for Madagascar. The late **Benjamin Moutou** pleads for the district of Black River to be recognised as a place of memory given the large population of Afro-descendants who inhabit it. **Deoraz Ramracheya** reveals the contents of the collections of the Museum Council relating to slavery, a paper which will in doubt interest the ISM. Apart from artefacts, the numerous sites related to slavery in Mauritius are destined to form part of the local Slave Route trail. **Maurina Soodin-Runghen** discusses one possible trail that of Pamplemousses village, where the hotly contested 'Bassin des Esclaves' was given the Slave Route label during the Workshop of 2019. It is to our knowledge, however, not yet a National Heritage.

Are there themes or issues that cannot be 'museumified'? How does one represent the extremely rich, vibrant cultural legacy that is the *Sega* within the four walls of a building devoid of its original context, without it becoming 'mummified'? These issues are raised by a poem by **Daniella Bastien**, an opinion paper by **Stephan Rezanna** and a discussion of Chagossian musical heritage by **Patrick Allen**.

This issue will indeed be one of the major challenges to be faced by the future curators of the Slavery Museum. Some answers on the way forward were received during the intense discussions that went on long after presentations had ended and in



the evening session on the Iconography of Slavery held at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture. We were fortunate to have among us several curators who have been involved in the establishment of slavery museums or have curated important permanent exhibitions on the history of slavery. The CRSI was honoured to welcome **Dr. Mary Elliott** from the African American Museum of History and Culture, **Shanaaz Galant** from Iziko Museums South Africa and **Nelly Schmidt** who presented UNESCO publication of proceedings of the Charlottesville Workshop. We were also, as always, happy to welcome our compatriot, **Rosabelle Boswell**, now Dean of the Faculty of Ocean Studies at Nelson Mandela University and **Myriam Cottias**, Head CIRSC at the CNRS.

The workshop was an extremely enriching learning experience for those of us in Mauritius who had been campaigning for so long for this Museum and had been actively discussing and refining the concept and debating the possible themes and approaches that could be included in a future museum. Indeed the rise in scholarly work since the 1980s on the history of Mauritian slavery has been exponential and there is today more than sufficient historical and other material to document the history of Mauritian slavery and its multiple legacies to feed the future *Intercontinental Slavery Museum*, as it is now officially known. **Jimmy Harmon** has given an overview of this long struggle for this Museum. It was interesting to note that although we had been working in an isolated manner in the region, with our colleagues from Madagascar and Mozambique, our ideas were not far off from those of our overseas colleagues in how we have, in the Southwest Indian Ocean, conceived this museum and the direction we hoped this museum could take.

The 'new museology' or 'indigenous museology', issues of identity representations, history and memory, the balance to be allocated to history and to legacies and contemporary issues were discussed as were the concerns of those present: who will or should fund the museum? To what extent will the Mauritian public and especially communities descended from slavery be involved? How do we palliate for the apparent lack of artefacts and objects emanating from slaves? How far can digital technology go in representing as accurately as possible the horrors of slavery? These questions were by no means fully answered, but it was important that they were raised and we hope the issues will be considered by those setting up the future museum.

It was also extremely refreshing to see so many young scholars and students interested in this project: **Dr. Stephanie Tamby**, **Sophie Lechartier**, **Jayshree Mungur-Medhi**, **Stephan Karghoo** and **Audrey Emile** stand out amongst others in having stoically supported this project and helped to move it forward. Their surveys of the views and opinions taken from the Mauritian population between 2016 and 2019 have helped to frame many of the discussions held during the Workshop. The results of these initial surveys are presented at the end of the volume in forms of summaries and

opinion papers. Also included are opinions, suggestions, thoughts collected at the end of the workshop, when each person sitting in the room and who had not intervened, was asked to say a few words on how they saw the future of the museum (chapter 20). We have tried our very best to be inclusive and include as many views as it was possible. The full proceedings of Day One of the workshop, filmed by the MFDC and edited by Onetake Ltd can be viewed on the CRSI website and on Youtube. A second film which will retrace the history of the ISM project is being prepared.

We hope this publication will serve as an introductory reader for those interested in the views of people associated with the project in one way or another. As I write, a public consultation process is under way at the site of the future Museum and conducted by ISM Mauritius Ltd, a corporate body set up to implement the Museum Project. I join with fellow CRSI members in wishing it well. I have no doubt that that part of the Mauritian public which has, over the years, followed this project very closely, will ensure the authorities stay on the right track! I have concluded this volume with an opinion paper by **Dominique Bellier**, French journalist who has lived for decades in Mauritius and has accurately summarised the expectations that many of us have about the future museum... *to have a space to breathe*.

Finally, I wish to thank the editors, Professor **Rosabelle Boswell**, Associate Professors **George Okello Abungu** and **Sheila Wong, Dehoutee Ballgobin** for their moral support and devotion to this cause; **Nalini Treebhoobun** for allowing use of her artwork to be reproduced over and over again for multiple publications, including the cover of this publication. Lastly but not least, a very big thank you to **UoM Press** and **Doorga Ujodha** who have morally been very supportive of this project and produced high quality publications for the various publications for the Slavery Museum project.

# FAQS - Mauritius Truth and Justice Commission

*Jimmy Harmon*  
*Member, CRSI*

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## ***When?***

The Truth and Justice Commission Act was constituted in March 2009, as a result of the enactment of the Truth and Justice Act, No. 28. of 2008.

## ***Objectives***

- (a) Make an assessment of the consequences of slavery and indentured labour from the colonial period up to the present;
- (b) Conduct inquiries into slavery and indentured labour in Mauritius during the colonial period and, for that purpose, gather information and receive evidence from any person;
- (c) Determine appropriate reparative measures to be extended to descendants of slaves and indentured labourers;
- (d) Enquire into complaints, other than frivolous and vexatious complaints, made by any person aggrieved by a dispossession or prescription of any land in which he/she claimed to have an interest; and
- (e) Prepare a comprehensive report of its activities, research and findings, based on factual and objective information and evidence received by it and submit the report to the President.

## ***Composition***

Chairperson (Dr Alex Boraine), Vice-Chairperson (Dr Vijaya Teelock) and 5 Commissioners, namely Jacques David, Benjamin Moutou, Paramaseeven Veerapen.

Research Unit: 25 consultants, 45 researchers.

Budget to the tune of MUR 60 million (€ 1,277,699.90; \$1,512,294.60).

## ***Mode of investigation*** (Duration: 2009-2011)

Enquiries into the History of slavery and indenture and study; hearings; public consultations.

### ***The Report (2011)***

Six volumes of 2700 A4 pages, 2 CDs of deponents' hearings, press cuttings, photos and films of hearings.

*Volume 1:* covers all topics falling under the mandate of the Commission, namely the history of the slave trade, slavery and indenture; the economics of slavery and indenture; legacies, consequences and continuities; racism and casteism; education and health; land reform; social justice; ending with main findings and recommendations.

*Volume 2:* consists of papers prepared by the Land Team on Land issues in Mauritius as well as the results of the analysis by the same Team on the 340 claims concerning land dispossession.

*Volume 3:* consists mainly of studies of contemporary Mauritius and surveys which Mauritians had participated in.

*Volume 4:* consists mainly of studies by specialists in History, Economics, Anthropology, Psychology, using an immense amount of archival material.

*Volume 5:* in digital format, is the collection of all audio and film materials collected by the Commission and is divided into Hearings Section, where the audio and the transcriptions are included.

*Volume 6:* consists of the databases created by the Commission for the institutions that will be set up upon its recommendations, such as the Genealogy Centre; the Land Research Unit; the Conservation Institute; the Slave Trade and Indentured Immigration Database.

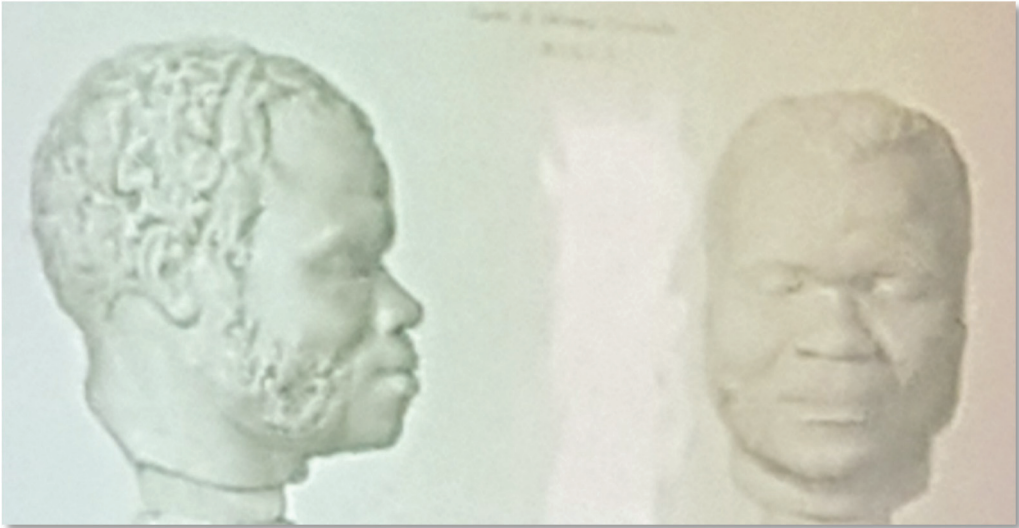
*Volume 7* (not open to public): consists of the administrative papers of the Commission.

### ***Summary of the 290 Recommendations***

Memorialisation of slavery and indentured labour to protect the historical and cultural heritage of Mauritius; archiving of documents related to slavery and indentured labour; empowerment of Mauritians of African and Malagasy origins while fighting against racial discrimination; and a more public democratic life.

PART I

THE ROLE OF A SLAVERY  
MUSEUM /  
LE ROLE D'UN MUSEE DE  
L'ESCLAVAGE



**Figure 1 Bust of ex-slave in Mauritius made by Eugene de Froberville in the 1840s**

# 1

## Mozambique and the Concept of Satellite Museum

*Benigna Zimba*

*Conceptor, ISM Project &*

*Founder and Administrator of Editora Khanysa, Maputo, Mozambique*

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As the name clearly says, the “Slavery Museum” is Intercontinental. The nature of this enterprise requires connections and interdependence with related institutions and/or organizations, which are not necessarily housed in Mauritius. A number of countries across continents are already contributing in developing this Project. Because of their privileged geographic location alongside the Western Indian Ocean coast, Madagascar, Ile de Reunion, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa are among the countries that play a crucial role in shaping the concept “Intercontinental Slavery Museum” (ISM) as well as its satellites.

The concept “Satellite Museum” anchors in the mission and the some of the aims of the ISM, namely: “(i) the promotion of scientific research, and the production of educational and pedagogical materials; (ii) the creation of slave heritage trails across the South West Indian Ocean; (iii) and the collection, inventorying and preservation of oral traditions related to slavery” (ISM Concept Paper, Final Version, August 2019).

Briefly, and as the expression also suggests, “Satellite Museums” are places closely interrelated to the ISM. Three functions are indispensable to further our knowledge of “Satellite Museums:” (i) to serve as a point of reference to identify and select artifacts for the ISM in Mauritius; (ii) to house artifacts, and all kinds of representations of slavery that might not necessarily be established in Mauritius; **(iii)** to promote temporary exhibition on topics related to slavery, thus developing cultural tourism across continents.

“Satellite Museums” will therefore be the places where screening information as well as selection of artifacts and educational will occur. Viewed in this way the connection between the ISM in Mauritius and its satellites requires solid organization and follow up of the overall goals of this Project.

It is in this context that Mozambique will be the first “Satellite” of the “Intercontinental Slavery Museum.” For the history, Mozambique contributed in first place to conceptualize this Project. Indeed, from the very beginning of this endeavor, which goes back at least to the years 2008-2009, “Satellite Museums” were conceived

to be an integral part of an entire complex, which is the “Intercontinental Slavery Museum.”

With this background, Mozambique is in the unique position to establish the first “Satellite” of to the “Intercontinental Slavery Museum”. More specifically, there is a private Publisher’s House, the Editora Khanysa, located in the neighborhood of Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique.

In terms of the physical space, although it is still in the process of construction, the infrastructure of Editora Khanysa is part of a large and versatile complex very-well suited to accommodate a Satellite Museum. The facilities of the future Mozambique’ Satellite Museum are located within convenient driving distance from a very good hotel, and they include:

Two spacious working offices for the representative and its collaborators. These offices can accommodate meetings for maximal twenty people.

A large room for events such as temporary and/or permanent exhibitions, meetings and conferences up to eighty or one hundred people.

In addition to the publication of several types of educational materials,

Editora Khanysa *aims at being a Publisher of national, regional and international reference in promoting, producing and disseminating culture, scientific knowledge as well as the dynamics of African socioeconomic development. More importantly,* Editora Khanysa aims to specialize in the following areas that are indispensable to the development of ISM:

- Creation and systematization of database concerning slave trade, slavery and indentured labor. This process will focus not only on Mozambique but also the interior regions and countries of the African continent.
- Translation of documents and interviews; these translations will gradually include English, Portuguese and African languages.
- Transcription of interviews.
- Linguistic revision.

With all these features, Mozambique’s Satellite Slavery Museum, located within the Complex of Editora Khanysa, will be a very dynamic part of the ISM project. Above all, we will be happy to engage in discussions for future collaboration and participation in ISM Mauritius.

Towards the end of this short note it is necessary to mention the issue of financial and material costs involved in this and any other satellite museum. On the one hand,



the Mauritian government must interact with its counterparts, to assure necessary mobility and fluidity of the whole process that involves the relationship between the satellites and ISM. On the other hand, apart from the nature and dimension of the satellite museum clarity, is needed in regard to costs for: (i) activities as they are mentioned above; (ii) cost share of maintenance and security of infrastructure; and (iii) payments of salaries and/or incentives for employees.

Finally and because the publication of these proceedings is occurring about a year after the Conference on the establishment of the “Intercontinental Slavery Museum” in Mauritius, it is a must to emphasize the following aspects. Considering the actual world socioeconomic and political crises created by the Covid-19 pandemic, in short and long time period, Mozambique’s infrastructure is definitely very-well featured to strictly accommodate requirements of the World Health Organization concerning the realization of all activities of this Satellite Museum.

From January 2021 onwards, undoubtedly, the Mozambican Complex of Editoria Khanysa will be ready to house the First Satellite Museum of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum.

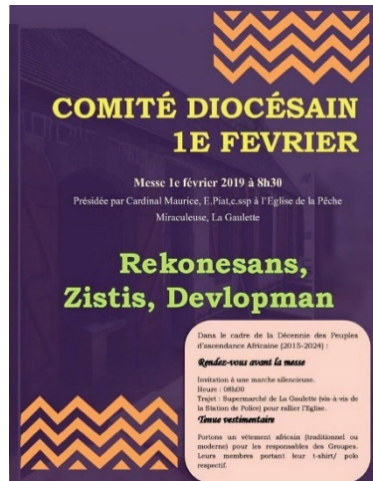


Figure 2 Photos of the activities undertaken by the KDPF in favour of the Slavery Museum.

(Source: Jimmy Harmon)

## 2

# History & Memory

## The Advocacy Campaign for the Slavery Museum

*Jimmy Harmon*<sup>1</sup>  
*Member, CRSI*

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### ***Introduction***

Mauritius, officially known as the Republic of Mauritius, is a Small Island Developing State situated in the Indian Ocean about 2000 kilometres off the south-east coast of the African continent and has an area of 2,040 km<sup>2</sup>. The Republic of Mauritius comprises mainland Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega islands. The population, estimated at 1.3 million inhabitants (Statistics Mauritius, 2019), comprises four ethnic groups, namely Indo-Mauritians (51%), Creoles (27%), Muslims (17%), Sino-Mauritians (3%) and Whites (2%). Paragraph 3 (4) of the First Schedule to the Constitution (1968) reads as follows:

For the purposes of this Schedule, the population of Mauritius shall be regarded as including a Hindu community, a Muslim community and Sino-Mauritian community; and every person who does not appear, from his way of life, to belong to one or other of those 3 communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population, which shall itself be regarded as a fourth community. (Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, 1968)

Therefore, the General Population is a residual category within which is lumped the Creoles who may be of African origin or mixed blood and the Whites or Franco-Mauritians. The appellation 'General Population' is vehemently opposed by Creole organisations and Creole opinion leaders because it is considered as a denial of their identity. Although the mainstream parties tend to show that they lend a compassionate ear to these claims, yet no government has ventured until now to amend this Schedule as it might have far reaching consequences on ethnic politics.

Boswell (2006) developed a taxonomy of the Creole ethnic group to illustrate its diversity in terms of class, phenotypes and common derogatory and divisive terms used

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Harmon is currently Deputy Director of the Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique (SeDEC). He is a Member of the Board of Directors of ISM Mauritius Ltd.

to classify the different Creole subgroups. Examples of such terms are 'Creole tiburzwa' (Creole of small bourgeoisie), 'Creole milat' (mulatto Creole), 'Creole madras' (Tamil Creole), 'Creole sinwa' (Chinese creole) and 'Creole mazanbik' (Black Afro Creoles whose ancestors came as slaves from Mozambique). I would say that the distinctions made by Boswell (2006) phased out with the emergence of the Creole identity affirmation movement as from the 1990s onward. Today, the existence of a Creole identity consciousness in the public space has transcended these internecine cleavages amongst Creoles. The plurality of the Mauritian society has contributed towards creating an interface between state, society, economy and politics. This interface is marked by ethnic politics which calls for the constant necessity to negotiate and broker agreements with the different ethnic lobbyists.

The first common denominator of the Creoles is consequential of their Christianisation over different periods until independence. In the 2011 Population Census, seventy-eight percent claim to be Roman Catholics out of 414, 553 Christians. For Romaine (2003), Creoles of the 'milieu populaire' (economically disadvantaged class) represent the bulk of Catholics in the Church. In February 1993, in the context of the commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery, a catholic Creole priest Father Roger Cerveaux stated that there was a 'malaise creole' in the Catholic Church. By 'malaise creole', the priest was referring to the situation of social exclusion and subjugation of the vast majority of Creoles. It became something of a catch-cry for Creoles who were dissatisfied with the way in which democracy was operating in Mauritius. For Boswell (2006), this malaise is symptomatic of the experience of social and cultural oppression while Miles (1999) defines it as a social disease which results partly from the inability of the Creoles to assert themselves as a group. The 'malaise creole' statement led to profound reflections of the Church on the Creoles while at the same time the clergy was gradually having Creole priests in its ranks. This statement came just two years after Cardinal Maurice Piat was appointed as the new Bishop. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Creole issue became central in the church. It led to an annual commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery by a close-knit group called the Komite Diosezin Premie Fevriye (1<sup>st</sup> February Diocesan Committee).

### ***Theology in Action: Komite Diosezin Premie Fevriye (KDPF)***

The Komite Diosezin Premie Fevriye (KDPF) is a committee of the Catholic Church of Mauritius which is responsible for marking the annual commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery on 1<sup>st</sup> February by holding a special Catholic mass. It was set up in 1995 as a result of several requests made by Kreol organisations for holding a special mass in different parishes. Instead of holding several masses, it was decided that it would be better to set up a committee with key stakeholders and to hold only one mass each year in a parish. The late Mgr Amedée Napapen, a renowned historian of the Catholic Church and maroonage was the first to be in charge of this committee. As from 2000, KDPF became more structured with Father Jean Maurice Labour, Vicar General of the Diocese of Port Louis as Coordinator, Sheila Brelu-Brelu as Secretary and five members comprising one priest and four lay persons, namely Father Alain Romaine (historian of slavery), Danielle Palmyre (anthropologist/ theologian), Marjorie Desvaux (secondary school teacher), Lindsay Morvan (social worker), Mary Jolicoeur (social worker) and Jean Claude Jance (entrepreneur and Kreol Gospel songs composer).

In the wake of the various debates sparked by the “malaise creole” statement, the KDPF evolved gradually and intensively into a group of reflection and sensitization engaged with the Creole community. History and memory of resistance and resilience of slavery and the maroons and contemporary societal issues related to the Creoles became the focus of KDPF. The mass held on 1<sup>st</sup> February for the commemoration of the abolition of slavery became known as ‘lames Premie Fevriye’ (1<sup>st</sup> February mass). The mass has since then become a rallying point preceded by preparatory meetings with community leaders and community mobilisation.

Each year a theme is chosen for the mass. The choice of the theme is discussed and made at the level of the KDPF. The theme is then made known to the parish community in November where the mass will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> February. Preparatory meetings are held till mid-January. Deep reflection is then initiated at grassroots level on the selected theme which is systematically located in history and memory. At evening gatherings after a working day, the community is invited to participate in storytelling, narratives, shared experiences and talks on slavery and maroonage revolving around the theme of the mass. It is theology in action. The activities are located in a new reading of the Christian faith with emphasis on pride in one’s culture, knowing one’s history and being reconciled with the past so that one can move forward. The Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, the President of the Republic, Members of Parliament and other personalities are invited to the mass. This mass has become the annual rendez-vous for the politicians with the Creoles in the church.

In 2007 the militancy of KDPF for cultural empowerment was strengthened when the theme of ‘maroon struggle’ (Lalit maron) was chosen for the 1<sup>st</sup> February mass at Saint Mathew Church situated at La Tour Koenig which is a suburb of Port Louis. Names

of famous maroons were displayed in the aisles of the church so that people seated in the pews could feel their symbolic presence. Lisette Talate, a woman from one island of the Chagos archipelago, was asked to narrate her life story during the mass. The Chagossians, known as Zilwa in Kreol language, are a Creole ethnic group native to the Chagos Islands, specifically Diego Garcia, Peros Banhos and the Salomon Island as well as other parts of the Chagos Archipelago which form part of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritius. Chagos islands are located about 1000 miles south of the southern tip of the Indian Ocean subcontinent. In her poignant story Lisette Talate told the people at the mass how the inhabitants of Diego Garcia and other islands of the Chagos archipelago<sup>2</sup> were expelled by Britain. Packed on board of a ship deck, they made the voyage to Mauritius, others to Seychelles, in very bad conditions. In her case, she experienced two expulsions. In 1973, she was moved to Peros Banhos where she lived for one year and then she was expelled to Mauritius. Talate became one of the key women figures of the struggle of the Chagossians for their return home on their island. In her biography written by Labelle & Cangy (2017), Talate describes herself as “at the same time Chagossian, Mauritian, Creole and even a bit British” (p.11). Talate passed away on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at the age of 71. Incidentally, one month after her demise, KDPF started its campaign for the dissemination of the Truth and Justice Commission Report on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

### ***Special supplement of La Vie Catholique for the TJC Report (2011)***

Two members for the KDPF, namely Daniel Palmyre and myself worked as part-time researchers with the Truth and Justice Commission (TJC) from 2009 to 2011. Both of us and Father Jean Maurice Labour deponed before the Commission in 2010. Given the historical link of the Catholic Church with slavery and the hate and love relationship between Creoles of African descent and their own church, our deponing got significant media coverage at that time. The report came out in 2011. It comprises 6 volumes, namely 4 volumes of 2700 A4 pages and 2 CDs of verbatim by deponents. KDPF devised a communication strategy to disseminate its content and findings to the wider community. After discussion, the circulation of pamphlets was identified as the most effective instrument for the sensitization of public opinion and grassroots mobilisation

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<sup>2</sup> When Mauritius obtained its independence in 1968, Britain kept the Chagos archipelago and leased one of its islands, Diego Garcia, to USA as a military base. The inhabitants were forcibly evicted. In the 1990s a group of inhabitants sued Britain for their return home. In 2019, Mauritius’ long standing claims on the Chagos archipelago were recognised by the International Court of Justice and the United Nations General Assembly.

in a collective effort to pressurize the state of Mauritius to implement the recommendations of the TJC report.

The pamphlet was published as a supplement of 'La Vie Catholique' on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012. Founded in 1930 by Bishop Mgr Leen and members of L'Union Catholique, an influential group of lay catholics in those days, the newspaper is not the official media of the church and it operates as an independent body. However, the newspaper is a special forum for the Catholic Church to put forward its position on some major issues. It also gives voice to different stakeholders like the KDPF. It has a regular readership of 9,000 readers and at times 12,000 on special occasions like Christian festivities.

This special supplement of La Vie Catholique of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 has some particular characteristics. Its title is 'La vérité vous rendra libres' (Truth will set you free) which is a sentence from chapter 8 and verse 32 of the Gospel of John. Through this title, KDPF wanted to sensitize public opinion about the need for each Mauritian to know the truth about our shared history and only by seeking truth can one be true to oneself. It is a 12 page document printed on glossy paper, with a brown background colour and borders in red. It contains 13 articles in French and with excerpts from the report translated in French, 1 in Kreol Morisien and reproduction of 4 excerpts in English from the TJC report. The pamphlet is illustrated with a total of 14 pictures. The supplement contains an editorial note by Jean Maurice Labour, coordinator of KDPF. It bears the title 'Nous sommes tous convoqués' ('we are all convened', my translation). In the editorial note, the author gives the gist of the works of the Truth and Justice Commission and the importance of the report by stating:

Nous sommes tous convoqués à faire la vérité. Ça va nous remuer. Disons-le d'emblée: il ne s'agit pas de prendre ce rapport comme LA vérité sur l'esclavage, l'engagisme et leurs conséquences...Il s'agit plutôt de l'accueillir comme une analyse sérieuse par des professionnels et de nous en servir pour avancer vers plus de vérité, de lucidité sur nous-mêmes, sur nos compatriotes. Désormais, ce rapport nous appartient à tous Mauriciens, et nous devons nous en servir pour construire notre citoyenneté sur des bases plus vraies, plus solides.

The editorial note points out the fundamental importance of seeking truth and the feelings of uneasiness that it will create in us. It says that the TJC report is not the absolute TRUTH but considered as significant research conducted by experts which can help us learn more about ourselves and others in our pursuit of truth. The editorial underlines that this report is for all Mauritians. We should therefore use it to strengthen our sense of belonging to the nation. The articles of the supplement are written by members of KDPF. They highlight the major issues dealt with by the Commission. Finally, the 14 bullets refer to the 290 recommendations of the TJC. The first three bullets refer to the need for memorialisation of slavery and indentured labour to

protect the historical and cultural heritage of Mauritius; archiving of documents related to slavery and indentured labour; empowerment of Mauritians of African and Malagasy origins while fighting against racial discrimination; and a more public democratic life. The supplement was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> February for the commemoration of Abolition of slavery during the special mass held at the church of La Gaulette, a neighbouring village to Le Morne region (see photos, . Mr Kailash Purryag, President of the Republic at that time, several personalities and officials of the government and opposition parties were present. The Commissioners of the Truth and Justice Commission were also present. Each of them received a copy of the supplement. Copies of the supplement were also distributed to schools and NGOs. The recommendation for the setting up of a Slavery Museum became the focus of the academia and especially members of the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture based at the University of Mauritius.

### ***A big 'what if'? About the Centre for Research on Slavery & Indenture (CRSI)***

What if Alexander Fleming had not discovered penicillin in 1928 after returning from his vacation? The death toll during the Second World War would have been higher and we would have been unable to cure bacteriological infections until today. In a similar vein we would say what if we did not have the local scientific contribution mobilised and engaged at the level of the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture (CRSI), the slavery museum project would certainly not have materialised. The CRSI, founded in 2006, specialises in scientific research on the history of slavery and indenture from multiple perspectives and groups researchers from various fields. Father Alain Romaine and I are members of KDPF but we are also members of the CRSI. In fact, CRSI research activities have received international recognition. CRSI became a member of SLAFNET (Slavery in Africa Network) and its coordinator (Vijaya Teelock) was elected President of the International Scientific Committee on the Slave Route Project and hosted its first time meeting in the Indian Ocean in November 2017. While KDPF has actively supported grassroots mobilisation, the CRSI has led the conceptualisation and design of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum (ISM). Amongst the activities related to ISM: from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015, CRSI organised an International Seminar at the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the then Ministry of Arts and Culture, Nelson Mandela Centre, Creole Speaking Union, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and University of Mauritius. The Deputy Prime Minister, Xavier Luc Duval and and the Minister of Arts and Culture, S. Baboo addressed the participants at the opening ceremony. The theme was 'Yer Rezistans, Zordi Rezilians' (Yesterday Resistance, Resilience Today). Two of the eight panels were on 'Implementation of TJC report-the situation of descendants of slaves' and 'Implementation of TJC report Land issues: The way forward'. Six TJC deponents made verbal presentations. Following the International seminar which attracted media coverage and my appointment as Director of the Nelson Mandela Centre from 2014 to 2016, the museum project gained momentum. The Centre was assigned by the Ministry to work out the details of the project. Several working sessions



were held at the centre which provided the basis for the Cabinet decision of 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 which read as follow:

The Cabinet decision of 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 which reads as “has agreed to the setting up of an Intercontinental Slavery Museum, as recommended by the Truth and Justice Commission, at the Ex-Labourdonnais Military Hospital in Port Louis. The Museum would give more visibility to slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, promote slave history and emphasize the contribution of the African diaspora in the world development”.

Motivated by the Cabinet decision, the CRSI organised a ‘Consultative Workshop’ on Slavery Museums: Memorialisation perspectives/ Mize Esklav: Memwar nou zanset’ from 12 to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at the University of Mauritius. Consultation workshops were also held at Le Morne and Ville Noire of Mahebourg on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 respectively to explain the objectives of the Slavery Museum and also to collect the views of the inhabitants. Three months later, a press conference, chaired by the Vice Chancellor of the University, was held in the University Council room to present the report on the consultative workshops and the results of the survey on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The advocacy for the slavery museum intensified at the level of the academia. In the context of the UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, CRSI published a booklet with the title ‘The Intercontinental Slavery Museum Project. Site: the ex-military Hospital, republic of Mauritius. A historical site of conscience’. In her message for this publication, Prof. Benigna Zimba of the Universida Eduardo Mondlane, conceptor of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum (ISM) project, writes:

We must obligatorily emphasize one particular feature of this project: more than a wide range of artefacts, documents as well as modern ways of representing this aspect of African heritage, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum will be a reflection of African cultural heritage. [...] the project moves beyond the tendency to “victimizing” the history and historiography of slavery and slave trade. (p.2).

The publication gives six reasons for the choice of the ex- Labourdonnais Military Hospital, namely the historic importance and nature of the building; it is a site to honour our interculturality and promote remembrance and reconciliation; it is an opportunity to restore the oldest building in the Republic of Mauritius; it secures financial feasibility as it is located in a tourist hub; the choice of this historical site is in line with the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). In an interview with a local newspaper, I reinforced these reasons by stating that this museum will be ‘a place of memory of freedom and reconciliation’ (Le mauricien, 13 January 2018, pp.10-11). For the commemoration of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018, Vijaya Teelock, Father Romaine and I gave

an evening talk on ISM at the church in Cassis known as ‘the cathedral of poor’. The talk gave rise to greater awareness and Cassis gave birth to a support group for ISM.

### ***Trilingual Documentary on Youtube***

On 31 January 2019, CRSI launched a short video documentary of 12. 29 minutes on ISM in English, French and Kreol Morisien. The subtitle is ‘The duty for remembrance’. The video in Kreol Morisien has received 1, 311 views to date. It gives a historical overview of slavery as forced labour, its role in the economy, its legacy in terms of impact on our legislation, the structuration of the economy and shaping of social relations and the importance of a slavery museum. The documentary explains the choice of the Military Hospital and describes the collections that the museum will house. This video has been used in several advocacy campaigns during meetings and gatherings at grassroots level and also shared widely on social media like facebook and whatsapp. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019, CRSI launched two publications in French and English entitled A short history and description of the Military Hospital in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as contributions to the ISM project. The video and the publications on ISM became supplementary tools for KDPF.

### ***The Silent Protest March for Slavery Museum***

At the beginning of Year 2019, the KDPF stepped up their advocacy campaign by planning a March for the Slavery Museum.. It was preceded by meetings with grassroots, intensifying lobbying with politicians and the preparations for the 1<sup>st</sup> February mass. The mobilisation gained momentum when the support group of Cassis, some Catholic faith based movements like Zezi Vre Zom (Jesus the Man) and Bethanie, which focus on male and female spirituality respectively, Franciscan Friars and Sisters, NGOs and prominent social workers of the Catholic Church joined the preparatory meetings. I was personally confronted with the idea of a protest march against the government for its inaction. The pressure came from the media who wanted to present the march as a protest of the Catholic Church against government. As I was the spokesperson on the slavery museum matter, I found myself in a very delicate position as I also hold a post of senior responsibility in Catholic education where my institution has to deal regularly with the government. I took the matter up with my colleagues at KDPF and the idea mooted into a Silent Protest March rather than a mass demonstration against the government. It was more of a march by the Creoles for the Creoles in memory of their ancestors and for their dignity. Posters in Kreol Morisien, French and English invited the public at large on Facebook to commemorate the Abolition of Slavery on 1st February, in the context of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) at La Gaulette, a village along the eastern coast and not far from Le Morne (see photos p. 25). The programme comprised a Silent March for the setting up of a Slavery Museum. The march would start at 7.30 a.m. followed by a mass to be celebrated by Cardinal Maurice Piat at 8.30 a.m. The theme of the mass

was: Rekonesans (Recognition), Zistis (Justice), Devlopman (Development). It is the theme of the UN Decade. Participants were asked to dress in African style.

Some 200 participants turned up for the march. Banners bearing the theme of the UN Decade plus 'Mize Esklav' (Slavery Museum) were prepared by a group of inhabitants of La Gaulette and were given to the participants. The march got wide press coverage. It ended at the entrance of the church just before the Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth and his wife and other personalities arrived. During the mass, Cardinal Maurice Piat emphasized the need for the Slavery Museum. A powerful song 'Get divan nou avanse' (Looking Ahead, Moving Forward), composed by Jean Claude Jance, member of KDPF, was sung by the assembly. At the end of the mass, officials and all those attending the mass got a bookmark as souvenir gift. The bookmark contained on its recto side the logo and theme of the UN Decade of People of African Descent (2015-2024) with a baobab tree in the background and a calendar Year 2019 with months and days in Kreol Morisien on its verso. In 2019, the government decided to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle by creating a State Company, 'Intercontinental Slavery Museum Mauritius Ltd', as a fast-track measure.

### *Discussion*

#### Some Insights

For Samuel (2007: 615), 'public advocacy is a set of deliberate actions designed to influence public policies or public attitudes in order to empower the marginalised' and advocacy is unlikely to achieve much without mobilisation (618). In fact, a working definition for 'advocacy' in this paper could be the effort deployed to persuade and win public support for the ISM project by grassroots mobilisation and the research input of the academic community. The conjugation of these two factors represented in the field by KDPF and CRSI was instrumental in shaping the government decision-making and decision-taking processes. For Samuel (2007), effective advocacy requires a combination of three perspectives, namely political, managerial and technical. The advocacy for ISM was underpinned by these three perspectives. The activities related to the 1<sup>st</sup> February mass and the organisation of workshops, international seminars, publications and video documentary required the mobilisation of different skills and competencies.

The advocacy for ISM has been a complex process leading at times to confrontation, negotiation and lobbying in the corridor. One such example is a letter of protest dated 29 November 2019 and signed by Vijaya Teelock, Alain Romaine and myself which was sent to the Deputy Prime Minister Xavier Luc Duval following a statement which he made at the International Festival Kreol. It was reported that he declared the Slavery Museum would not be at the Military Hospital but on another site given by the United Docks (Le Mauricien, 17 November 2019). In that letter we argued for the restoration

of the Military Hospital. Another example has been to persuade government to insert ISM as an item in the Budget speech of 2016. According to Klugman (2011), advocacy involves the processes of problem identification, agreement on solutions, bringing new data and analysis and strengthening the base of support. We can find these processes in the actions of KDPF and CRSI. Although they were not concerted actions yet given both actors were working for the same goal, this developed into a sustained and organized action. However, it is clear that milestones and achievements like the Cabinet decision of 7th April 2016, the Budget Speech 2016-2017 and the setting up of ISM LTD were not 'sequential but multiple streams that flow independently and simultaneously' (Klugman, 2011: 143). The operation and results of the TJC have recently been assessed.

### ***Foresight***

Croucher et al. (2017) critically examine the Mauritian Truth and Justice Commission (MTJC). In 2013, the authors conducted a study on the impact of TJC. They conducted interviews with 15 members of the local political elite, intensive semi-structured interviews of six individuals who were highly involved in MTJC, interviews with 35 Creoles considered as descendants of enslaved people living in Port Louis, Le Morne and Cap Malheureux. The findings showed the limitations of the TJC. First, the TJC itself was set up following negotiations between two political parties, namely Les Verts Fraternelles of the Michel brothers and Labour Party of Navin Ramgoolam which were in alliance in the government. TJC was not therefore the result of grassroots mobilisation. Second, 'a certain dissonance between the scholarly and the popular [...] undermined the MJTC report' (Croucher et al., 2017: 345). According to the authors, the chasm between researchers and the Creoles is reflected in the TJC report (volume 3) whereby an anthropological study conducted with the people of Le Morne states in its findings that the people do not know the history of their ancestors. For Croucher et al. (2017) this cannot be considered as a finding but rather the bias of the researchers who cannot reach out to the people and understand their language. Also, the authors observed that when the TJC report was made public, there was little media coverage. According to them, this explains why few of their respondents knew something about the TJC and its report.

### ***Conclusion***

This overview has shown that the setting up of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum was underpinned by mobilisation at grassroots level by the KDPF and initiatives taken by researchers at the level of CRSI. The mobilisation at grassroots level itself was informed by research on slavery and helped the people to move forward with an enlightened perspective. Given those concerned by this mobilisation defined themselves as descendants of their ancestors who were taken captive and then enslaved, this form of advocacy was highly introspective. I remember how one of the

participants in the Silent Protest March told me that when he put on his African shirt in the morning before coming to the march he felt strong connectedness with his ancestors. I think this will be the biggest challenge for ISM, that is, to foster and nurture the link between the people and the slavery museum. For Nyamgurisa (1998: 300) 'part of capacity-building is to enable advocates to acquire the ability to disempower themselves in order to empower others: self-disempowerment [...] they must adopt attitude of accompaniers and as a sounding board of the marginalised; they are temporary brokers'. After the opening of the ISM, I see myself no longer in the role of the 'temporary broker' or involved in public advocacy but in that of an 'accompanier'.

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## 3

# Le Musée face à l'esclavage

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L'initiative que prit l'UNESCO de publier un ouvrage consacré au thème « *New Approaches in Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums* »<sup>4</sup> fut prise à l'issue du Colloque international tenu à l'Université de Virginie à Charlottesville en mars 2018 intitulé *New Approaches in Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums and Sites*, organisé par l'UNESCO en collaboration avec cette université, l'US.ICOMOS et la Fondation Jefferson's Monticello. Ce fut l'occasion de dresser un bilan sur le sujet « le musée et l'esclavage », plus précisément sur le musée face aux trafics d'êtres humains, à l'esclavage, aux abolitions, aux politiques sociales mises en œuvre dès ces abolitions, aux discriminations qui furent instaurées et aux séquelles de ces événements et phénomènes.

En septembre 2019, le ministère des Arts et de la Culture de la République de Maurice organisait un atelier (workshop) relatif au projet de Musée intercontinental de l'esclavage prévu dans l'île. À la lumière du travail entrepris dans le cadre de l'UNESCO et du Colloque international tenu à Charlottesville en 2018, une réflexion commune eut lieu à la lumière de l'expérience acquise sur le rapport entre Histoire et Muséologie<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Nelly SCHMIDT, *Nouvelles approches pour l'interprétation et la représentation de l'esclavage dans les musées - New Approaches in Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums*, à paraître en 2020, Paris, UNESCO, Secteur des sciences sociales et humaines, une décision prise par l'UNESCO, dans le cadre du Projet « La Route de l'esclave : résistance, liberté, héritage », sur la recommandation des participants au colloque de Charlottesville.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Nelly SCHMIDT, « Présentation des résultats du travail sur le Guide pour les nouvelles approches de l'interprétation et de la représentation de l'esclavage dans les musées », « Findings of the Guide to New Approaches towards Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums », *Slavery Museums Workshop*, Ministry of Arts and Culture, University of Mauritius, 13-15 September 2019.

### ***Repères historiques***

Il importe tout d'abord de tracer quelques-unes des étapes de toute démarche préalable dans l'analyse des traites d'êtres humains, de l'esclavage et des processus d'abolition, non pas pour retracer cette histoire - tel n'est pas le but de cette courte contribution - mais afin de signaler quelques repères, bornes essentielles et pourtant sous-estimées dans l'historiographie du sujet.

Les colonies des Caraïbes-Amériques, comme celles de l'océan Indien, furent les lieux de phénomènes qui débutèrent dès les débuts du processus colonial et esclavagiste : une longue tradition de résistance de la part des captifs et esclaves, premiers concernés par cette histoire, une résistance dont les traces subsistent dans la culture de ces pays, dans la survivance des grands camps d'esclaves fugitifs, les cimarrons, dans la langue, dans de multiples traditions, dans les contes et la littérature, mais dont on ne conserve que très peu de traces écrites, hormis les rapports officiels d'administrateurs ou ceux que laissèrent certains religieux et voyageurs. Les phénomènes de résistance des esclaves, qu'ils aient été individuels ou collectifs, furent négligés, voire occultés par les abolitionnistes eux-mêmes ainsi que par une historiographie coloniale peu critique, cultivant les mythes et autres interprétations édulcorées et erronées de cette histoire.

Un autre phénomène historique est essentiel pour la compréhension de la manipulation de l'histoire et de la construction dans le long terme d'un récit historique faussé : les politiques coloniales post-abolitionnistes préconisèrent toutes l'« oubli du passé », des occultations du passé esclavagiste qui, avec le concours de la presse, du clergé et des autorités locales, atteignirent remarquablement leurs buts, et ceci dans la très longue durée - des silences sur un passé colonial dont les séquelles sont aujourd'hui encore très sensibles. Ce n'est que depuis la fin des années 1960 ; puis à partir de 1998, avec, en France, la célébration du cent cinquantième de la suppression de l'esclavage dans les colonies, que l'écriture de cette histoire s'est peu à peu dégagée de sa gangue colonialiste. De nouvelles sources furent consultées, des interprétations et des confrontations nouvelles de documents furent pratiquées.

#### ***Le « siècle des abolitions » : au cœur du processus de l'oubli.***

- À l'origine de ce processus d'oubli du passé, de manipulation de l'Histoire et de leurs répercussions dans le long terme au niveau de la recherche, de l'enseignement et dans le domaine muséographique, les contextes et les conditions d'abolition furent déterminants. C'est dès le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en effet, conjointement aux expansions coloniales en Afrique, en Asie et dans l'océan Pacifique et au développement de l'idéologie du racisme dit « scientifique » en Europe que le récit historique et les politiques patrimoniales, puis muséales, relatifs à l'esclavage, accumulèrent lacunes et retards.



- Un autre caractère commun à l'ensemble des colonies concernées par cette histoire est la rareté, voire l'absence de témoignages d'esclaves authentiques. Si des récits d'esclaves furent publiés dans les colonies anglo-saxonnes, le plus souvent avec le louable concours de sociétés antiesclavagistes, plus rares furent les récits authentiques tels que ceux d'Olaudah Equiano ou de Frederick Douglass. Le cas des colonies françaises est spécifique : on ne dispose à ce jour d'aucun témoignage d'esclave ou de « nouveau libre », aucun récit datant de la période de l'esclavage, ou de la période d'abolition.
- Enfin, l'analyse comparative des processus de destruction du système esclavagiste<sup>6</sup> dans une perspective internationale fait apparaître de nombreux points communs :
  - ils firent tous partie d'un long siècle d'abolition, à partir de la rébellion des esclaves de Saint-Domingue en 1791 qui lança en quelque sorte le mouvement ;
  - ils se déroulèrent dans des contextes conflictuels comme en Haïti, aux États-Unis ou en Amérique du Sud ou dans des contextes de rébellion interne, comme en Jamaïque, dans les colonies françaises, danoises, néerlandaises ou au Brésil, à l'issue de plusieurs séries de rébellions au fil du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.
- Colonies anglaises, françaises ou des États-Unis, parmi d'autres, promulguèrent des décrets d'abolition qui étaient eux-mêmes porteurs de la négation de la liberté et des droits qu'ils annonçaient. On assista en effet à la négation et au refus d'application des droits des nouveaux libres par d'anciens propriétaires d'esclaves, voire par les autorités elles-mêmes et les assemblées locales où siégeait une majorité de planteurs. Partout également, la proclamation de la liberté fut immédiatement suivie d'une période de contrôle social, de discrimination, en fait de marginalisation des anciens esclaves et de renforcement de l'encadrement colonial

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. les travaux d'Oruno D. LARA sur ce qu'il désigna dès les années 1970 en tant que « processus de destruction du système esclavagiste », notamment : *Les Caraïbes*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1997 ; id., *De l'Oubli à l'Histoire. Espace et identité caraïbes. Guadeloupe, Guyane, Haïti, Martinique*, Paris, Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1998, rééd. L'Harmattan en 2015 ; id., *La Naissance du Panafricanisme. Les racines caraïbes, américaines et africaines du mouvement au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1999, rééd. L'Harmattan, 2015 ; id., *Space and History in the Caribbean*, Princeton, USA, Markus Wiener Publ., 2005.

destiné à remédier à la disparition de la réglementation esclavagiste. Il s'est agi d'un système de réduction et de répression de la liberté, en fait passé sous silence<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Je renvoie pour information, au sujet de cette évocation des abolitions de l'esclavage dans l'histoire, aux quelques publications suivantes, non exhaustives bien sûr. Concernant les colonies françaises : Nelly SCHMIDT, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage et réformateurs des colonies*, Paris, Éditions Karthala, 2000 ; id., *Les abolitions de l'esclavage. Cinq siècles de combats, XVIe-XXe siècles*, Paris, Éditions Fayard, 2005, et id., « Abolition et abolitionnistes de l'esclavage. Analyse critique et perspective patrimoniale » in « *Route de l'esclave* » : *des itinéraires pour réconcilier histoire et mémoire*, Actes du Colloque international, Guadeloupe, décembre 2014, Paris, Éditions L'Harmattan, 2015, p. 204-226 ; Oruno D. LARA, *Caraiibes en construction : esclavage, colonisation, résistance*, 2 vol., Éditions du CERCAM, Centre de recherches Caraïbes-Amériques, 1992 ; id., *La liberté assassinée. Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique et La Réunion, 1848-1856*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005 ; Claude WANQUET, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage, 1794-1802, le cas des colonies orientales, Ile de France (Maurice) et La Réunion*, Paris, Éditions Karthala, 1998 ; Prosper EVE, *Le corps des esclaves de l'île Bourbon. Histoire d'une reconquête*, Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2013 ; id., *Le 20 décembre 1848 et sa célébration à La Réunion : du déni à la réhabilitation (1848-1980)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003 ; Hubert GERBEAU, *Les esclaves noirs, pour une histoire du silence*, Océan Éditions, St-André, La Réunion, 1998. Au sujet des politiques d'abolition hors des colonies françaises, voir notamment : Ali Moussa Iye, Nelly Schmidt, Paul E. Lovejoy, Ed., *Slavery, Resistance and Abolitions. A pluralist Perspective*, Africa World Press Inc., 2019 ; Vijayalakshmi TEELock, *Histoire de l'île Maurice - Mauritian History : from its Beginnings to Modern Times*, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Maurice, 2001 ; id., « Les travailleurs mauriciens engagés : un aperçu de l'historiographie », in *Revue d'Histoire du XIXe siècle*, 2018/1, n°56 ; id., co-éditrice, *History, Memory and Identity. Comparative Perspectives*, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund, Mauritius, University of Mauritius Press, vol. 2, 2019 ; id., co-éditrice, *The Moulin à Poudre Cultural Landscape. History and Archaeology*, Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, Mauritius, 2018 ; Oruno D. LARA, *De l'Oubli à l'Histoire, op.cit.* ; *Les abolitions de l'esclavage. De L.F. Sonthonax à V. Schœlcher, 1793, 1794, 1848*, Actes du Colloque de 1994, Université Paris VIII, publiés par M. DORIGNY, Presses universitaires de Vincennes, Éditions de l'UNESCO, 1995 ; Paul LOVEJOY, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3rd edition, Cambridge University Press, 2011 ; Robin BLACKBURN, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, Londres, Verso, 1988 ; Michael CRATON, *Testing the Chains : Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982 ; David RICHARDSON, Ed., *Abolition and Its Aftermath. The Historical Context, 1790-1916*, Londres, Frank Cass & Co, 1985, eBook, Routledge, 2013 ; Sudel FUMA, *L'Esclavagisme à La Réunion, 1794-1848*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1992 ; Chan Low, Jocelyn, *Esclaves, Exclus et Citoyens*, Colloque sur L'Esclavage, University of Mauritius, 1998 ; William A. GREEN, *British Slave Emancipation : The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1976 ;

- Ceci explique l'absence, dans la plupart des musées consacrés à ces questions, d'un récit précis des réalités des conditions de vie et du travail des esclaves comme des circonstances des abolitions. Les décennies de discrimination qui suivirent firent également l'objet de non-dits, au profit des discours et des proclamations officiels. L'ensemble de ces conditions fut à l'origine de la relative pauvreté, jusqu'à une période très récente, du traitement muséologique et muséographique de ces pans de l'histoire humaine.

### ***Une perspective mondiale et comparatiste***

- L'interprétation comme la représentation de l'esclavage sont encore des thèmes de recherche en cours, objets de débats, voire de polémiques. L'évocation de ce passé est lourde de séquelles non dites, souvent mal identifiées. Elle exige, au niveau de la représentation, des connaissances scientifiques constamment mises à jour, voire remises en question, et une collaboration approfondie avec les populations concernées. Comment établir ces échanges, ce dialogue ? Et jusqu'à quelles extensions le musée voit-il son rôle s'élargir ?
- Autre aspect de cette histoire : son caractère mondial. En effet, toutes les parties du monde furent impliquées, de manière plus ou moins directe, ce qui suppose l'établissement indispensable de liaisons internationales entre musées et organismes de recherche, universitaires notamment. Ceci justifie par ailleurs amplement l'initiative prise à l'île Maurice de fondation d'un musée intercontinental de l'esclavage.
- Enfin, il semble nécessaire d'établir le lien – en évitant assimilations abusives et anachronismes – entre esclavage colonial massif et ce qu'on désigne aujourd'hui par le terme d'esclavage moderne.
- Un autre élément à introduire dans l'échange entre histoire et muséographie est la notion de séquelles de l'esclavage, de traumas physiques et moraux, individuels et collectifs, entraînés par l'esclavage et les trafics d'êtres humains, ce qui implique

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Richard HART, *Slaves who Abolished Slavery*, 2 vol., I – *Blacks in Bondage*, 1980 ; II – *Blacks in Rebellion*, 1985, Mona, Jamaïque, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies ; *L'Esclavage à Madagascar. Aspects historiques et résurgences contemporaines*, Antananarivo, Institut de Civilisations, musées d'Arts et d'Archéologie, 1997 ; Rebecca SCOTT, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba : the Transition to Free Labour, 1860-1899*, Princeton University Press, 1985 ; *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, J.P. Rodriguez Ed., ABS-CLIO, 1997.

également la notion de contact et de relations spécifiques à établir avec le public concerné et intéressé.

### **Des objectifs**

- Un constat put être dressé, mettant en évidence les grandes lacunes dont souffre cette thématique, les besoins exprimés en termes de recherche tant historique que muséologique, la rareté des partenariats entre musées, universités, centres de recherche archéologique et communautés héritières de cette histoire.
- L'analyse du rôle déterminant d'un oubli du passé, savamment orchestré par les autorités coloniales, dès la proclamation des abolitions de l'esclavage au fil d'un long XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, des politiques sociales et des discriminations qui suivirent les abolitions est, en fait, au cœur du rapport entre histoire et muséologie. Par ailleurs, l'évolution majeure de la muséographie dans les trente dernières années permet la conception de nouvelles questions, l'apparition de nouveaux progrès dans la réflexion au sujet du thème « le musée face à l'esclavage ».
- De nouveaux modes d'approche d'une histoire aussi douloureuse que celle dont il est ici question impliquent le recours à une recherche historique fondamentale, ouverte aux débats ainsi qu'aux liaisons entre patrimoine matériel et immatériel. Il importe en effet, dans cette perspective, de procéder à une analyse critique des interprétations aujourd'hui datées d'une histoire qui a si longtemps tu, occulté certaines réalités des processus coloniaux, des traites d'êtres humains, de l'esclavage et des résistances qu'ils ont suscitées, de réfléchir, dans chaque cas, à la prise en compte de l'ensemble des éléments permettant de fonder et de construire cette histoire et de la transmettre au niveau muséographique : archives écrites, archives orales (enregistrements de témoignages, récits divers), archives musicales, documents littéraires (romans, nouvelles, mythes, contes), résultats de fouilles archéologiques, objets, œuvres d'art.
- Parmi les objectifs figurèrent les missions suivantes :
  - i. **présenter**, avec quelques références indispensables, les grandes expériences en matière de muséographie sur les sujets dits sensibles et douloureux - celui de l'esclavage étant majeur en la matière - tels que les travaux de l'UNESCO en général, du Projet « La Route de l'esclave » plus particulièrement, de l'ICOM, de la Coalition Internationale des Sites de Conscience (CISC), du Mouvement International pour une Nouvelle Muséologie (MINOM) ou de la Fédération Internationale des Musées des Droits de l'Homme (FIHRM), enfin les déterminations de la Décennie internationale des personnes d'ascendance africaine, 2014-2025 ;

- ii. **dresser un bilan** de l'état des connaissances et des contextes historiographiques du sujet ;
- iii. **envisager une révision** des concepts employés au sujet de cette histoire et procéder à une réécriture du discours historique et muséographique si nécessaire ;
- iv. **procéder à un inventaire** et à un examen des contextes patrimoniaux : archives écrites et orales, iconographie, ensemble des artéfacts disponibles, données archéologiques, récits de contemporains au sujet des événements évoqués, engagements de certains artistes, collections des organismes muséaux, progression des engagements de l'UNESCO sur le sujet<sup>8</sup> ;
- v. identifier les conflits de mémoire entre héritiers des différents protagonistes de l'histoire évoquée ;
- vi. **identifier les besoins** nécessités par les traumas hérités de l'esclavage et le rôle du musée à ce sujet ;
- vii. **formuler des suggestions** d'ordre scientifique, méthodologique et éthique à l'intention des personnes travaillant dans des musées consacrés à l'esclavage ou comportant une ou quelques salles relatives au sujet ainsi qu'aux personnes participant à quelque titre que ce soit à la création d'un tel musée ;
- viii. **recommander l'établissement de partenariats** entre musées, entre musées et organismes universitaires de recherche, entre musées et opérateurs de nouvelles technologies ; à cet effet, entreprendre un inventaire des différents organismes – musée, mémorial, site d'histoire et de mémoire -, de toutes dimensions, identifier leurs réalisations comme leurs besoins ;
- ix. **recommander une ouverture rigoureuse** du musée, de ses collections et de ses activités diverses aux populations locales et concernées par l'histoire évoquée.

Cette démarche prend toute son importance si l'on garde à l'esprit qu'il s'agit d'un vaste crime contre l'humanité et que deux questions très sensibles sont, aujourd'hui, à

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<sup>8</sup> Le projet de l'UNESCO « La Route de l'esclave : résistance, liberté, héritage » a publié en 2018 l'ouvrage intitulé *Legacies of Slavery. A Resource Book for Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory – Héritages de l'esclavage. Un guide pour les gestionnaires de sites et itinéraires de mémoire*, Paris, UNESCO, Secteur des sciences sociales et humaines.

l'ordre du jour de manière internationale : celle de l'identification des traumatismes hérités de l'esclavage et la question des réparations.

### ***Suggestions / recommandations***

Il ne peut s'agir de dresser ici une liste d'obligations de l'institution muséale en fonction d'un thème spécifique qui serait celui des trafics d'êtres humains, des esclavages et des abolitions. Pourtant, tout musée prétendant à cette spécificité de son objet assume, certes, des fonctions de pôle de conservation et de recherche pluridisciplinaire, mais il fait aussi appel à l'ensemble des sciences humaines et sociales. Histoire, muséologie, archéologie, sociologie, ethnologie, sciences juridiques, disciplines artistiques, littéraires (écrites et orales), scénographie, nouvelles technologies de communication peuvent être sollicitées avec pour fonctions prioritaires :

- de permettre une réflexion et une analyse critique pluridisciplinaire et internationale ;
- de mener une réflexion sur les mots et concepts utilisés, tels que sites de mémoire, sites historiques, sites de conscience, histoire et mémoire, mémorialisation, muséification, restauration, commémoration, etc ;
- d'adopter des concepts et un vocabulaire nouveaux et appropriés ;
- d'établir les relations nécessaires entre passé et présent, par exemple dans les domaines des trafics d'êtres humains et des servitudes passés et contemporains ;
- de constituer des équipes pluridisciplinaires d'experts en vue de l'analyse précise des pièces montrées et de la présentation des différentes interprétations éventuelles;
- de distinguer et de promouvoir des projets muséographiques pilotes ;
- de prévoir des cycles de formation du personnel ;
- de prévoir des sessions d'aide aux projets de création de musées ainsi qu'aux petites structures existantes.

Tout ceci impliquant bien évidemment la constitution, à un niveau international, de réseaux avec des universités mais aussi avec des organismes spécialistes de nouvelles technologies. Le visiteur doit être amené à comprendre qu'il s'agit d'une histoire et de sa représentation muséographique qui sont encore *en construction*, souffrant encore de stéréotypes, de raccourcis, d'occultations et d'oublis... Par ailleurs, de nombreux visiteurs s'interrogent au sujet des modalités selon lesquelles leur histoire familiale et personnelle peut être intégrée à ce passé. Des liens spécifiques peuvent permettre de

satisfaire cette quête légitime, notamment par l'aide, au sein de certains musées, à des recherches archivistiques adaptées.

Le respect de principes déontologiques est, par ailleurs, une priorité de l'*approche touristique*. En aucun cas il ne peut être question de tendre vers une perception du musée en tant que *produit touristique*, comportant les nombreuses dérives potentielles que cela peut entraîner quant à des interprétations simplistes, réductrices, voire *folklorisantes* – au sens péjoratif de ce terme - et erronées. Le *tourisme mémoriel* ne peut donc être développé et promu qu'en alliance avec des professionnels avertis de ces risques et capables de fixer un cadre rigoureux et efficace aux initiatives de cet ordre.

Dans cette même perspective, il est recommandé d'identifier dans les différents pays, les structures et/ou les organisations relais (fondations, universités, ministères, services et commissions gouvernementaux), y compris les Commissions nationales pour l'UNESCO et les bureaux hors-siège de l'UNESCO afin d'obtenir les aides nécessaires. La mise en place d'un système organisationnel pilote (comité scientifique, comité de pilotage, bureau, etc) est fortement suggérée.

### *Un vœu*

Le musée serait-il la panacée aux insuffisances de l'Histoire et aux souffrances transgénérationnelles liées aux blessures pluriséculaires de l'esclavage? Certes non ! Il demeure, dans le meilleur des cas, un lieu de connaissance historique, patrimoniale, de prise de conscience mémorielle, tout cela dans un délicat processus d'émergence dans l'espace public. Processus délicat, parce que souvent parasité par des actes mémoriels et commémoratifs parfois inadaptés, voire erronés. Ainsi le musée apparaît-il comme un organisme à la fois puissant et fragile, voire manipulable, la neutralité n'existant pas. Quelques cartels peuvent suffire à falsifier la signification et le message d'objets-témoignages. La mythification d'un site – voire d'un objet - peut générer l'enthousiasme, alors qu'elle doit faire l'objet des analyses les plus fines au profit d'un accès aux réalités le moins *brouillé* possible.

La nécessité d'une coopération nationale et internationale est un leitmotiv de ce texte consacré aux approches muséales des traites d'êtres humains, de l'esclavage et des abolitions. Ce pan de l'histoire de l'humanité - qui relia quasiment, et dans la longue durée, tous les continents - implique que tout musée, toute exposition temporaire ou virtuelle sur ces thèmes se situe dans un cadre de références internationales.

La Recommandation de 2015 de l'UNESCO sur les musées puis le Forum UNESCO de haut niveau sur les musées, en 2016, ont souligné les opportunités comme les défis que représente la mondialisation dans ce domaine. Les travaux ainsi menés ont abouti à l'encouragement en faveur d'une « plus grande mobilité des collections, des professionnels, des visiteurs et des idées ». Les concepts de « diplomatie culturelle » et

de « pouvoir d'influence de la culture » sont aujourd'hui utilisés au sujet des fonctions essentielles des musées. Le Forum de haut niveau de l'UNESCO sur les musées a souligné leur rôle en tant qu'« accélérateurs culturels » par le biais d'expositions temporaires, d'échanges et de prêts d'artéfacts qui devraient bénéficier d'aides financières accrues.

Le musée possède en fait une puissance considérable s'il allie ses collections, les interprétations et les initiatives culturelles qui les accompagnent à la connaissance historique la plus avertie et s'il échange ses données et la nature du contenu de ses collections. Les objets et les œuvres conservés, et le contact avec l'artéfact interpellent les historiens eux-mêmes, sollicitent bien souvent de leur part une mise à jour historiographique, ouvrent la voie aux révisions inédites auxquelles se livre chaque génération. C'est au musée que le public, qui ne fréquentera pas les centres d'archives mais cherchera à comprendre son histoire, pourra accéder à une part de ce passé.



## 4

# How Do We Embed Holistic Restorative Justice Processes in the Design of the Inter-Continental Museum?

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I noticed in the course of the superb intercontinental slavery museum conference that it was often mentioned that slavery museums should be sites for needed societal healing in African Slavery Legacy Societies.

The phrase “restorative justice” was said in passing several times without clear definition. I would argue that the most crucial kind of societal healing in a society dehumanized through African slavery and like experiences such as Indian Indentureship and genocide is through a holistic restorative justice process as an authentic transparency rehumanizing process in which all members of society find and sustain their humanity and that of each other or what I call intercultural opening as a lifelong value based way of becoming and being. I did not want to distract during the remarkable Inter-continental slavery museum conference by injecting my concern for a clearer operational definition of restorative justice such as one embedded in shall we say the 6 Holistic Restorative Justice Phases model I have been testing and modifying over the years and am now writing up as a book.

The Holistic Restorative Justice Model is hinted at in the following WhatsApp conversation I had the morning after our conference with a Senegalese American friend about the conference. I sent her (Aida) a copy of my *L'Express* interview published a few days before in which the journalist emphasized me observing that most Americans don't even know slavery existed though I should add leaving out the fact that even Americans who do know African slavery did happen presume it was a past experience African Americans experienced with no ongoing impacts (a point several of us made at the conference):

[09/16, 08:21] Aida: We need to take these Americans to Ghana or Senegal [...]

[09/16, 08:23] Prof John: [...] last week at UoM they had a remarkable conference focused on building a government funded inter-continental slavery museum with scholars and curators from Mauritius and several other countries. Send me your email and I will send you the program [...]

[09/16, 08:34] Prof John: I am afraid Americans like those others residing in slave-based societies are taught to be ignorant about slavery or to assume it was just a past event with no contemporary impacts. So, taking them to Ghana and to Senegal alone will have an uneven outcome. What needs to be done is for heads of state and of other national political branches to acknowledge the history of slavery in their countries and make systemic amends from confessing to repentance to asking for forgiveness to reparations to reconciliation. Only the Mauritian political elite in the world made by the historical African slave trade have done this though quite partially and thus must do a more thorough and transparent job.

[09/16, 08:42] Aida: I agree but don't think these words you just put forth "forgiveness to reparations to reconciliation" are well understood by the Americans or better yet African Americans, if I may say.

[09/16, 08:44] Aida: Indeed, the work is much greater acknowledging or understanding, but it must start somewhere.

[09/16, 08:55] Aida: 'Your' island nation's political leaders must show the rest of the world, specifically areas where slavery had been a hindrance to advancement and development of all sorts, how to lead the way and show how to meaningfully incorporate such into the educational (and other) system (s) and through open dialogues.

[09/16, 09:03] Prof John: I appreciate your observations though I must say the words, that is, the steps of restorative justice are not understood by most citizens of African Slavery Legacy Societies, especially those belonging to ex-slave owner populations.

The different phases involving both members of perpetrating (slave owner) and (victim) enslaved populations which have been written up in three publications with a book on the way are processes through which members of both populations provide their interpretations without "cross-talking:

- 1) Historical interpretations of "what happened", "how it happened", "to whom," and "living legacies";
- 2) Mutual confessions, that is accountabilities;
- 3) Mutual repentance, that is, a covenant between historic perpetrator and victim populations that slavery and its living legacy will never happen again -the roots of abolitionist and slave revolt movements; State anti-slavery policies; and post-slavery civil rights movements;

- 4) Mutual forgiveness, meaning understanding each other's histories and motives; not necessarily agreeing; sometimes co-existing;
- 5) Mutual reconciliation, meaning giving back what was taken such as dignity, identities, land, remains of loved ones, language, arts, religions, freedom of expression; community wellbeing; and
- 6) Unity, meaning value centered togetherness, meaning authentic intercultural openness as the ultimate outcome of the first five phases as a process of authentic rehumanization of all concerned.

In conclusion, this is all to say slavery is a horrible societal blight which impacts all living in a society which can only be rooted out through the briefly described holistic restorative justice process.

The problem is in African Slavery Legacy Societies, the holistic restorative justice process when applied as government or institutional proclamations or policies tends to be fractured such as stressing history sharing or confession or apologies or reconciliation without realizing all steps are necessary to bring about the authentic healing a society needs to go through after such a societal horror such as slavery, genocide, pogroms, and mass rapes.

The different roles in slavery perpetrating populations include: slave catchers, slave owners, slave managers, non-slavery involvers, abolitionists, , post-slavery proponents, opponents, and silent; in enslaved populations: field slaves, house slaves, conforming slaves, rebelling slaves, ex-slaves, non-slavery involvers, abolitionists, and post -slavery proponents, opponents, and silent.

The question I have is how do we develop an inter-continental slavery museum model which exhibits the complexities and paradoxes of a restorative justice process holistic in displaying the different phases and the different roles and perspectives of members of perpetrator and victim populations?



## 5

# The Intercontinental Slavery Museum Mauritius: Imagining a Decolonized Museum Process, Narratives and Space

*George Okello Abungu*

*World Heritage Consultant, Emeritus Director General National Museums of Kenya & former Vice President of ICOM (International Council of Museums)*

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### **Introduction**

The Republic of Mauritius is putting up an intercontinental Slavery Museum in its capital city, Port Louis. This is a significant development not only because Mauritius as a country had a long history of slavery that has been well documented but also because it is one of the few countries that have carried out a Truth and Reconciliation exercise whose recommendations include the setting up of such a museum as part of a healing and correction process and whose implementation is being realized.

The issue of slave trade and slavery is a difficult historical fact that marks an unfortunate period in the relations of humanity across continents and ages. While the act of slavery appears to have been a human phenomenon almost everywhere for centuries, including in Europe during the Greek, Roman and Medieval periods, the most profound, with the greatest and longest lasting effects, was the slave trade and slavery inflicted on the African continent.

The Arab-led slave trade on the East African coast and in the trans-Saharan region as well as the European-led one on the Atlantic Sea have had lasting effects that continue to not only influence Africa's performance on many levels, but to impact deeply the geopolitical relations between the African continent and the rest of the world (Kake 1978; Ogot 1978; Alpers 2007; Abungu 2019).

Some of the sufferings, non-performance and embedded discrimination that the African continent and its people continue to endure are rooted in the deep historical occurrences such as slavery and slave trade that reduced the black man to a saleable commodity. The continent became a space and source of exploitation, often by force, of raw materials and labour, including human labour, within as well as outside the continent, and this has remained a fact to the present (Diene 1998; Teelock 1998; Abungu 2019).

While slave trade took away some of the best of the African population, transplanting them in other lands and denying the continent a huge percentage of the

workforce, colonialism cemented the exploitation of the continent from within. Thus Africa was a victim of massive extraction of its population and other resources. However all these could not have taken place without the cooperation of other Africans, especially those in authority in the various polities that dotted the continent before European colonization. The story of slavery and slave trade therefore needs to be told in its entirety and truthfully for any meaningful future reconciliation and healing to take place. The Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius comes at the right time in the right place to tell the stories.

### ***Museums: a historical perspective***

Museums as we know them today were Western, introduced during the colonial times. Thus despite the antiquity of the museums that are found as early as the Roman and Greek periods, the museums as we know them today have their most recent origins in the cabinet of curiosity.

The Museums, especially the Western museums were beneficiaries of the colonial enterprise, the successor to slave trade. They were involved in the expeditions and plunder that accompanied colonization of the different parts of the world, Africa included. Today a large part of their collections is derived from plunder through war, unethical collections and illicit trafficking that has now evolved into the debate on restitution as part of a decolonization process. Thus as opposed to the collection and transfer of people from Africa during the slave trade, colonialism introduced among others the collection of heritage and natural resources to the north. However the two exploitative mechanisms were similar. Museum's complicity in the extractive agenda, especially of the heritage of the others makes it a place of contestations and controversies.

Despite its checkered past, museums and their origins in the West as concepts and institutions have found their way in all parts of the globe. Today they are not only seen as creations of the eighteenth and nineteenth century European collection mania, but have, over the years, grown to transcend their original 'cabinet of curiosity' or 'war chest' images, and are part of the human landscapes that shape and are shaped by current and ongoing realities and debates.

In many places museums have become critical and important spaces of representation, history telling and dialogue apart from their traditional roles of exhibition, education and research. Although at times they provide spaces of narratives that are loaded with interests and power imbalance, they are generally accepted across the society as custodians of societal history and human development. This, however, makes them into powerful tools/instruments of influence through dominant and selected narratives that often tend to favour those on and with power or in authority. Museums are therefore neither political nor neutral.

### ***The Museum today***

The Museum of today should be a decolonized space of true representation, debate and dialogue that transcends the traditional practice where at times they are used for the marginalization of others and the promotion of dominant voices. It has to be a space that captures and emits diversified messages from diversified voices. It has to project the harsh realities of human interaction and political, social and economic positioning of the present world with all its skewed nature as a point of reference for call to action. Museums must also engage on issues that concern humanity such as sustainable development, climate change, gender imbalance, contemporary slavery and slave trade, youth empowerment, migration, globalization and decolonization among others. Museums of today must cease their inaction in apolitical dialogue and be ready to forfeit their comfort zones where their existence is explained merely on exhibition of the past life ways.

The Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius will have to focus on difficult and painful episodes as it relates to the African peoples and peoples of African origins. To play a credible role of the museum of today, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius must be ready to interrogate truthfully and without bias factors based on the realities of history that have subsequently shaped power relations and privilege apportioning between peoples as well as between regions. These power relations have left some visible social, political and economic scars in the South, with unfinished agendas of the past. These scars are also experienced internally within the countries of the South as people of different origins; persuasions and even class compete for resources resulting in permanent underclass/under privileged and permanent super rich. The present situation arises from, but is not limited to, past injustices such as slavery, indenture and colonization, the impacts of which reverberate up to the present in many societies and define the present geopolitical relations globally.

### ***Museum for, by and of the people: a paradigm shift?***

The question that needs to be asked is whether museums can make a change. Are they as institutions capable of decolonizing their working methods, processes, and narratives of dominant voices to be inclusive and democratic enough? In a decolonized and democratized museum “everybody is a curator”. However museums have always been made to thrill through the voices of one man or woman, the curator.

The traditional museums give all the power to the curator to curate and exhibit providing all the narratives without need for consultations. However a decolonized museum must ask how the general public including the consumer of the narratives as well as those represented in the narratives contribute to the making of the museum and in their representation. Here is where the expressions “not for me without me”, “if you do it for me without me you are against me” come into play.

In this context can it be said that the proposed Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius will be equipped with the necessary resources and have the capacity of inclusiveness by, among others, bringing the voiceless to the centre of the museum dialogue without having to gaze over its shoulders? Will it be able to include the voices of the discriminated and stereotyped in the dominant narrative?

If that were to be the case, then a thorough mindset change would need to occur with a paradigm shift that would see the introduction of co-Creation, co-Curation and co-Production of museum exhibits and narratives, something alien to museum operations and traditions. It is proposed that such radical change that brings in a total paradigm shift cannot be achieved without a serious transformation including a total mindset change. The opposite unfortunately will just be business as usual.

It is considered that truly decolonized museums have to tackle tough questions on any subject but particularly on those that relate to discrimination, marginalization, stereotyping and matters of wellness and subsequently propose solution. Heritage is politics and museums must be ready to partake without bias into the politics of the day through their exhibitions and public programming if such actions are deemed to possess the power to correct existing mistakes and contribute to human good, common understanding and harmony. Museums of the people, for the people and by the people must be able to tell collective as well as individual stories although they may appear unimportant, unpleasant or minute.

For the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius, it is imperative that the story of slavery and slave trade does not become frozen in the museum cases but becomes a catalyst to revisiting and correcting/repairing past mistakes. Unlike many other museums that are often places of narration of past histories whether painful or glorious but with little room for discussing remedies, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum must up its action by providing way forward. It is important from the beginning to understand that as important as the museums can be, they can also be spaces of fossilization of human histories. In this regard they tend to start and end at particular times, leaving little room for debate on what is next. It is hoped that the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius will be different and a game changer. That it will be a forward looking and a decolonized museum that in addition to the narrative of the past histories will provide avenues for action and a futuristic approach to its workings. It must be a place of inspiration and fulfillment, especially those whose lives are scarred with pain through past actions of oppression and discrimination.

While it is imperative and expected of such a museum to tell what happened in the past including the very painful past, that is not is enough. What is even more important is to show how that past influences the present either negatively or positively and to provide space for dialoguing positive change for a better today and tomorrow. If the



Intercontinental Slavery Museum succeeds in this, then the process of healing for the descendants of those who were enslaved and all peoples of the world who suffer in one way or another from discrimination, oppression, want and denial would have commenced through a museum space.

The Intercontinental Slavery Museum in the present day should also play an active role in the lives of people from different backgrounds and understandings. While remembrances and commemorations are good in reminding us of the past human relations, including the very difficult past they are not in themselves enough or an end. The Intercontinental Slavery Museum should not have the commemoration of the past suffering and humiliation of communities as their main goal but go beyond this to be a platform for recognition, reform, reconciliation and repairing.

Further such a museum could serve as an advocate for the memory of the long suffering enslaved peoples and their descendants in attaining justice through recognition, compensation and correcting of the past injustices. It must be a lively space of debate and dialogue where the inherent and inherited injustices and discrimination of the present society can be articulated, debated and corrected.

It is not a secret that stereotyping of the descendants of those who were enslaved continues to negatively impact on them politically, socially and economically wherever they are. It adversely affects them in terms of education, jobs, health, and social status with often serious consequences in the forms of drug addiction, lower health standards, poor nutrition, marginalization, lower self-esteem, and less self-confidence.

While it will be a fallacy to generalize on the above as affecting all peoples descended from those who suffered from slavery, it is not uncommon or a secret that many of the above inflictions do take place among them as a result of both historical and contemporary inequalities. These are some of the issues the Intercontinental Museum of Slavery could deal with through highlighting the causes and effects and going beyond the common. Otherwise these museums would become just another complaint and grumbling with no foreseeable solutions.

The Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius should therefore aspire to be a space of debate on all and different subjects including human rights, economic, political, gender, and social justice among others. Only then will a new set of a truly decolonized museum come of age.

## ***Conclusion***

As Museums are society-made and society-driven, they, by necessity, should be cognizant of societal challenges, needs and expectations. They must face head on and discuss the fallacies of the inherited inequalities and discriminations based on past histories. Confronting the painful past and crafting a better present and future is not outside the domain of museum practice. It is a responsibility that the new Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius would be expected to partake in.

## 6

# Engaging Trauma in the Intercontinental Slavery Museum

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How might we engage historical trauma in the Intercontinental Slavery Museum? What challenges may arise in engaging trauma and why is the engagement with trauma necessary for a democratic society? This chapter considers museums as sites and facilitators of trauma, as well as the role that the ISM can play in de-centering, de-institutionalising, acknowledging and engaging trauma in the construction of a democratic nation.

### *Introduction*

In 2002, I had the opportunity to visit the Africa Museum at Tervuren, in Brussels Belgium. Set in the grand gardens of the historical palace of King Leopold II, the Africa Museum betrayed little of Belgium's colonial past and said little about the deeper history of the artefacts to be found in the museum or in its grounds. The curators had arranged the artefacts in a manner expected in the nineteenth century. They had collated all artefacts according to geographical origin and ultimately botanical genealogy, creating an impression of precise evolutionary order. As I entered the grand foyer of the Africa Museum, I noted a statue of mother and child. This depicted a Romanesque woman draped in a flowing gown, hand outstretched towards an African child. On closer inspection, I learned that the image symbolised Europe's relationship with Africa and that it expressed a scientific racism common to the era. In the mid-nineteenth century and via the theory of recapitulation, scientific racists proposed that lower order races never fully mature, in either cognitive or moral senses. Because of

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this inherent inability to mature, it was imperative for 'superior' races to take charge in order to secure both a moral and cognitively sound destiny. After visiting the Africa Museum, I visited many other museums across Europe. A year later, for example, I visited a museum in Copenhagen, Denmark that commemorated the resilience and suffering of Danes during the Second World War. The museum was as interactive as it could be offering images of the War, sound clips and film in order to create a holistic account of what happened and how people had responded to Nazi oppression. From the exhibitions, one could somewhat gather the extent to which the people had suffered and even if for a brief moment, visitors to the museum were given the opportunity to empathise with what the Danes had experienced during the war. Each visit to a museum in Europe revealed, however, a focus on triumphalist national identity and efforts to distinguish this identity from other (often exotic) identities. Narratives of transnational oppression and trauma were missing from these museums. This was especially apparent in ethnographic museums that curated artefacts from Africa and elsewhere in the world. It was as if the items had voluntarily floated over the sea and settled in display cases, the history of slavery was everywhere, hardly acknowledged.

By commencing this chapter with the above stories of what I saw in some European museums, I hope to highlight the complexity of museums. They can liberate but also serve as sites of oppression. In writing this chapter, I also hope to emphasise ways in which the Intercontinental Slavery Museum (ISM) and other related efforts to reveal historical oppression might avoid entrenching the trauma they seek to alleviate. For too long, museums have served as nationalist projects detached from historical and globalised processes of oppression, especially oppression caused by slavery. The detachment and institutionalisation of memory taking place in museums has silenced Africans and their descendants, perpetuating hidden violence. To frame the discussion, the chapter engages with trauma and heritage theory, as well as literature on memory making. The conclusion is that to strike the right social note, the ISM will have to consider various ways in which to address trauma and consider the potential ramifications of doing so for both a national and global audience. The discussion begins with the identification of theories relevant to the discussion. An account of the traumatic experience resulting from slavery and an overview of the purpose and role of museums follows. The final section of the chapter offers questions and recommendations to the ISM as it seeks to advance restitution centuries after the abolition of slavery.

### *Theorising Trauma*

To engage the issue of trauma in relation to the endeavour of the ISM, one must be prepared to thread together disparate theories. These include theories of trauma, heritage, place and memory making. Briefly, memory making was and is key to nation building. Museum curators have used the museological space to narrate new nation states (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007, Abungu 2019). The memories surfaced were integral to forging a unified nation. As Werbner (1998) remarked some time ago, memory making helped leaders to reimagine 'post' independence society. Citizens were encouraged to focus on liberation leadership, to forget the violence of slavery and colonisation and find belonging and identity in the new nation. National leaders also encouraged national identity as a way of building the fictional family of the nation -- hence the reference to liberation leaders as the 'father of the nation'. The aim was also to address the divisive potential of ethnic and other particularisms and to cement allegiance to the state.

In the last 20 years, national leaders have been concerned about the destabilising effects of western globalisation. International heritage regimes have provided a discourse of diversity that some national leaders have accepted. The discourse evokes rootedness and belonging via cultural heritage. Given the politically charged nature of the process, some heritages were not included or expressed. Long (1999) has argued that the heritages of the poor and marginalised rarely feature in official narratives of the nation. Those in power foreground their own heritages (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004) to promote the symbolic and actual power of those in power. Even so, daily, commonplace heritages persist and the cultural expressions of the poor and marginal continue (Chambers 2009). These expressions provide both a symbolic and visceral means to dealing with social suffering.

Thus, those engaged with the ISM also need to consider social suffering. Kleinman, Das and Lock (1997) say that social suffering encompasses the entire complex of suffering wrought by oppressions endured in modern times. These oppressions did not just suddenly manifest, they are the result of complex processes of increasing racial inequality and hierarchy. Within this complex are other socialities and those identified as slave descendants today are embedded in multiple socialities. They may be marginalised citizen subjects in neoliberal states that visit upon them varying degrees of suffering but they are also transnational subjects, participating in other social loops both virtual and actual, realising a diversity of selfhoods that buffer their casting as slave descendants. Moreover, family and communal experiences differently situate identity. Inter-marriage, social networks and friendships, for instance, may complicate lineages of trauma, producing new resilience and opportunity to remake one's world. Kleinman, Das, Lock, Ramphela and Reynolds (2001) emphasise the latter, proposing that human

beings who have experienced significant trauma have made strong effort to remake their worlds and that this has to be acknowledged and documented.

Considerations of trauma should, therefore, take note of social suffering and make clear the distinction between the immediate impact of a socially and physically disruptive event and their cumulative, long-term effects. Defining trauma, Fassin and Rechtman (2009) state that 'trauma has become a major signifier of our age [21st Century]. It is our normal means of relating present suffering to past violence'. [Trauma] is understood as the 'traces' left on the individual psyche after a violent event, it is also understood as 'the collective imprint on a group of a historical experience that may have occurred decades, generations, or even centuries ago' (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: foreword). In saying this, Fassin and Rechtman acknowledge that long term, intergenerational trauma exists but that trauma itself risks becoming commoditised and bio-medicalised. The issue for the ISM is that there are diverse ways of dealing with both immediate and long-term trauma. The museum has an important role, as Abungu (2019) notes in addressing the long legacy of trauma, which includes the violence inflicted by deliberate forgetting/amnesia and exclusion of slave history. The ISM also needs to guard against setting aside the issue of trauma for professional (Western) psychological intervention. Reflecting on long-term trauma in the US after slavery, Brewster (2018) cogently argues trauma is an intergenerational visceral experience. The body remembers and cognitive patterns and ways of dealing with violence are transmissible from one generation to the next. Presently, few accounts retell the visceral nature of slavery, of its impacts on personal mobility, the tactile experience of being in close confines for weeks on end, with strangers – of the pain endured by lashings and other physical forms of abuse visited on slaves. In accounts of slavery, one obtains only a minimal sense of that painful sensory experience.

A last concept of relevance to the consideration of trauma is that of spatiality. The work of Lovell (1998) makes the distinction between meaningless spaces and meaningful places. She argues that places are rendered meaningful by their accumulated social value and narration, that is, what people say and how people speak about places. In thinking about the ISM, one must remain mindful of the fact that museums are particular kinds of places. There is a risk, because of the way in which curators have curated museums and tourism officials narrated them that they become edifices of exclusion. In this regard, one needs to consider a wider spatial field for the expression of the sentiments and imperatives of the ISM. An issue that is taken up further on in the discussion.

### ***A History of Traumatization***

Scholars have offered cogent historical accounts of slavery both in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. What is perhaps less evident is the nature of contemporary trauma experienced by slave descended populations. Literature searches reveal that the issue surfaces in sociological and gender analyses of race and inequality. In the southwest Indian Ocean region, scholars (Sheriff 1987, Campbell 1988, Cole 2001, Lambek 2002, Fair 2004, Evers 2006, Boswell 2006 and Graeber 2007) have, through ethnography and historical analysis, documented the persistence of trauma among slave descendants in the region. In the context of Mauritius, I argued (Boswell 2006) that those enslaved in Mauritius are associated with experiences of a social phenomenon known as *le malaise Creole*, a phenomenon that is both 'real' and ideological. Creoles did and do indeed experience marginalisation in Mauritius, however those in power ideologically deploy the concept of 'malaise' as a primordial trait of Creoles, in order to explain their continued economic alienation and social exclusion. Before considering the contemporary, however, one needs to go the past. What was the nature of trauma experienced by African descendants? Briefly, those enslaved in Mauritius, Zanzibar or Madagascar first experienced the traumatic event of capture. Capture was often violent, signifying the first instance of pain and violation. Slave traders ripped families apart, they stripped people of their cultural attire and bundled them into groups with whom they may have had little in common. The first instance of trauma might have also been that of betrayal, since in Africa local chiefs sold their subjects into slavery in exchange for arms and other goods. In Madagascar, the first trauma might have been anticipated, one could become a bonded slave, someone who was passed on into slavery to pay off family debt (Campbell 1988). Evers (2006) notes that slaves endured severe hardships in Madagascar, a notch above the 'untouchables', they had no established burial plots and therefore fell outside the realm of ancestral protection and beneficence.

Slave owners and their workmen further violated the enslaved on the plantations. Fair (1994), notes that slaves in Zanzibar were forced to go barefoot and to wear black Kaniki cloth to symbolize their slave status. Brewster's (2018) account of mothering in the United States mirrors what took place in the southwest Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Both in the IOR and in the US, slave masters and other men on the plantations regularly raped slave women and compelled them to raise their illegitimate children as slaves. At any point in time, those children could be sold to another slave owner since all slaves were possessions. Those attempting to escape the plantations were recaptured, faced violent punishment. These punishments included the severing of ears and Achilles tendons, the forced wearing of iron masks and public floggings. Other forms of suffering continued on and off the plantations. Those in power publicly denigrated slave descendants, creating racist ideologies to justify their continued oppression. White slave owners and those in power within that society denigrated the colour of black skin,

black hair, nose shape, mouth and culture, promoting in modern times, what Stuart Hall (1992) calls a politics of blood, skin and bone. The above noted physiological traits became what Hall calls floating race signifiers. Those in power used such physiological signifiers to determine an individual's potential and economic fortune.

In the context of Mauritius and certainly in Brazil, this has encouraged many slave descendants to deny their own blackness and Africanity. It has encouraged many to engage in a process of social whitening, a repositioning of the self and identity to maximise access to resources afforded to those defined as white. The self-denial, as Frantz Fanon (1952) has argued, produces a race-based psychosis that promotes self-loathing. The black self can never be white enough to achieve the desired level of recognition and acceptance. In the present context, the exclusion of slave descendants has resulted in homelessness, poverty, drug addiction, malnutrition, particular disease profiles and high incarceration and mortality rates. Reflecting on contemporary circumstances, Brewster (2018) explains that fears originating in the time of slavery continue in the 21st Century. The racialized nature of the society means that the black mother still fears that her son will not remember the construction of his raced identity and face violence and murder by racist whites. The black mother also still fears that authorities will take her child from her. She still has no aesthetic value in US society and must continuously 'position' herself to be culturally and physically white in order to avoid scorn or violence.

Part of the work done by scholars of slavery also reflects on the resilience of slave-descended populations. The work shows that slave descended peoples have proactively engaged with the traumas visited upon them in the period of slavery and colonisation. In brief, and despite enslavement, human beings have used their circumstances to create music, art, language and dance. They have also used their circumstances to advance social justice, new concepts of freedom and equality. Their contributions to the worlds in which they now live, include fashion, culinary traditions and beliefs. African beliefs and symbolism, for example, have crossed the Atlantic to enliven ritual practices in the Americas and the Caribbean. In the Southwest Indian Ocean region, similar flows of ritual and belief are apparent. There is no space to attend to the detail of these here. However, a common tie binding all African descendants is their belief in, or notion of, the ancestral world. Those enslaved have long called upon the beneficence of ancestors even though physically removed from the land of the birth. Equally, some African artefacts now residing in European ethnographic museums, although removed from their original social context, still hold great value and cultural meaning. The looting of such artefacts can produce long-term trauma. This includes cultural amnesia and the loss of rituals associated with culturally and historically meaningful objects. Reviving the story of such artefacts might be useful in the restitution of identity and



history. I next consider museums and museumification and their impacts on identity and trauma.

### *Museums as sites of Trauma*

Since the eighteenth century, museums in Europe have offered a means for humanity to engage with material culture and ideas from both the past and the present. For 18th century Europeans in particular, the collection of artefacts both botanical and cultural became an obsession. The acquisition of goods formed part of a collectivist, masculinist thrust of conquest, a way to publicly demonstrate hegemonic masculine European values and, by implication, European racial and cultural superiority. In the same way that their predecessors had violently seized goods from those conquered, European colonists 'collected' artefacts from the conquered for both private and public displays. In public displays, meticulously assembled curations aimed to impress and to indicate the discerning taste of the emerging bourgeoisie. Scientists also displayed trophies for public entertainment and 'education' and eventually recuperated these for further scientific study. An extreme example of this was the public display and dismemberment of Saartjie Baartman, a Khoekhoe (indigenous African woman) who lived in South Africa in 1810. Her captives paraded her in freak shows in England and France so that locals could peruse her 'unique' anatomical features. To the 'experts', she was presented as an example of her race, encouraging diverse classes of Europeans to internalise racist stereotypes of Africans. When she died, the surgeon George Cuvier excised her genitalia and preserved them for science at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. Baartman's remains were only returned to South Africa in 2002, nearly 200 years after she was taken from Africa.<sup>10</sup>

As a colonial subject, Baartman's captives considered her property. Similarly and until now, curators at the Africa Museum still consider property all items lawfully gained during conquest. A long history of effort to repatriate Congolese artefacts from the Africa Museum to the Democratic Republic of Congo continues. It is not clear if the repatriation request includes the renowned pile of hands in the basement of the museum. Hands severed from dissenting Congolese plantation workers under Belgian colonial rule. As the case of Saartjie Baartman and the story of the Africa Museum relate, museums are historically central to the perpetuation of trauma. As a black woman and slave descendant visiting some European museums, I am traumatised by

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<sup>10</sup>South African History Online. (n.d.) Sara 'Saartjie Bartman'  
<https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/sara-saartjie-baartman#:~:text=The%20process%20took%20eight%20years,Africa%20where%20she%20was%20buried.> Accessed 08/08/2020.

racist narratives of the exotic (black) other, triumphalist accounts of conquest and deliberate silencing of slavery. More chilling was the presentation, in many museums, of the 18th Century as the commencement of European Enlightenment. While Europe flourished in art, literature and music, the parallel horror show of African slavery and underdevelopment went unacknowledged. The traumatization of millions of Africans through capture and forced labour facilitated the artistic flourishing of Europe, as excess capital flowed to enable the purchase of art and its display in ornate edifices dedicated to 'culture'.

The spread of capitalism ensured that museums became sites not only for representation but also for consumption. Cultural and art appreciation was increasingly tied to being a member of the bourgeoisie and eventually, the leisure class (Veblen 1899). Museums became stopover sites for tourists as they sought to fill idle time. The narratives of identity apparent in museums confirm that those historically in power created museums to salvage and represent a version of the past that favoured the victors. Curators presented artefacts derived from other cultural groups in a less favourable light. The location of museums across a city or country is also relevant, serving to express, spatially, the formation and apogee of national identity, with the most globally significant collections placed in the centre of capital cities. Such placements further delineated social and economic hierarchies, distinguishing urbanites as cultured and educated.

A brief note is required on the subject of museumification. For the powerless, museums may have become edifices of exclusion, for those in power they signify triumph. Entire European cities (c.f., Amsterdam) seem to be undergoing a process of museumification, that is, museums are popping up, almost as if these places are nodes articulating authentic cultural identity in the face of growing diversification. As globalization continues apace, more such museums are needed to ensure that the 'true' locals do not forget their history and ultimately, who they are.

When one considers existing museums in Mauritius, one finds that existing museums on the island do not yet articulate the history of slavery or the integrated nature of the island's ethnic history (Boswell 2019). Existing museums (and ultimately also the ISM) are located in the capital or its major cities, far from communities where slave descendants live or where they originally congregated. Existing museums on the island also tend to elevate the triumphs of colonial powers (Boswell 2019) and to encapsulate these in museums. The current museums barely mention the role of slaves, or even indentured labourers, in society and economy. The situation has silenced the viscerality, or fleshliness of slavery and colonial rule (Ibid), numbing 'victims', promoting collective amnesia and preventing a sensory (potentially therapeutic) engagement with the past. Of course, it is not only 'victims' who are affected; by erasing the history and curation of slave history, the minority elite not only silences African history (Teelock

1998, Depelchin 2005, Vaughan 2015, Salverda 2015) it absolves itself of the intergenerational pain and guilt arising from centuries of social and economic benefit. In the context of Mauritius, Eriksen (1998) argued that a fragile ethnic compromise had been achieved since independence from colonial rule and that particularism might upset the balance.

In the 21st century, however, museums, unless sufficiently engaged in representing a diversity of pasts, are not the only places where one can represent the past. The past is now public, virtual, rendered aesthetic (in public art) or sensory (in culinary expressions of the past). Articulations of and conversations with the past, immediate, recent or ancient appear in art galleries, public spaces, fashion and film. Through a diversity of media, fine art, sculpture, mixed media, photography and food. People are diversely seeking to address legacies of violence and oppression. Public spaces have become mobile repositories for a multi-layered and multiply articulated contemporaneous past. In the latter, there is acknowledgement that the past has not passed, that it continues in the present and that one can, with some imagination, differently engage with it. By contrast, museums seem to have become uninteresting, expensive stop points for engaging with and representing 'the' past. The situation should not deter the ISM, in recent years advancements in museology and curatorship have transformed museums into critical, post-modern spaces for reflection on identities, past, present and future. The difficulty comes when museums have to represent traumatised identities and groups in a context where such persecution continues.

### ***Questions and Recommendations for the ISM***

In the context of Mauritius, the ISM is vital but an orientation to and uncritical focus on trauma risks several things. One of these is to forever associate Creoles with slavery. The other risks are commodifying slave heritage, dis-placing meaningful places in slave history and advancing trauma of various kinds. Visitors, for example, may be encouraged to 'consume' the tragic history and to be 'done with it' before moving on to other recreational activities that the island offers. The location of the museum in the capital city, far from the site historically associated with slavery (Le Morne village), also risks gentrified (touristed) engagement with the museum and the de-emphasis of Le Morne village as a socially meaningful place in the story of slavery in the Indian Ocean region. Here I emphasise the issue of socially meaningful place because as Lovell (1998) argued, there is socially meaningless 'space' and there are deeply meaningful places. Places such as Le Morne are the kind that have accrued social and moral value over time.

The extent to which African descendants have remade their worlds after slavery is an important narrative to include. The latter is important because the ISM must take care not to endorse a narrative of unabated trauma. It must also look to ways in which

those who survived slavery have resiliently produced new worlds. Another point that must be made is that in thinking about trauma, The ISM will have to consider the multifaceted and multicultural nature of trauma, its fleshliness (i.e. how bodies remember and lock-in violence). It may need to address this aspect by finding similarly embodied expressions of liberation to engage with this form of trauma.

Earlier, I touched on the relevance of place in memory making and in restitution. It is important to therefore note that the ISM will not be able to offer a holistic accounting of slavery and its aftermath in one place or building. The members of the board of ISM must be innovative and consider the ISM as but the starting point for thinking about the intercontinental and inter-spatial nature of slavery. This is important because Mauritius is the host of this museum and a place in which slavery occurred. It is not a neutral space for the articulation of slave history as it has its own hierarchies and its inhabitants hold their own ideological imperatives. These complexities have to be acknowledged. Mauritius is a place where hegemonic heritages rule and it is a place where slave descendants are still marginalised in the economy and society. To date, Mauritius is still a place where African descendants continue to experience both hidden and public violence.

Thus in considering the issue of trauma and its representation or articulation in a museum space, one also needs to ask what forms of trauma we are addressing. Are we merely concerned with the first traumatic events of slave capture and settlement or will the ISM commence a dialogue on the range, forms and extent of trauma experienced after abolition both in Mauritius and elsewhere? Will the ISM be a place where there might be focus group discussions on the presence and relevance of intergenerational violence? Will it be educative to a broader public, nationally and internationally, offering seminars on the linkages between contemporary racial politics, heritage management and social justice? Will the ISM also serve as a guide to the visiting public of other places of commemoration on the island and elsewhere in the world? Will it encourage, support and advance social inclusion by joining contemporary social movements that intend to improve global racial equality? Will it seek to integrate those communities previously and currently isolated in small hamlets due to the geographies of slavery on the island and especially, elsewhere in the region? Will it highlight, through funded and voluntary research, the worldviews, values, beliefs and epistemologies of African descendants in the global bid to address to issues of knowledge justice and equality?

### ***Conclusion: Avoiding Dehiscence***

In artist William Kentridge's *Sleeper*, we see the perils of ignorant bliss. The drawing effectively depicts a sleeper, a white man who will have to wake up to the reality of millions of South Africans oppressed through the period of both slavery and colonization. In the Apartheid Museum, one gets to experience the historical journey

through the violent regime and to encounter in sound and sight, the struggles of ordinary black South Africans against the white minority regime. The museum displays are very evocative and powerful, but the museum itself is far from the reality of poverty and exclusion experienced by black South Africans living in the city.

In 2011, I led a team of researchers for the Mauritius Truth and Justice Commission. Our task was to investigate the legacy of racism in Mauritius, following the abolition of slavery. We noted then that the roots of racism are deep and are complexly entangled with other forms of exclusion in the society. The national government is slowly addressing the recommendations made. It is heartening to see the emergence of the ISM. However, in addressing the issue of trauma, one should consider the following points:

- Museums are nodes of remembrance not entire places offering a cohesive narrative of commemoration.
- Beyond the museum there should be interlinked spaces and places of reflection regarding slavery so that visitors and citizens understand that slavery is still marking the landscape and forms part of our intimate joint history.
- The ISM should include not only static, historical artefacts and two-dimensional representations of the past but also fluid, temporary, multimedia expressions of our connections to a past influenced by slavery.
- The museum offers sensitive and sensory rich experience of the institution.
- The work of the museum extends beyond the museum to engage in a scholarly way with social critique of inequalities in public life so that the museum is not merely a place of salvaged memories but also a place of interlocation and interrogation of the present.
- The artwork, artefacts and other products exhibited are widely sourced and circulated so as to create a truly intercontinental museum, rather than one that simply depicts the story of slavery in Mauritius and
- The museum recognises and documents the ways in which slave descendants have remade their world after slavery.

In the healing of wounds, one must avoid dehiscence. Dehiscence is the coming apart or tearing of the wound if one applies too much pressure to flesh that is knitting together in the healing process. Slavery is a long standing, festering wound. It is now being excised and its contents examined. The ISM has a unique opportunity to offer an inclusive, de-institutionalised and dynamic museum that attends to all the things that could render a project of this magnitude fragile. It would be advisable to pay attention

to what has gone wrong elsewhere, what has caused dehiscence and to fully engage with the concept of trauma in order to understand how it might be addressed for Mauritius and for others of slave descent, elsewhere in the world.

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## 7

# «Quelles Histoire, Mémoire-S et Identite-S dans un Musée de l’esclavage? »

## Notes réflexives – Suggestions

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Pour abriter un Musée de l’Esclavage à la fois Interocéanique et Intercontinental, l’île Maurice occupe une position stratégique, faisant la jonction entre les îles du Sud-Ouest de l’océan Indien et le continent africain. On se propose de prendre en considération les différentes échelles de rayonnement d’un tel Musée Intercontinental de l’Esclavage à Maurice : une première échelle sub-régionale (Sud-Ouest de l’océan-Indien), une seconde régionale (Océan Indien) et une troisième globale (Océans indien/atlantique/pacifique).

Pour illustrer l’articulation des traites indo-océaniques et pacifiques aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, on peut citer l’exemple de captifs issus des actuels Malaisie et archipel indonésien, qui furent déportés et asservis au Cap11 (en période esclavagiste), ou encore l’exemple de migrants forcés déportés des îles du Pacifique à l’île de la Réunion<sup>12</sup> (en période post-abolitionniste).

Alors que le processus abolitionniste traversait tout le long XIXe siècle, cette époque fut paradoxalement caractérisée par l’augmentation et la diversification des migrations forcées (traite des esclaves, des « engagés », des « Libérés ») dans le Sud-Ouest de l’océan Indien.

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<sup>11</sup> Eric Germain, « Les Malais du Cap existent-ils ? », in *Archipel*, année 2002, 63, pp. 173-210.

<sup>12</sup> Un groupe de 66 engagés, capturés entre le 12 et le 20 août 1857 dans de petites îles du Sud de l’océan Pacifique, embarqués à bord du bateau anglais le *Sutton* et déportés jusqu’à l’île de la Réunion, où ils ont été qualifiés d’engagés volontaires pour cinq ans. Ils ont été appelés Polynésiens, Australiens ou Calédoniens, englobés à la Réunion dans le groupe des « Africains ». Voir l’ouvrage de Gilles Gérard, *Les nègres du Pacifique Sud : Histoire des Polynésiens engagés-esclaves à la Réunion*, Harmattan, Paris, 2019, 130 p.

Les captifs catégorisés comme « Mozambiques » ont formé une diaspora africaine que l'on retrouvait aussi bien dans l'océan Indien (Madagascar, Mascareignes, Comores) que dans l'espace atlantique (Brésil, Cuba, Louisiane)<sup>13</sup>. De la fin du XVIIIe siècle à la fin du XIXe siècle, les « Mozambiques » ou « Makua » ont été déportés massivement de l'Afrique du Sud-Est vers les îles de l'océan Indien occidental. Madagascar, qui était un pays exportateur d'esclaves, se mit au XIXe siècle à importer massivement des esclaves issus du Mozambique. On peut estimer à un minimum de 350,000 le nombre de captifs importés du Mozambique à Madagascar seulement au cours du XIXe siècle<sup>14</sup>. Le XIXe siècle fut marqué par un développement des traites et des esclavages en Afrique orientale et à Madagascar ; par une série d'abolitions juridiques de la traite des esclaves et de l'esclavage ; et par des mutations et des continuités des migrations forcées et des systèmes d'exploitation et de domination (engagisme, système d'apprentissage, etc) dans les différentes sociétés du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien.

Esclaves, Affranchis, « Apprentis », « Engagés », ou « Libérés » africains avaient fait l'expérience collective de la traversée forcée du continent vers les îles de l'océan Indien occidental. Les routes de la traite illégale des esclaves, les routes des « engagés » et les routes des « libérés » africains ont coexisté et s'articulaient même ensemble dans cet espace du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien. Des « Libérés » Africains introduits à Maurice ont pu connaître une étape au large de la côte Ouest de Madagascar, où d'autres captifs est-africains étaient embarqués comme « engagés » vers la Réunion<sup>15</sup>.

Penser et concevoir une muséographie de l'esclavage à partir d'une île du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien permet de décentrer le regard (souvent « atlantico-centré ») sur cette importante question historique, mémorielle et patrimoniale des traites, des esclavages et de leurs abolitions.

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<sup>13</sup> E. Alpers, « Mozambique and "Mozambiques": Slave Trade and Diaspora on a Global Scale », in B. Zimba, E. Alpers, A. Isaacman, *Slaves Routes and oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa*, 2005, pp. 39-62.

<sup>14</sup> Voir K. Boyer-Rossol, *Entre les deux rives du canal de Mozambique. Histoire et Mémoires des Makoa à l'Ouest de Madagascar. XIXe-XXe siècles*, thèse de doctorat en Histoire de l'Afrique sous la direction de Faranirina Rajaonah (Université Paris 7 Diderot), soutenue le 20 novembre 2015 à l'Université Paris 7 Diderot, 980 p.

<sup>15</sup> Des captifs issus du Mozambique ont ainsi pu apparaître dans la catégorie de « Malgaches » aux Mascareignes, les recruteurs retenant non pas le pays d'origine mais celui du dernier transfert des migrants forcés.

Penser et concevoir une muséographie de l'esclavage à partir d'une île du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien permet de décentrer le regard (souvent « atlantico-centré ») sur cette importante question historique, mémorielle et patrimoniale des traites, des esclavages et de leurs abolitions.

L'esclavage dans l'océan Indien se caractérise par une grande diversité : diversité des acteurs et des réseaux de la traite servile ; diversité des systèmes et des modèles esclavagistes évoluant dans le temps long (du IXe au XXe siècle). Le processus de déportation, d'asservissement et d'émancipation y apparaît comme un phénomène millénaire. Celui-ci prit un rythme et des proportions plus importants à partir des XVIIe siècle et XVIIIe siècles, avec l'essor de la traite européenne dans l'océan Indien et de l'influence politique omanaise sur les côtes de l'Afrique orientale. On relevait une pluralité de modèles esclavagistes dans le Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien : esclavage colonial (Mascareignes, Cap), développement au XIXe siècle de l'esclavage au sein de sociétés est-africaines et malgaches, caractérisé par une pluralité des fonctions serviles et des sources d'approvisionnement en captifs (traites internes et externes en Afrique orientale et à la Grande Ile). Il paraît important de mettre en évidence cette diversité, ainsi que la circulation des acteurs de la traite, des modèles et des pratiques esclavagistes dans cet espace, notamment à travers la diffusion du modèle d'esclavage de plantation dans des sociétés parfois très différentes de l'océan Indien (Bourbon, Zanzibar, les Comores etc). L'adoption d'une perspective comparative paraît également pertinente pour analyser le processus d'émancipation et les défis du post-esclavage dans diverses sociétés insulaires de l'océan Indien<sup>16</sup>.

Il faut enfin souligner la diversité des sources dont dispose l'historien travaillant sur la traite des esclaves, les esclavages et leurs abolitions dans l'océan Indien. Les sources écrites paraissent à la fois diversifiées (sources françaises, anglaises, portugaises, malgaches ou encore swahili...) et abondantes, en particulier pour le XIXe siècle (récits de vie et témoignages d'anciens esclaves africains et malgaches, sources juridiques etc). Les sources orales de la traite, de l'esclavage et de leurs abolitions dans le Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien font le plus souvent référence au XIXe siècle. Dans le cadre d'un programme de recherche UNESCO lancé au début des années 2000, des mémoires orales de la traite des esclaves et de l'esclavage ont été recueillies dans les îles du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien (îles Maurice, Seychelles, Rodrigues et Comores) et en Afrique

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<sup>16</sup> Abdul Sheriff, Vijaya Teelock, Saada Omar Wahab, Satyendra Peerthum, *Transition from slavery in Zanzibar and Mauritius : a comparative history*, Dakar, Codesria, 2016.

du Sud-Est (Mozambique)<sup>17</sup>. Toujours dans les années 2000, des mémoires orales makoa ont été recueillies à l'Ouest de Madagascar et aux Comores. Le croisement des sources orales et écrites permet de reconstituer les itinéraires de la traversée forcée des captifs de l'Afrique orientale vers les îles du Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien<sup>18</sup>.

On dispose également de sources archéologiques. Plusieurs projets de recherche en archéologie subaquatique ont été menés sur des navires utilisés pour la traite des esclaves aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles dans le Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien. On peut mentionner le cas de l'*Utile*, qui transportait des captifs provenant de Madagascar en 1761 et fit naufrage sur l'île de Tromelin. Au large des côtes du Cap, ont été retrouvées les épaves du navire hollandais le *Meermin*, qui a coulé en février 1766 à la suite d'une révolte à bord de captifs de Madagascar ; et du navire portugais Sao José, qui transportait plus de 400 captifs du Mozambique et qui avait fait naufrage en 1794. Les recherches archéologiques sur les épaves du *Meermin* et du *Sao José* ont été menées, respectivement à partir de 2004 et 2012, dans le cadre de « l'African Slave Wrecks Project » (SWP), une recherche trans-continentale menée sur le long terme, en collaboration avec divers partenaires institutionnels tels que les « Iziko Museums » d'Afrique du Sud, le « Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture » aux Etats-Unis.

Le cas des révoltes à bord des navires utilisés pour la traite d'êtres humains soulève la question des résistances des captifs et/ou des esclavisés. Il paraît important d'inclure dans le discours muséal sur la traite et l'esclavage les différentes formes de résistances (« actives », « passives » etc), y compris les résistances culturelles. On peut évoquer l'exemple de pratiques rituelles maintenues et/ou transformées en contexte d'esclavage, en particulier, des rites funéraires et des cultes aux ancêtres.

Le facteur linguistique paraît important pour comprendre le maintien de pratiques culturelles en contexte d'esclavage et de post-esclavage. Des captifs issus de la Grande Ile, qui ont été déportés à Maurice ou encore au Cap, ont maintenu l'usage de la langue malgache<sup>19</sup>. Au XIXe siècle, on relevait également la présence d'une diaspora africaine

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<sup>17</sup> Voir l'ouvrage de Benigna Zimba, Edward A. Alpers, Allen F. Isaacman, *Slave routes and oral tradition in southeastern Africa*, Filsom Entertainment, 2005, 335 p.

<sup>18</sup> Voir Klara Boyer-Rossol, *Entre les deux rives du canal du Mozambique : Histoire et Mémoires des Makoa de l'Ouest de Madagascar. XIXe-XXe siècles*, thèse de doctorat d'histoire de l'Afrique, sous la direction de Faranirina Rajaonah (Université Paris 7 Diderot), 980 p.

<sup>19</sup> Voir les travaux de Pier Larson sur la diaspora de langue malgache dans le Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien.

de langue emakhuwa dans le Sud-Ouest de l'océan Indien<sup>20</sup>. D'anciens captifs ont mis à l'écrit leurs langues d'origines, comme le firent des Makoa à l'Ouest de Madagascar<sup>21</sup>.

On peut interroger la fabrication et la circulation d'objets de culture matérielle (instruments de musique, métiers à tisser, mobilier, outils etc) en contexte d'esclavage et de post-esclavage. De tels objets ont souvent été construits à partir de matériaux périssables (bois, matières végétales, etc) et n'ont pas nécessairement laissé de traces matérielles. Toutefois, il est parfois possible d'en retrouver des reproductions iconographiques ou bien la mémoire de leurs fabrications et-ou de leurs usages. À travers la transmission de savoirs culturels, d'anciens captifs ont maintenu (parfois durant plusieurs générations) des liens (symboliques) avec leur pays d'origine. Ces dynamiques diasporiques se sont aussi traduites par des stratégies de retour au pays natal, comme à Madagascar ou au Mozambique.

On peut évoquer d'autres sources matérielles, comme des objets de collections anthropologiques. À titre d'exemple, la collection Froberville de 62 bustes moulés en plâtre d'hommes issus de l'Afrique orientale, a été reproduite au cours du XIXe siècle pour intégrer des fonds muséaux en France (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle à Paris), sans éclairage sur le contexte de production et de collecte. À la lumière de ses carnets manuscrits (inédits), on apprend qu'Eugène de Froberville a effectué ces moulages en 1846 à l'île Maurice, auprès de 60 modèles, qui avaient été déportés de force du continent africain. Ces modèles étaient aussi des informateurs auprès de qui Froberville recueillit une somme considérable de savoirs (géographiques, linguistiques, anthropologiques) sur l'Afrique orientale. Entre 1845 et 1847, Eugène de Froberville mena une vaste enquête ethnographique auprès de plus de 300 anciens captifs africains à la Réunion et à l'île Maurice. Tandis que l'esclavage avait été aboli une dizaine d'années plus tôt à Maurice, à la Réunion, les Africains interrogés par Froberville étaient encore maintenus en esclavage. Les archives Froberville (en France et à Maurice) apparaissaient comme des archives privées de l'esclavage infiniment précieuses.

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<sup>20</sup> La langue makhuwa apparaissait comme une langue véhiculaire usitée par les migrants forcés est-africains pour communiquer entre eux, bien qu'ils aient également maintenu le savoir et/ou l'usage d'autres langues est-africaines (comme le maravi, yao, manganja etc). À l'Ouest de Madagascar, la langue makoa s'est maintenue au moins jusque dans les années 1970.

<sup>21</sup> J'ai ainsi recueilli en 2008 un des cahiers de vocabulaires malgache-makoa, qui ont été recopiés durant des décennies et qui circulaient entre les villages makoa de la périphérie de Morondava (Menabe, côte Ouest de Madagascar).

De nombreuses sources de l'esclavage (écrites, orales, iconographiques, archéologiques, etc) sont ainsi à mettre en perspective et à valoriser, notamment à travers un Musée Intercontinental de l'Esclavage à Maurice.

## 8

# The Slavery Museum as Community Anchor, Eye-Opener, and Thought-Provoker

*Preben Kaarsholm*

*Professor, Global and International Development Studies*

*Roskilde University*

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The new Slavery Museum in Port Louis will have many important functions to fulfil, and it is important to discuss how these different objectives can come together.

First of all, the Museum should be a meeting place within the Mauritian public sphere, where different groups will visit to learn about the country's past. At the same time, it should be an anchor for Mauritians whose forebears were slaves and descendants of slaves, around which they can come to terms with, explore, and seek recognition for their history as a community and as Mauritians. The most important function for the Museum will be to make visitors aware, help them remember, and make them think and ask questions.

The Museum should be organised around two strands – one centering on the building of a 'permanent' collection, and another dedicated to temporary exhibitions with a more topical focus. I put 'permanent' in quotation marks since this part of the Museum must of course also be dynamic and changing as collections and insights develop and interpretations of the past are re-worked.

At the outset, I imagine the 'permanent' side of the Museum will be limited since an important activity during the Museum's first years will be to bring a collection of exhibits together. The current situation is that materials that should become exhibits are scattered in other Museums and private collections within Mauritius and abroad, or hidden within the family heritage of descendants of slaves. The Slavery Museum's founders must explore and map this treasure, and secure from it the elements of a first 'permanent' collection. Some ingredients within the Museum's 'permanent' display will be textual, and must be sourced from archives of documents in Mauritius, the western Indian Ocean region, and Europe. At the same time texts for display might be based on popular memorialisation, and it would be an obvious idea for the Slavery Museum to get its own oral history project under way, through which the memories and interpretations of history transmitted within families and community groupings can be recorded and made available. An oral history project would also be an important

ingredient in linking the Museum project to Mauritian civil society and local community forums as well to educational institutions. Thus projects could be launched from early on to make secondary-school students explore their family history histories through interviews with parents and grandparents, collection of family letters, etc., and a simple commonly shared matrix for such collection of family memories could be prepared by the Museum. Similarly, the Slavery Museum should engage with Mauritian artists, cultural groups, and heritage associations, and collaborate with them in the preparation of displays and representations reflecting different views and perspectives.

### ***Permanent collection and temporary exhibitions***

In practical terms, one could imagine that – during the first years of the Museum’s program – a possible model for displays could be to combine the developing of ‘permanent’ collection of the Museum with exhibitions on loan from or prepared in tandem with already existing national and international institutions. This would be an opportunity to engage also with exhibition practices from which lessons and inspiration could be drawn. E.g. the Mauritius Slavery Museum could learn from collaboration around temporary displays with like-minded initiatives like the Iziko Museums in Cape Town (incl. the Slave Lodge, Bo-Kaap, and District Six Museums) with a high degree of local community involvement. Possibilities for collaboration with heritage projects in other neighbouring countries in the western Indian Ocean should also be explored, and in particular with archives and museums in Mozambique and Madagascar.

Fruitful collaboration around temporary displays could also be tried out with resourceful international institutions like the Smithsonian in Washington, or with the Humboldt Forum and the Bode Museum in Berlin, whose recent ‘Beyond Compare’ exhibition broke new ground in the representation of African cultural history. Other avenues for international collaboration around temporary displays with slavery history themes should be explored with the museums in India, Brazil, and the Caribbean. Dialogue around the preparation of temporary exhibitions could also be initiated with critical commemoration initiatives in former colonial and slave trading societies. Thus a number of interesting displays were mounted and new digital resources developed in 2017 by archives and Museums in Denmark to commemorate slavery and slave trade in the Danish Virgin Islands, which – in the face of local protestations - were sold to the United States in 1917. An exhibition at the Workers’ Museum in Copenhagen was particularly successful in emphasising continuities between forms of unfree labour from slavery through indenture to contemporary forms of globalised contract migrant labour.

The Slavery Museum could experiment with ‘dialogic’ modes of exhibition through such collaboration around temporary exhibitions and ‘travelling circuses’, and should encourage critical thinking and new modes of seeing through the counter-posing of different representations. A promising beginning for such a practice was made through



the art exhibition presented by the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture at the University of Mauritius in 2018 with the title 'Towards a New Iconography of Slavery (a Work in Progress)'. For the exhibition, five new paintings were commissioned on the everyday life history of slavery, which took issue with earlier representations, drew attention to new dimensions of the history and differentiations between experiences of slavery, and succeeded in provoking valuable discussions around them.

Dialogic exhibitions at the Slavery Museum should also involve interaction with representations of slavery and unfree labour at already existing museums in Mauritius. These would include the National Museum at Mahébourg, the museum at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka, and – perhaps most importantly - the displays at the Apravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, which is next door to the ex- Military Hospital, where the Slavery Museum will have its home. It would be a productive challenge for the Slavery Museum to both collaborate with Apravasi Ghat and at the same time take issue with its representation of indentured labour as a 'great experiment' and as something that represented a radical break - rather than continuity - with slavery.

#### ***Dialogic representation***

Dialogic representation could take the form of temporary exhibitions on a number of issues that have involved controversy. These might include:

***a) Different types of slavery in Mauritius.*** The development of plantation slavery over time should be addressed here, as well as of compounds, segregation and ethnic stereotyping of slaves with different origins. The life experiences of plantation slaves who could be contrasted with those of government slaves, of domestic slaves, or of slaves who were hired out for work, and would sometimes have contracts, remuneration and social welfare rewards offered to them. Also the forms of apprenticeships that came along with abolition and the indenture of 'liberated Africans' and the children of freed slaves alongside Indian should be made the subject of representation and exhibitions.

***b) Importation of slaves from India to Mauritius.*** Nine per cent or so of the total number of slaves in Mauritius were imported from India through Calcutta and Madras, and were sourced primarily from Bihar, the Bengali and tribal hinterlands of Calcutta, and from Tanjore and the inland regions of the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. The recruitment, transportation, work and life world experiences of the Indian slaves have been neglected and hidden from memory, and it would be an important intervention by the Slavery Museum to bring them back into view in a special exhibition.

***c) The so-called 'Tinkerian paradigm'*** that indentured labour was 'a new system of slavery,' and that there was continuity, rather than a break, between plantation slavery on the one hand and indenture and subsequent forms of more or less unfree wage,

migrant and contract labour on the other.<sup>22</sup> Special exhibitions here should be arranged in critical dialogue with those of the Aapravasi Ghat Heritage Site, and could be linked to displays on Indian slavery as proposed above. A special exhibition could focus on the areas of origin in India from where both slaves and indentured labourers were exported for work in Mauritius. It should show the social, economic and political conditions in India that made enslavement possible, and demonstrate what forms of unfree labour were characteristic of the regions in India, from which the slaves and indentured labourers came.

*d) The origins of African slaves imported into Mauritius*, slave trade diasporas, and their post-abolition histories (Makua, Malagasy, Makonde, Yao, Inhambani, Guinea, etc). A special exhibition of the Slavery Museum might show how slaves were categorised in the numerous returns and censuses of the slave population in Mauritius, which were compounded in the 18th and 19th centuries. What were the categories used to designate the different groups of slaves - 'castes', 'national', 'races' etc, and what were the markers used to differentiate between slaves within the categories - names, languages, tribes, father's and mother's names, tattoos and cultural incisions, etc? What is the state of anthropological and historical research regarding the cultures and societies of slave origins? How was slave agency employed in determining designations of origin at the time of enslavement and slavery? How did missionary and other philanthropic agency affect the identifications of freed slaves after abolition?

*e) The cultural entrepreneurship, administration of memories* and strategies for recognition of former slaves in comparable contexts. How have groups of descendants of slaves from different origins gone about memorialising and interpreting their histories? A special exhibition project might focus on the different trajectories of memorialisation of, for example, descendants of Makua slaves in different diasporic environments in Mauritius, Madagascar, South Africa, Somalia. Why did freed slaves within some contexts strive to preserve, safeguard and develop strategically their cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage, while in other situations they did their utmost to forget and do away with any kind of signifier that could denote a slave past? Why was a slave past seen by some as stigma, and by others as tragic and heroic victimisation? How should contemporary heritage conservation efforts relate to such diametrically opposed traditions of memorialisation?

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<sup>22</sup> Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

*f) Varieties of slavery in neighbouring Indian Ocean societies* such as Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa. A special exhibition of the Slavery Museum could contrast the different and interacting histories of Portuguese, Dutch, French, British colonial slavery and slave trading, and demonstrate what impact they had on Mauritius. Another special exhibition could be concerned with the history of abolition programmes, which also developed through multinational interaction, again with a focus on what this meant for Mauritius. Yet another special exhibition (or set of exhibitions) might address histories of non-colonial slavery in neighbouring Indian Ocean societies, and Madagascar and Northern Mozambique in particular. How did indigenous forms of slavery in different parts of Madagascar relate to the export of slaves and the trade in slaves with Mauritius? What forms of slavery existed in chiefly Makua societies in Northern Mozambique, and how were these affected by raids to provide export slaves for the Portuguese and Brazilian trade from Ibo, Mossuril/Ilha and Quelimane? In what ways did Islamic alliances between Swahili sheikhs and African chiefly lineages affect the exportation of slaves from Northern Mozambique? To what extent was there an anti-colonial slave trade, where income was generated from the sale of slaves from Angoche, Sancul and similar Sufi Islamic strongholds to finance armed resistance against the Portuguese?

Finally, an important function of the Slavery Museum will be to highlight connections and comparisons between the past and the present. The lasting impact of the history of slavery and the slave trade on subsequent generations of descendants should feature prominently in the Museum, and the consequences in terms of inequality and discrimination, which were exposed in the report of the Truth and Justice Commission in 2011 should be made the subject of displays. At the same time Museum exhibitions should link slavery and unfree labour in the past to contemporary modes of transnational migrant labour recruitment. One possible focus would be the political economy and social and cultural life conditions of Bangladeshi workers in Mauritius today. Such a focus might bring to view some of the effects of globalisation on labour markets internationally in terms of informalisation, new inequalities, and the emergence of a new global precariat and reserve army of labour.



# 9

## Met Li Dan Mize!

*Daniella Bastien*

*Anthropologist, Musician*

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Aswar kan zetwal sintiye dan lesiel  
Enn lavwa rezone kas silans lanwit  
Enn son bat-bate fer lekor frisone  
Lwin, dan zistwar nou pei  
Leker akorde lor enn sel batman  
Dan sa tan-la, tanbour bate pou dir  
boner, douler lexi-stans  
Kadans silekote pou ekout parol anvole  
Ler saler laflam monte  
Lekor sakouye  
Pou tir tou douler maler  
Ravann maravann  
Tanbour bob  
Otour klarte dife  
Lekor touse flite  
Komie banane finn pase  
Mo finn trouv mo zanfan so ti-zanfan  
  
Mwa, avek loder lapo mor  
Anba douser ledwa  
Mo ranim zistwar enn pep

Mwa, tonbe-leve

Ar seki pa finn les mwa mor

Mwa, memsi mo son rezone

Dir ki mo enn cholo

Azordi disan monte-desann

Kan mo lestoma ouver pou kriye

Aster, zot pou met mwa dan mize?

Tansion pe anpay mwa

Met mwa dan vitrinn

Personn pa pou tous mwa?

Fer mo lapo zigile?

E si...

Laba, se enn lot lavantir mo lavi?

Laba, se enn lot louvertir lanvi?

Pou konn vremem mo zistwar e aksepté li...

PART II THE WAY FORWARD

PRESENTING AND  
REPRESENTING SLAVERY IN  
MUSEUMS

2E PARTIE LA MARCHE A  
SUIVRE

PRÉSENTER ET REPRÉSENTER  
L'ESCLAVAGE DANS LES MUSÉES





## 10

# Les Mots de l'esclavage

*Myriam Cottias*

*Directrice de recherche au CNRS & Directrice du Centre International de Recherches sur les Esclavages et les Post-Esclavages*

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Dans les travaux de recherches et sur les cartels des musées, des termes doivent rendre désormais visibles les différentes façons de rendre compte du passé dans le présent comme des changements de régime d'historicité.

### ***Introduire une demande officielle auprès de l'UNESCO***

Briser le silence est l'un des arguments centraux du programme de l'UNESCO, «La Route de l'Esclave: résistance, liberté, héritage », lancé en 1994 à Ouidah, au Bénin, sur proposition d'Haïti. L'organisation d'un Comité scientifique international avait l'objectif de structurer les travaux et de réaliser la feuille de route de la mémoire que le programme instituait. Cet objectif appuyé par des organisations citoyennes, associé à des décisions étatiques et à organismes de recherche ont permis, entre autres, l'établissement de programmes éducatifs (l'intégration de leçons sur l'esclavage et la traite dans certains pays). Des sites mémoriaux ont été valorisés comme *l'Arche du retour* à New-York, le *Mémorial de l'abolition* de Nantes, le *Monument national de l'Esclavage* dans l'Oosterpark d'Amsterdam, le *Mémorial ACTe* à Point-à-Pitre en Guadeloupe, le *Slave Memorial* à Cape Town, l'Antigo Mercado de Escravos, le vieux marché aux esclaves, en projet à Lagos ...). Des expressions culturelles ont été patrimonialisées comme le *Maloya* de la Réunion, le *Gwo Ka* de la Guadeloupe, la *Charte du Mandèn* du Mali et la *Tumba francesa* de Cuba. Des musées ont été établis comme l'Aapravasi Ghat, à Port-Louis, ou le Musée de l'Esclavage de Maurice, le *National Museum of African-American History and Culture*, à Washington DC, le *Musée International de l'Esclavage de Liverpool*, le Musée des Ducs de Bretagne à Nantes, le Musée d'Aquitaine à Bordeaux, le Rijksmuseum à Amsterdam, le Musée maritime de Norvège à Oslo ou encore le musée Soul of Africa d'Essen en Allemagne parmi d'autres.

Bien que de nombreux champs de recherche soient encore en friche, les programmes de recherche et les productions académiques ont pris de l'importance. De nouveaux types d'archives ont été analysés et dans la recherche de l'expérience esclavagiste, au plus près des acteurs de l'histoire, s'est imposé le sujet esclave, acteur de sa propre histoire qui retransforme les conditions de sa propre vie, de sa propre survie, dans des conditions de coercition extrême.

La recherche en sciences humaines et sociales n'a pendant longtemps pas cherché à retranscrire cette prise de position. L'agentivité de la personne mise en esclavage - sa compétence en tant que sujet - a été développée dans les historiographies anglophone, lusophone et hispanophone mais plus rarement francophone. Pour rendre compte de la capacité du sujet esclavage à résister au système de l'esclavage, un changement sémantique s'est opéré, un peu partout dans le monde. Il s'agissait d'exprimer la disjonction entre le statut civil d'un individu avec son identité. Quoiqu'on ait pu refuser aux personnes mises en esclavage ce statut, quoiqu'une idéologie raciale les ait cantonnés dans un statut d'inférieur, ils.elles sont demeuré.es des êtres humains, même au sein d'un système de violence extrême. L'histoire des dominations radicales montre que l'humain sait toujours trouver des espaces, même les plus ténus, pour revendiquer son humanité. Les résistances et les révoltes –mineures ou radicales –, les avortements, les empoisonnements ou les homicides témoignent d'ailleurs de la nécessité de rendre hommage à la force de l'humain.

Un peu partout dans le monde, ce tournant linguistique à l'œuvre s'est épanoui dans des moments de rupture politique, généralement sous l'impulsion de revendications citoyennes. En portugais, *escravizado(a)*, dont l'usage s'est généralisé parmi les historien·ne·s brésilianistes, est déjà utilisé dès le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle par les abolitionnistes brésiliens. Dans l'historiographie anglophone et particulièrement états-unienne, le terme *enslaved* s'impose peu à peu dans le dernier tiers du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle grâce au travail de militant·e·s africaines-américain·e·s. En italien, le terme est *schiaivizzato*. En espagnol, c'est le terme *esclavizados*, « parce que c'est une catégorie qui répond à une revendication sociale et politique qui signifie que les gens ne sont pas par nature des esclaves, mais qu'ils ont été violemment asservis à des fins politiques et économiques »<sup>23</sup>.

En français, il manquait un terme pour rendre compte de ces positions heuristiques. De nombreuses·x chercheur·se·s francophones tel·le·s que ceux·celles du CIRESC mais bien d'autres encore proposent ainsi de cantonner l'emploi du terme *esclave* à l'expression d'un statut civil –inique- et à préférer le terme *esclavisé.e* pour désigner le sujet mis en esclavage. La transformation du substantif « esclave » par le suffixe adjectival « -isé » marque ainsi la distance par rapport à ce qui est souvent pris comme une essence originelle, comme une identité impérissable. Or, être mis en esclavage est un statut juridique et non une identité. Il faut l'affirmer par une mutation de terme afin

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<sup>23</sup> Extrait de l'introduction du numéro spécial *Alteridades*, « Desde el norte hacia el sur: esclavizados fugitivos en la frontera texano-mexicana », coordonné par María Camila Díaz Casas, vol. 28, 56, 2018.

de provoquer un changement des représentations; les mots sont une ressource essentielle de l'émancipation. Ces lignes contextualisent la lettre adressée à Madame la directrice-générale de l'UNESCO.

Paris, le 12 novembre 2019.

Madame la Directrice-générale de l'UNESCO  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75007 Paris

Madame la Directrice-générale de l'UNESCO,

L'UNESCO peut s'enorgueillir d'avoir lancé sous l'impulsion du Bénin et d'Haïti, le programme *La route de l'esclave* en 1994. Son Directeur initial, M. Doudou Diène, a permis l'ouverture d'une prise de conscience planétaire sur les horreurs de l'esclavage et ses conséquences dans le monde contemporain.

Différentes actions ont été initiées au niveau international et ont été relayées par les pays. Les dates de commémoration ont permis que des jours soient dédiés à la mémoire de l'esclavage et à la lutte contre le racisme. Des mémoriaux, des lieux de mémoire et des musées ont été érigés un peu partout dans le monde pour rappeler la souffrance endurée par les esclaves mais aussi pour célébrer leurs combats pour la liberté et leur lutte pour la dignité. Les cultures issues de l'esclavage comme le *gwo ka*, le *maloya* ou encore le jazz sont entrées, pour certaines, au *Patrimoine Immatériel de l'Humanité*. L'enseignement de ces questions s'est imposé progressivement, quoique fragilement encore, et des actions pédagogiques transcontinentales ont mis en relation des écoles d'Europe, d'Afrique et des Caraïbes. La recherche universitaire, enfin, s'est développée et les livres, les articles et les thèses se sont multipliés dans les universités.

Ces progrès sont indéniables quoique la connaissance profonde, l'acceptation sereine de l'histoire de la traite et de l'esclavage ne soient pas acquises. Ces questions mobilisent, en effet, encore trop de subjectivités au travers desquelles l'histoire de l'esclavage est traduite par une mise en accusation d'une partie du monde par une autre et à ce titre, rejetée. On peut espérer que le soutien de l'UNESCO au programme *La route de l'esclave* ne faiblira pas afin d'atteindre les objectifs de paix et d'inter-reconnaissance ainsi que la lutte contre le racisme qui doivent fonder ses actions. Cependant, permettez-moi, Madame la Directrice générale, d'attirer votre attention sur un point très important, sémantique et heuristique.

Grâce à l'importance prise par l'histoire de l'esclavage dans le champ académique, une relecture des archives a été initiée ces dix dernières années pour retrouver l'agency, la « capacité du sujet à agir », et la subjectivité des esclaves. De nouvelles interrogations sur les expériences des sujets dominés ont été ainsi rendues possibles.

A travers l'analyse des documents juridiques et infra-juridiques, des témoignages, des « voix d'esclaves » ont été retrouvées. Des destins et des parcours transatlantiques, intra-africains ou dans l'Océan Indien et jusqu'en Asie, de personnes mises en esclavage ont été reconstruits. La reconstitution de ces destins rassemblés en *biographical turn* a construit une nouvelle « bibliothèque des situations d'esclavage » en montrant l'écart entre une histoire normative de l'esclavage et celle des expériences de l'esclavage où la « ruse » du sujet coexiste avec la violence inouïe et la domination radicale. Finalement, une nouvelle grammaire s'est installée. Dans la ligne du *linguistic turn* qui

a opéré en histoire du genre, des changements conceptuels et sémantiques importants ont été consolidés

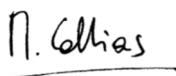
Il s'agit maintenant d'en rendre compte officiellement. Ainsi, de nombreux chercheur.e.s tels que ceux du CIRESC, proposent-ils de cantonner l'emploi du terme d'*esclave* à l'expression d'un statut civil –inique- et à préférer le terme d'*enslaved*, *enslaved people* ou d'*esclavisé.e* pour désigner le sujet mis en esclavage.

Il s'agit par cela de dissocier le statut civil, de l'être et de l'individu. Un être qui, quoiqu'on lui refuse ce statut, quoiqu'une idéologie raciale le cantonne à un statut d'inférieur, demeure un humain, même au sein d'un système de coercition. L'histoire des dominations radicales montre que l'humain sait toujours trouver des espaces, même les plus tenus, pour s'exprimer en tant qu'être humain. La résistance et les révoltes –mineures ou radicales-, les avortements, les empoisonnements ou les homicides témoignent, d'ailleurs, de la nécessité de rendre hommage à la force de l'humain. Ce terme « d'esclavisé.e » en rend compte, il signifie le fait d'être mis en situation d'esclavage. La transformation du substantif « esclave » par le suffixe adjectival « -isé » marque ainsi la distance par rapport à ce qui est souvent pris comme une essence originelle, comme une identité impérissable. Or, être mis en esclavage est un statut juridique et non une identité. Il faut l'affirmer par une mutation de terme pour faire transformer les représentations.

Ainsi devient-il important d'opérer un changement du titre du programme en français, non pas pour celui « de personnes réduites en esclavage » car, une fois encore, on ne rendrait pas hommage à l'humain, on le « réduirait » encore et toujours comme cela a été le cas pendant des siècles, mais pour le terme « d'esclavisé.e ». Il serait utile en cela de suivre les recommandations du Comité scientifique international du projet *La route de l'esclave* qui emploie, en anglais, le terme d'*enslaved* ou *enslaved people*, et demande à ce qu'il en soit rendu compte en français. Nous avons l'honneur de vous recommander celui d'*Esclavisé.e.s* et des chercheurs du CIRESC sont à la disposition de l'UNESCO pour ouvrir cette discussion qui est à mener aussi avec l'Académie française afin d'entériner ce terme.

Je concluais cette lettre en soulignant que ce changement de terminologie est demandé instamment par la société civile se réclamant de l'histoire et de la mémoire de l'esclavage. C'est, en fait, une question cruciale dans l'exercice de l'égalité entre les citoyens.

En vous remerciant de toute l'attention que vous apporterez à cette question, je vous adresse, Madame la Directrice-générale de l'UNESCO, l'expression de ma parfaite considération.



Myriam Cottias

Directrice de recherche au CNRS

Directrice du Centre International de Recherches sur les Esclavages et les Post-Esclavages

### *Les mots de l'esclavage: une vigilance nécessaire\**

A l'heure où le débat sur la restitution des oeuvres d'art est ouvert, d'autres questions urgentes se posent dans les musées de France et d'Europe: celles de la présentation et de la contextualisation des objets et des oeuvres liés à l'histoire de l'esclavage et à celle de la colonisation. Avec l'appui des recherches en sciences humaines et sociales, certains objets ne sont plus considérés du point de vue de leur utilisation en Europe mais sont réinterprétés en fonction de circuits globaux au sein desquels circulent des produits coloniaux tirés de sociétés esclavagistes. Par exemple, les tasses de faïence de Chine, dans lesquelles la société européenne élégante du XVIIIe siècle buvait café, thé et chocolat sont la concrétisation, en Europe, de rapports de pouvoir et de commerce allant de l'Asie aux Amériques. Certains tableaux sont, eux aussi, décryptés de façon nouvelle. Des anonymes, sujets colonisés noirs, émergent de l'oubli comme dans l'exposition actuelle au Musée d'Orsay sur « le modèle noir ». Dans le tableau du radeau de la Méduse, l'homme en figure de proue a retrouvé son identité et des bribes de son histoire ont été reconstituées. Il s'agit de « Joseph le Maure », Haïtien de la nouvelle République indépendante. Il fut un modèle célèbre du début du XIXe siècle. Quant au tableau de l'Olympia de Manet qui scandalisa en 1865 à cause de la nudité de la femme blanche couchée lascivement qu'il présentait, il n'est plus analysé de la même façon. Placée derrière elle, la servante qui était jusqu'alors anonyme dans les livres d'histoire de l'art, présentée comme un moyen de magnifier la peau blanche par contraste avec sa peau noire, a été depuis identifiée. Elle s'appelait Laure et était un modèle régulier de Manet. Le souci de nommer, de retracer les biographies de ces modèles, parfois par bribes, sont symptomatiques de l'interrogation actuelle sur les rapports de pouvoir et de domination, sur la violence, sur les représentations induites par les mots qui désignent les individus, leurs actions, leurs fonctions.

Patrimonialiser, exposer, montrer, valoriser certains éléments plutôt que d'autres: voilà des questions débattues, comme lors du récent colloque du Musée d'Aquitain<sup>24</sup>, par des experts internationaux, conservateurs de musée et chercheurs, d'Afrique, d'Europe et des Amériques. Comment rendre compte des changements de l'époque, de la représentation de la domination? La politique du Rijksmuseum d'Amsterdam y a, par exemple, été présentée. Depuis le mois de décembre 2015, des titres d'œuvres ont été rebaptisés à cause des mots jugés offensants qu'ils contenaient car ils étaient trop empreints de terminologies colonialistes et esclavagistes, reproduisant les rapports raciaux dissymétriques : « nègre », « esclave », « sauvage », « maure », « mahométan ». Une

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<sup>24</sup> Le dernier colloque des Rencontres Atlantiques s'est déroulé les 9 et 10 mai 2019 à Bordeaux. Organisé par le Musée d'Aquitaine et le Centre international de recherche sur les esclavages et les post-esclavages (CIRES), il portait sur *Les sémiophores des traites et des esclavages*.

nouvelle grammaire est ainsi proposée pour ne pas réduire des individus à un statut. Par exemple, un néologisme tel que celui d'*esclavisé* évoque la capacité du sujet à résister à la violence extrême: une façon de dire que l'humain demeure humain même en situation de domination mortifère. Le projet est ambitieux, il est nécessaire. Il est à l'œuvre, par exemple au Musée d'Aquitaine, et contredit les critiques qui ont pu récemment être adressées à cette institution sans pour autant considérer que le travail en cours ne soit pas exempt d'approximations et de reconductions sourdes qui affaiblissent sa visée<sup>25</sup>.

La quête de dialogues pour tendre vers une muséographie la moins en prise aux impensés des mots, discours et représentations du colonialisme est bien l'objectif à poursuivre activement. Les discussions du colloque ont eu pour conclusion que ces changements doivent se faire en co-construction entre chercheurs et professionnels des musées et en discussion avec le public. La vigilance sur les mots de l'esclavage et du post-esclavage concerne, en effet, chacun.e d'entre nous, mais il faut, dans le même temps, être attentif aux processus en cours dans les établissements muséaux et participer de façon constructive aux projets d'avenir. C'est en favorisant la rencontre des voix dissonantes, en s'interrogeant sans répit sur les catégories en usage, en pratiquant le doute permanent sur nos outils de représentation que nous pouvons espérer atteindre un langage éthiquement acceptable pour dire l'ampleur du crime de la traite et de l'esclavage.

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\* Article publié dans *Libération*, le 28 juin 2019.

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<sup>25</sup> Le Musée d'Aquitaine affiche un cartel aux relents révisionnistes sur la traite négrière», par un collectif d'écrivains, emmené par Anne-Marie Garat, *Le Monde*, 22 mai 2019

Annette BECKER, historienne, Professeur des Universités

Christine CHIVALLON, anthropologue, Directrice de recherche CNRS

Gaetano CIARCIA, anthropologue, Directeur de recherche au CNRS

Catherine COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, historienne, Professeur émérite des Universités

Myriam COTTIAS, historienne, directrice de recherche au CNRS, directrice du CIRESC

Antonio de ALMEIDA MENDES, historien, Maître de conférences, Université de Nantes

Maxime de FORMANOIR, historien de l'art, doctorant, Université Libre de Bruxelles

Charles FORSDICK, professeur de français, Université de Liverpool

Matthieu DUSSAUGE, Conservateur du patrimoine, Musée départemental Victor Schoelcher, Guadeloupe.

Anne-Claire FAUCQUEZ, maitresse de conférences en civilisation et histoire nord-américaine, Université de Paris VIII

Céline FLORY, historienne, Chargée de recherche au CNRS

Bertrand GUILLET, Directeur du musée d'histoire de Nantes, Château des Ducs de Bretagne.

Krystel GUALDÉ, Directrice scientifique du musée d'histoire de Nantes, Château des Ducs de Bretagne.

Joël NORET, Professeur d'Anthropologie, Université libre de Bruxelles

Anna SEIDERER, Philosophe, Maîtresse de conférences, Université de Paris VIII



# 11

## Les Musées à Tamatave : Quelle place pour la Traite et l'esclavage ?

*Chaplain Toto*

*CEREL (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches en Ethnologie et Linguistique),  
Université de Toamasina*

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Comme dans beaucoup d'autres pays, l'esclavage en général et la traite en particulier continuent à être un sujet de division ou un sujet de conflit du nouveau genre avec la libération des paroles et de penser du temps présent. Pour ne pas évoquer souvent cet épisode de l'Histoire, certaines sociétés optent pour un oubli collectif sur quelques passages de l'Histoire. Il semblerait qu'une partie des Malgaches se retrouvent dans cette option. Pour clarifier cet argumentaire, nous avons visité six musées dans la Province de Tamatave et l'absence d'une représentation, même symbolique de l'esclavage, ou de la traite nous interpelle, compte tenu de la prédominance de cette partie de la Grande Ile sur ce sujet majeur de l'Histoire. Cette contribution consiste à partager un regard qui se veut équilibré sur la représentation, même partielle, des faits historiques sur l'Est de Madagascar à travers le temps et des espaces différents.

### **1. CEREL et le Musée Régional à l'Université de Toamasina**

Au cours des années 1990, un musée ethnographique régional a été créé au sein de l'établissement du Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches en Ethnologie et Linguistique de l'Université de Toamasina. En dehors de quelques débris de poterie tirés des recherches archéologiques menées par les chercheurs locaux en collaboration avec des institutions internationales, le musée possède notamment des objets ethnographiques spécifiques du pays des *Betsimisaraka*. Nous citons notamment des talismans appartenant aux guérisseurs traditionnels du pays et les outils de base pour le travail domestique quotidien tels que la forge traditionnelle, le pressage de la canne à sucre et d'autres techniques pour tirer les noix de coco.

On note également l'existence de quelques représentations cartographiques des différentes vagues de migrants d'origine asiatique et africaine dans l'histoire du peuplement de Madagascar. Une protohistoire qui s'étale théoriquement du V<sup>e</sup> siècle avant au V<sup>e</sup> siècle après Jésus Christ.

Si les reliques représentant le passé de Tamatave sont très limitées au musée régional de Tamatave, le peuplement de la ville a pourtant été attesté depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup>

et apparaît comme le premier port de la traite dans l'Est de Madagascar dès le début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le « Royaume de Madagascar » avait même installé son port d'embarquement des esclaves vers les Mascareignes juste à côté de l'actuelle ville de Tamatave dans la localité d'Ivondro<sup>26</sup>. Malgré l'engagement signé par le roi de Madagascar en 1817 à Manangareza Tamatave évoquant pour la première fois l'arrêt de la traite des esclaves dans son royaume<sup>27</sup>, Ivondro continue à exercer ses activités portuaires et ses activités économiques rayonnent auprès des communautés environnantes.

Le poids de l'économie de la traite va laisser pour toujours ses marques dans l'organisation sociale de la ville du grand port jusqu'à sa forme moderne d'aujourd'hui. Nous citons notamment l'existence d'un grand quartier appelé Antanamakoa qui signifie littéralement dans le village des *Makoa*, une référence aux esclaves d'origine africaine débarqués à Madagascar dans le cadre de la traite des noirs. Si le nom de Jean René est historiquement associé avec l'intensification de la traite à destination des îles sœurs de l'océan Indien occidental en utilisant ses *Makoa* comme des chasseurs d'esclaves redoutables et sans pitié dans les arrière-pays, l'hégémonie *merina* a également laissé une autre empreinte ineffaçable jusqu'à la cartographie moderne de la ville du grand port. Un quartier est actuellement appelé Antanamborozano rappelant leur débarquement au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour accompagner le déplacement royal de 1817 et celui de 1823<sup>28</sup>.

Ces éléments ne sont que la partie émergée de l'iceberg par rapport à l'immensité des héritages durant les siècles de l'esclavage et de la traite dont la ville de Tamatave elle-même est l'un des vestiges historiques de cette pratique commerciale mondialisée.

Pour un regard scientifique, il est inadmissible d'ignorer cet épisode de l'Histoire dans une représentation même partielle du passé des habitants de l'Est de Madagascar, et surtout dans la ville de Tamatave où tout semble assumer le rôle de la première ville portuaire du pays.

Malgré l'absence remarquée de l'esclavage dans les représentations au musée du CEREL, un événement mérite d'être souligné parmi les activités de ce centre depuis ces

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<sup>26</sup> Esoavelomandroso M. (1979), La province orientale du « Royaume de Madagascar » à la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle (1882-1895), Antananarivo, p. 417.

<sup>27</sup> Toto C. (2019), « Descendants et héritages *Makoa* à Tamatave », in *History, Memory and Identity – Comparative Perspectives*, Vol. 2, Port-Louis, Nelson Mandela Center for African Culture Trust Fund, pp. 65-81.

<sup>28</sup> Toto C. (2019), *Idem*, carte p. 66.

dernières années. Le deuxième événement scientifique dédié à l'esclavage, organisé à Madagascar par l'Université de Toamasina et pour le compte du CEREL, a eu lieu à Tamatave du 20 au 22 septembre 1999. Les textes présentés sur la thématique *La Route des Esclaves : Le système servile et la traite dans l'Est Malgache* ont été ensuite publiés en 2000 par l'Harmattan et l'Université de Toamasina.

N'importe quel musée représentant en partie de l'Histoire des habitants de cette région ne doit pas ignorer la dimension esclavagiste de la société dont les traces continuent toujours à ronger la société dite moderne et contemporaine. Mais certaines de nos expériences semblent tourner vers le refus d'en parler ouvertement alors que chez les autres, la libération des paroles sur l'esclavage s'inscrit dans le processus de tourner enfin définitivement la page conflictuelle vers la nouvelle : celle de la paix et de la justice.



**Figure 3 Tandroko aody ou un talisman en corne de zébu**

*(Source: Musée du CEREL Université Toamasina)*

## 2. Musée du Port de Toamasina: l'histoire des transports

Créé en 2005, un autre musée dans la thématique de transport a été inauguré à Tamatave dans le périphérique du Port de Toamasina. Le nouvel musée s'est doté d'une riche collection d'images et de photos anciennes sur les grands travaux d'embellissement de la ville de Tamatave et le début des moyens de transport terrestre, navigation fluviale et maritime, et des photos d'archives des premiers atterrissages des avions dans cette ville portuaire.

Appartenant à l'entreprise la plus riche et la plus dynamique de la ville, à savoir le Port de Toamasina, le musée rayonne très vite et attire de plus en plus de visiteurs. Pour les étudiants en Histoire de l'Université de Toamasina, la visite du « Musée du Port de Toamasina » devient une tradition. Pour une société dont la culture est plutôt tournée vers la mer comme la majorité des habitants de la côte orientale de Madagascar<sup>29</sup>, les représentations des techniques de navigation et les moyens de survie en mer sont observés avec une attention particulière au musée.



**Figure 4** Vue de devant du Musée du Port de Toamasina (2013)

*(Source: Chaplain Toto)*

Parmi les pièces les plus marquantes exposées au musée, on retient encore une belle photographie en noir et blanc de l'embarquement des tirailleurs malgaches à destination de la France pour combattre à côté des militaires français lors de la Seconde

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Toto C. (2018), La baie d'Antongil dans l'Est de Madagascar du XVII-XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle : Le Pays et les Hommes dans la durée, Thèse de doctorat et Histoire, ED-SHS Université d'Antananarivo.

Guerre mondiale. Ces Malgaches embarqués sont appelés « les volontaires » dans les archives officielles alors que les récits sur les préparatifs pour partir en guerre donnent une toute autre version des faits : de jeunes Malgaches se sont mutilés volontairement pour être invalide avant l'embarquement<sup>30</sup>. Des cérémonies dignes d'un enterrement sont aussi organisées par les familles des jeunes indigènes sélectionnés et improvisés en soldats. Mais les représentations dans ce genre d'institution contredisent souvent la mémoire collective locale.

Une fois de plus, l'embarquement des esclaves, des zébus vivant à destination des îles voisines n'y est pas illustré alors que le port en question et surtout la partie où le musée est construit se trouve juste à quelques centaines de mètres de l'Ivondro, le plus grand port de la traite de l'Est de Madagascar du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'absence des passages sur la traite et l'esclavage devient alors de plus en plus préoccupante dans ce deuxième établissement de la ville de Tamatave.

Ironie du sort, le musée ne dure que quelques années car l'extension du port l'efface carrément du périmètre de la ville de Tamatave. Toutefois, l'ancien responsable du projet affirme que les collections sont actuellement conservées en lieu sûr en attendant un nouvel endroit pour les accueillir.

### ***3. Musée de l'Andrôna au cœur d'un foyer culturel tsimihety***

Créé en 1999 dans les hautes villes de Mandritsara, le Musée de l'Andrôna est inspiré de l'expérience du CEREL de l'Université de Toamasina. Au départ, l'institution est mise en place par les autorités universitaires de Toamasina, et est dirigée par le Recteur Mangalaza en présence du Président du Conseil d'Administration en la personne de Emile Tsizaraina. Scientifiquement, le Musée de l'Andrôna est donc créé par l'Université de Toamasina mais étant donné que Mandritsara est administrativement dans la province de Majunga, une collaboration s'impose avec l'Université de Mahajanga et les autorités administratives de la province.

Mandritsara est avant tout un foyer de la culture *tsimihety* et capitale d'une zone géographique appelée Andrôna. Le pays *Tsimihety* forme une aire culturelle où des groupes, résistant au rouleau compresseur *sakalava*, sont bien installés depuis essentiellement le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le nom *Tsimihety* signifie *celui qui ne se coupe pas les cheveux*. Selon la tradition du temps des *Sakalava*, lorsqu'un roi meurt, les hommes se

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<sup>30</sup> Mémoire collective précisée par le témoignage de Darivelo, 74 ans au moment de notre entretien en 2014. Mère de famille d'Andranofôtsy et descendant des *Zafindrabay*. Les entretiens ont eu lieu de manière informelle à plusieurs reprises chez elle de 1997 à 2014.

coupent les cheveux pour marquer le deuil dans le royaume. Le groupe *tsimihety*, comme son nom l'indique<sup>31</sup>, aurait résisté contre cette pratique royale ancestrale.

Sans vouloir à nouveau retracer l'histoire des *Tsimihety*, déjà l'objet de différents travaux de recherche, le groupe avait connu sans aucun doute l'atrocité de son voisin *Sakalava* où l'esclavage et la traite avaient commencé depuis le temps du partage avec les *Arabes* dans l'Ouest et le Nord de Madagascar<sup>32</sup>. La conquête territoriale et la traite continuent jusqu'à l'arrivée des Européens durant laquelle les *Sakalava* tentaient de conquérir presque tous les pays voisins. Nous citons notamment le pays des *Tsimihety*, le pays des *Sihanaka*, le pays des *Antakarana* et même dans le pays des *Betsimisaraka*. Ces conquêtes s'effectuent généralement par la réduction des hommes en esclaves dans les pays conquis.

Depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, différents groupes d'esclaves d'origine africaine s'installent définitivement à Mandritsara. Dans le processus de libération des *Masombika*, les esclaves se sont éparpillés formant ainsi les *Makoa* : la mémoire collective à ce propos est souvent présente dans les chansons populaires et les variétés. Les recherches sur les traces des *Makoa* de Mandritsara sont en cours et les résultats partiels sont encourageants. Ce qui est certain au moment de la rédaction de cette contribution, c'est qu'une localité a été découverte actuellement comme étant un village *makoa*. Il s'appelle Ankôtsohôtsô, situé presque à la limite du district de Mandritsara en direction vers celui de Maroantsetra ; le village *makoa* est relativement isolé<sup>33</sup>. Très peu de contacts et d'échanges entre Ankôtsohôtsô et les autres groupes lignagers de la région de l'Andrôna. L'interdiction d'épouser les individus de ce groupe n'est pas formellement établie mais il semble que le groupe vit plutôt à l'écart, même si le village est traversé par une des pistes les plus empruntées reliant de l'Andrôna à la côte Est de Madagascar.

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<sup>31</sup> Rakotonavory H. (2015), *Le Bali-manjôfo ou Bal poussière dans la Région de l'Andrôna : pour quels regards anthropologiques*, Mémoire de Master en Anthropologie Sociale sous la direction de Mangalaza, Université de Toamasina, 115 p.

<sup>32</sup> Zafidady I. E. (1991 – 1992), *Le Saha de l'Andrôna, étude ethnologique de la société Tsimihety de l'Andrôna. Cas du village d'Anratramidôla*, La Réunion, Université de La Réunion, 151 p.

<sup>33</sup> Témoignage Hilarion Rakotonavory, 39 ans au moment de notre entretien en 2019. Chanteur et auteur-compositeur originaire de Mandritsara connu sous le nom de scène Le Jim 415. Doctorant en ethnomusicologie à l'Université de Tuléar.



**Figure 5 Représentation des matériaux utilisés par les guérisseurs traditionnels locaux par un photographe local surnommé Zafy Albert**

(Source : Chaplain Toto)

Etant le théâtre d'une conquête territoriale et d'une pression politique et culturelle des *Sakalava* durant des siècles, et une localité où la mémoire sur les *Makoa* reste encore très vive et populaire, il est difficile d'admettre que le Musée de l'Andrôna ne possède même pas une pièce représentant, d'une manière ou d'une autre, l'esclavage et la traite des esclaves.

#### **4. Musée Lampy de Fénérive-Est dans le pays de Ratsimilaho**

Lampy a été créé à la fin des années 1990 par l'Université de Toamasina parallèlement avec une formation en informatique dans la ville de Fénérive-Est. L'idée de créer un musée consistait à mettre en place une structure qui garantirait l'attachement de la jeunesse aux valeurs culturelles locales tout en leur offrant les outils modernes à travers les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication. Si la présentation est séduisante, la structure est loin d'être complète. Les objets qui forment la présentation se résument ainsi : les outils traditionnels de la pêche locale, la cuisine dans la vie quotidienne, quelques instruments de musique ainsi que les *aody* ou les plantes locales utilisées par les guérisseurs traditionnels.

Fénérive-Est est avant tout une ville attestée depuis le temps de Flacourt qui devient ensuite une base arrière des pirates au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Un théâtre des compétitions entre

les groupes lignagers malgaches d'origines diverses, la ville attire très vite la convoitise et est recherchée très tôt par les navigateurs envoyés par les grandes puissances de l'époque moderne. Il s'ensuit des liaisons entre les filles locales et les pirates ou les traitants qui sillonnaient la zone. Subséquemment, un groupe d'enfants métis plutôt fortuné émerge et se développe à travers le temps<sup>34</sup>. Au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, différentes localités dans l'Est de Madagascar deviennent des centres de traite fournissant de l'approvisionnement et des esclaves aux bateaux marchands européens. Un jeune métis nommé Ratsimilaho prend le pouvoir à Fénérive et devient le roi des Betsimisaraka<sup>35</sup>. Son royaume s'étend théoriquement de la baie d'Antongil jusqu'au pays des *Antatsimo* au sud de Tamatave.



Figure 6 Musée Régional de Fénérive-Est LAMP

Créé pour donner un ancrage culturel régional à travers l'histoire et l'ethnographie. Installé au cœur du centre-ville de Fénérive-Est Lampy est situé dans la zone la plus accessible.

Depuis son règne jusqu'à la fin du siècle avec l'installation de Beniowsky à Antongil et son traitant Mayeur qui assure les liens avec les différentes formations politiques contrôlant chacune des zones portuaires, la traite d'esclaves explose à l'Est de Madagascar. Les *Zafindrabay* agissaient librement dans ce contexte. La capitale politique est la ville de Fénérive-Est qui gère l'ensemble de la façade orientale de Madagascar, devenue une plaque tournante fournissant des esclaves à l'Île de France

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<sup>34</sup> Grandidier G. (1898), Histoire de la formation du Royaume Betsimisaraka, extrait du *Bulletin du Comité de Madagascar*, Paris, Librairie Maritime et Coloniale, 14 p.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Le manuscrit de Nicolas Mayeur, *Histoire du Roi Betsimisaraka Ratsimilaho (1695-1750)*, Londres, British Museum, source dactylographiée. Disponible dans le fonds Grandidier à Tsimbazaza, Antananarivo, p. 1.



mais également à d'autres destinations riveraines de l'océan Indien<sup>36</sup>. Inspiré d'une réalité identique à celle qui prévaut à Madagascar lors de son séjour à l'étranger, le roi métis et fils d'un pirate donne une large latitude à ses partisans locaux, créant ainsi une ambiance de fête quasi quotidienne illustrée par le concept « *libertalia* »<sup>37</sup>.

Ces éléments historiques, constituant la matrice de l'identité des habitants de cette partie de la Grande Ile, sont totalement absents de cette structure culturelle censée constituer un socle pour l'ancrage identitaire des Betsimisaraka. Une nouvelle approche s'impose et les nouveaux responsables de la ville nous ont donné leur accord de principe pour rétablir la place et le rôle de Fénérive-Est dans l'histoire du pays des Betsimisaraka.

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<sup>36</sup> Rakoto I. (2000), *La Route des Esclaves, Système servile et la traite dans l'Est malgache*, Actes du Colloque International de Tamatave (20-22 Septembre 1999), Paris, l'Harmattan.

<sup>37</sup> Les témoignages des descendants de Ratsimilaho à travers des entretiens que nous avons eu avec Alain Frédéric MAVERANA, navigateur de profession et aussi président de l'association des *Zanamalata* à la recherche des héritages du roi à Fénérive-Est. Il revendique et dit avoir des preuves et des consignes gardées jalousement par les aînés de la famille : le fameux *Libertalia* se passait bel et bien quelque part à Fénérive-Est.



**Figure 7 Charlot et Sabine représentant le Roi Ratsimilaho et son épouse Matavy**

*(Source : A l'occasion du 30<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la FLSH de Université de Toamasina en 2015)*

### **5. Autres Musées aussi proches de Tamatave**

A 250 kms de Tamatave sur la RN2 vers Antananarivo dans la ville de Moramanga, se trouvent deux Musées de thématique différente. Le premier est celui dédié à immortaliser l'histoire du mouvement pour l'indépendance symbolisé par la révolte malgache de 1947. Etant une institution inscrite dans le nationalisme malgache, l'établissement détient une large collection sur les récits concernant le mouvement de 47 à travers le pays, les personnalités politiques dans le rang des nationalistes et surtout les outils de guerre utilisés par les Malgaches contre l'armée coloniale française. Tous les ans, le musée endosse le rôle d'un épice de la commémoration de la tragédie de l'époque coloniale le 29 mars, mais demeure presque silencieux pendant le reste de l'année. Par ailleurs, il est muet sur les différents aspects de la domination hiérarchique à travers le temps.

Dans un autre site de la ville se dresse un autre musée, celui de la gendarmerie nationale malgache. Il serait peut-être nécessaire de rappeler que l'actuelle

gendarmerie est la continuité de la fameuse Garde Indigène de l'époque coloniale, tristement célèbre à cause des abus perpétrés envers la population. La mémoire populaire l'associe quasi-systématiquement à la répression et aux traitements indécents infligés par le régime colonial. Le « Musée de la gendarmerie nationale Moramanga » détient une large collection sur l'histoire de la gendarmerie depuis les origines et les différents hauts responsables de cette branche du système sécuritaire de Madagascar. Née sous la colonisation, reformée par la suite dans un pays devenu indépendant, la gendarmerie nationale est avant tout une institution sécuritaire d'Etat.

Pour un regard reculé, la présence de ces deux musées dans la ville de Moramanga symbolise la continuité d'un conflit en temps de paix ; il s'avère que chacun essaie de perpétuer la mémoire sur son système. Il est aussi inutile de rappeler que la ville de Moramanga puise directement son nom de l'Histoire de l'esclavage. Son nom illustre l'abondance et le bon prix des esclaves dans le passé et Mayeur - le traitant le plus connu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle de Madagascar - a été le premier blanc pénétrant à l'intérieur de la Grande Ile depuis Tamatave, et il s'est arrêté sur l'actuel Moramanga et ses alentours. Moramanga est donc la première ville des hautes terres connue et visitée par un traitant d'esclaves dans les années 1770<sup>38</sup>.

En 2014, l'Université de Toamasina a aussi été sollicitée lors de la mise en place d'un autre musée dans le pays des *Betsileo*. Il s'agit du « Musée des Deux Guerres » baptisé Johanesa Rafiliposaona, en rappel du rôle prépondérant de cet ancien tirailleur malgache qui combat à côté des Français lors de la Première Guerre mondiale. Les premières pièces constituant le patrimoine de ce musée sont les documents conservés par ce Malgache ; il est un des rares lettrés et il est chargé par beaucoup de ses camarades pour écrire des lettres à leur famille à Madagascar. Des copies conservées dans un coffre ont été découvertes récemment par ses descendants, à l'origine de ce projet. Le Musée est construit sur la terre de ses ancêtres donnant ainsi le titre privé de l'établissement dans la Commune Rurale de Tadio dans le district de Fandriana de la Province de Fianarantsoa<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ratsivalaka G. (1977), « Éléments de biographie de Nicolas Mayeur 1747-1809 », in *Omalysy Anio*, n°5-6, Antananarivo, Dép. d'Histoire de l'Université d'Antananarivo, pp. 79-88.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Letellier S. (2014), *Le Musée des Deux Guerres dans les rizières à Tadio Commune Urbaine de Fandriana*, Document de création du musée avec l'appui de Région Normandie en France, le Comité du Centenaire de la Guerre 14-18 et le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique de Madagascar, 37 p.

Si les idées sont toujours séduisantes, l'absence spectaculaire de l'esclavage - ne serait-ce que sur une seule de ses multiples facettes - interpelle celui qui veut tourner définitivement la page de conflit pour ouvrir une nouvelle page de l'Histoire et du droit à la mémoire pour tous.

### **Conclusion**

Depuis septembre 1996 - la date de la première rencontre scientifique évoquant spécialement le sujet de l'esclavage à Madagascar - jusqu'à aujourd'hui, on ne compte pas plus de trois ouvrages collectifs publiés<sup>40</sup>, ce qui est très peu pour un sujet central comme l'esclavage, et la traite des esclaves et ses héritages. Si l'inexistence d'un musée se spécialisant sur ce sujet semble logique, compte tenu de la rareté des rencontres spécialisées pour débattre de la question, l'absence d'une rubrique traitant de l'esclavage dans les musées évoqués est très gênante. Malgré cette constatation alarmante, la présence en nombre des contributions faites par les jeunes chercheurs à côté de Rakoto et Urfer (2014) dans leur dernier ouvrage est un signe plutôt encourageant. L'esclavage fait partie intégrante de l'Histoire du pays mais le sujet reste toujours brûlant et gênant à Madagascar. Heureusement qu'il y a la nouvelle tendance menée par nos artistes pour briser enfin le tabou. La chanteuse Denise assume et impose son image d'une femme issue d'un groupe *mako* ; une nouvelle représentation plutôt bien accueillie pour l'instant et qui mérite probablement une place dans les musées à Madagascar.

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<sup>40</sup>Rakoto I. (1997), *L'esclavage à Madagascar, Aspects historiques et résurgences contemporaines*, Actes du Colloque international sur l'Esclavage, Antananarivo du 24-28 Septembre 1996, publié en 1997 par Institut de Civilisation-Musée d'Art et Archéologie et l'FTM ; Rakoto I. (2000), *La route des Esclaves, Système servile et la traite dans l'Est Malgache*, Actes du Colloque international de Toamasina de Septembre 1999, publié en 2000 par l'Université de Toamasina et l'Harmattan ; et enfin Rakoto I. et Urfer S. (2014), *Esclavage et libération à Madagascar*, Paris, Karthala-Centre Foi et Justice, 364 p.

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# 12

## The Imagery of Slavery

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### ***Introduction***

In the Atlantic world, as Marcus Wood has stated, the imagery of slavery has not been taken as seriously as it should have been". The same could be stated for the Indian Ocean region. In light of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum project, a priority project for the Government of Mauritius, the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture has focused on a critical examination of memorialisation of slavery initiatives through visual media. Although it has been involved in historical, archaeological and ethnographic research on slavery for the past decade, the potential of the use of these studies for memorialization activities, and particularly the visualization is important to investigate. Two past activities, conceptualized by the Centre: living museum exhibits in Le Morne in 2013 and 2014 led to further discussions on choices of what to present, how to present information without the available supporting visual material and how to involve the local community in representing their history. It was clear that in the absence of much visual and oral material, new ways of representing the history of slavery would need to be found. In 2016, it also conducted a preliminary survey to gather Mauritians' views of the proposed Slavery Museum, a study which is on-going.

On the Atlantic side, Marcus Wood has critically examined the visualization of slavery through four 'themes' which have, in Europe, the USA and the Caribbean, attracted much attention at the time and even today: the slave trade, maroonage, physical punishment and the visual imagery created from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. We have yet to undertake such a study for the Indian Ocean world.

My own study for a dissertation in 2017, which consisted of examining visuals and other iconographic material relating to slavery, concluded that much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century images of the enslaved are stereotypical yet continue to be used by those attempting to memorialise slavery today. These visualisations do not do full justice to understanding the full breadth of the historical experience of slaves. There is an urgent need to create new visual documentation that reflects more accurately and holistic manner, the 'slave experience'. It is also crucial, as Rosabelle Boswell has stated, to consider the use of other sensory experiences in visualizing slavery in public

representations of slavery.<sup>41</sup> In the light of these studies, it appears essential to break away from ‘traditional’ ‘stereotypical’ visualisations of slavery and conceptualise new visual forms of memorialising the history of slavery. I hope that this paper will serve those setting up the future Intercontinental Slavery Museum.

### ***Slavery in Mauritian iconographic history***

Slavery forms an intrinsic part of Mauritian history. Slaves’ contribution to the construction of Mauritius can no longer be denied. As the former builders of the island and its economy and the horror that slaves have endured, it is our ‘devoir de memoire’ towards the enslaved to remember their history as they lived it. Various initiatives have been undertaken to honour slavery in Mauritius, such as the listing of heritage sites such as the Le Morne Cultural Landscape, a day set aside for commemorating the abolition of slavery on February 1st etc. The Truth and Justice recommendations has also examined the memorialization of slavery and indenture and made several recommendations.<sup>42</sup>

Museums have, in the past, in Mauritius and in Europe, portrayed slavery using old prints and other artistic works as visuals. Even contemporary art uses old prints and transforms past realities of slavery through the artist’s eyes. It is however important to stress that memorialising the history of our ancestors through museum display must communicate a Verstehen/Empathic aspect of slavery through one of the most communicative ways that is through visuals.

In comparison to other slave importing countries like the USA, the number of museums in Mauritius to which slave descendants could directly relate to is scarce. Accessibility of data on slavery from slave testimonies is inexistent; all information concerning slavery relies on the colonisers’ writings and these represent and amount to a one-sided record of events. History, seen from the enslaved’s point of view can rapidly be forgotten; that is why its conservation and transmission is important so that it remains engraved in peoples’ memory. An effective way to do so is through images or a combination of both wording and visuals...

But one of the key actions required before setting up a Museum of Slavery is to determine its importance for the Mauritian population and their expectations and views on this. The visual aspects of this future memorialization forms an intrinsic part of this public consultation. Indeed, “Museums are more than cultural institutions and

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<sup>41</sup> Rosabelle Boswell (2017) ‘Sensuous stories in the Indian Ocean islands’.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, Corinne Forest, ‘Memory and Representations of Slavery and Indenture’ in TJC Report, Vol 4 Part X Preserving *the Nation’s Memory*.



showplaces of accumulated objects: they are the sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production".<sup>43</sup>

Thus the aim of my survey, conducted in 2017, was to gather and understand peoples' views of slavery, their perceptions of slavery through visuals and their opinions regarding a possible slavery museum. Although a total of 30 questionnaires were distributed, only twenty responded. Thirteen were female respondents and seven were male. It was interesting that those below 40, identified themselves as 'Mauritian' while those of upper age category gave their ethnic or religious backgrounds.<sup>44</sup>

Through the information gathered, it was found that generational perception and for some, their cultural background made a difference in the knowledge, perception and interest concerning slavery. However due to the uneven age group response and the small sample, the issue of generational/cultural identification could not be generalized. Generally, it was also found that respondents were aware of what slavery is and its essence; even if criteria of completeness and total accuracy in their answers were not met. On the other hand, it was noticed that various stereotypical feedbacks about slaves existed. Regardless of gender, age, cultural and educational background, respondents were really touched about the subject and interested in knowing more about the history of slavery in Mauritius. One respondent nevertheless expressed her unwillingness to know about slavery as it had caused "too much pain and horror".

Respondents were also asked about their opinion concerning the creation of a slavery museum in Mauritius. The data collected revealed that overall, museum visits were not a regular occurrence for them. But it is not only in Mauritius that there is less and less interest in Museums. The cause? According to Jonathan Jones, economic pressures [...] are destroying the aspirations we express when we go to galleries. [...]It is an expression of hope and self-esteem. He continues, "The drop in museum visitors reveals a nation without aspiration or hope".<sup>45</sup> Though the Truth and Justice Commission of Mauritius recommended several measures to better promote museums

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<sup>43</sup> Crane, Susan A. *Museums and memory*. Stanford University Press, 2000, 12.

<sup>44</sup>Pénélope Marie-Charlotte Audrey Emile, 'Visualising Slavery through Old Prints And Contemporary Art', BA Dissertation, University of Mauritius, 88-90.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'The drop in museum visitors reveals a nation without aspiration or hope', The Guardian 2 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2017/feb/02/drop-uk-museum-attendance>

so as to increase the general public's interest, it can be stated that the designed incentives did not generate the expected feedback.

The various opinions expressed are greatly important to understand the motives that make Mauritians willing to have such a place dedicated to slavery in Mauritius. It was also stated quite eagerly that the truth must be shown. One respondent was against the display of the mistreatment of enslaved women because it might impact negatively on descendants' self-esteem.

All respondents were supportive and interested in this initiative for the country. None of them viewed the establishment of a Slavery Museum as a project that may lead to a bad image to Mauritius. Instead, respondents put forward the fact that this sort of Museum may help to show and define the rich, somehow unique and complex aspect of the Mauritian social reality. The general feeling was that there was a need for transmission of the history of slavery to the present for future generations so as it is not forgotten or ignored.

It was observed in contrast, that there was a generational difference which influenced the interest and consideration about the subject. One interviewee who was above sixty years old claimed that, "remembering slavery is somehow useless as Mauritians will not be interested and give importance to something that is finished and which does not touches them directly". However, opinions changed after the visioning of selected prints. Personal interviews were arranged with five interviewees from different ages and cultural background, to gain a generational perspective about slavery after viewing selected images shown to them and to ascertain if their views varied according to ethnicity or cultural background. The interviews were carried out so as to have a deeper insight into the opinions and feelings of interviewees regarding Slavery through an interesting selection of images not normally shown to the Mauritian public.<sup>46</sup>

From the survey and in-depth interviews, it can be stated that visuals do make a difference and impact enormously on learning about slavery. Opinions changed when visuals were shown. By viewing images of slavery, interviewees stated they could identify with the slaves and felt that they were in the slaves' shoes. They stated that they were trying to imagine whether they would have been able to support all the violence and torture. Some added that by 'visualising' slavery rather than reading about it, learning and comprehension were enhanced as the images captured one's attention and generated emotions, compared to if one were to simply read text. Some

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<sup>46</sup> Emile, 'Visualising Slavery', 100.

interviewees also suggested that a children's corner should be designed so as not to traumatize or hurt their sensitivities.

This preliminary study of peoples' perceptions of slavery and their views concerning the setting up of a museum of slavery revealed some interesting points and also areas of concern for designers of the proposed museum. There is clearly a great interest in the history of slavery and there were great expectations about the slavery museum project. In order to acknowledge and incorporate the expectations and views of the public and essential components to the success of the museum, a holistic approach about representing history slavery to visitors is required. A special unit of trained individuals with a dynamic competence to transmit knowledge with passion is recommended to deal with visitors so as to generate interest in the museum. Currently, museums in Mauritius are not a conducive environment to develop visitors' continuous interest due to their rigidity, monotony, cold and disinterested approach towards visitors.

### ***Visualising slavery in the eighteenth century***

Most of the visual images that exist of Mauritian slavery stems from the eighteenth century period, when visitors arrived in Mauritius and produced works which are today used over and over again by writers to illustrate their work on slavery. There has been rarely any critical questioning of whether these representations are stereotypes or show the realities of slavery. In fact, we have today in Mauritius, only these visual images of slavery drawn by Europeans and no oral information or information deriving directly from the slaves themselves.

At this time, in France and England, landscape art was undergoing a revival, inspired by Italian art and drew inspiration from the countryside. These included peaceful scenes of mountains, rivers, farm houses and animals.<sup>47</sup> In the USA, a derivative was what is termed the 'plantation view'.<sup>48</sup> These paintings of the plantation have become a major object of study of social and cultural historians. Today, as in Mauritius, "the plantation

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<sup>47</sup>J. Paul Getty Museum, Brief History of the Landscape Genre, [https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/landscapes/background1.html](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/landscapes/background1.html)

<sup>48</sup>Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius (eds). *Landscape of Slavery The Plantation in American Art*.

has endured in the American consciousness as a nostalgic memory for whites and as an open wound for blacks.”<sup>49</sup>

Just as Edward Said showed for the ‘Orient’ in ‘Orientalism’, the overall picture one has of slavery therefore, is a creation of Europe. The visuals are part of “the general mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines”.<sup>50</sup> The overall image of slavery depicted in paintings and lithographs of the eighteenth century is heavily influenced not only by landscape art but by artists trying to find a way to make the horrors of slavery seem more palatable. But Marcus Wood has questioned whether there is such a way to represent the horrors of slavery artistically.<sup>51</sup>

Most of the paintings depicting slaves tend to diminish the violence of slavery, as the slaves, although part of the landscape, are barely visible in this landscape dominated by more natural features or the owner’s house and other built structures. One needs also to remember that often writers were writing for a European audience and works depicting scenes of violence would not have sold well. Many were financed by wealthy merchants.

The exception to this is, of course, all the abolitionist propaganda which highlighted the horrors of slavery and particularly of the slave trade. The most famous is undoubtedly the Brookes ship.<sup>52</sup> Another example of a ‘negative visual’ that triggers powerful emotional representation and response is the image of an enslaved man who bears the scars of his multiple floggings (Fig. 7).

At that time, the only artwork that depicted violent human figures/situations was the renaissance art of the Italian. According to Scott Nethersole, “Renaissance Florentines were constantly subjected to the sight of violence, whether in carefully staged rituals of execution or images of the suffering inflicted on Christ. There was nothing new in this culture of pain, unlike the aesthetic of violence that developed towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> William R. Ferris, Senior Associate Director, Center for the Study of the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, reviewing Mack & Hoffius’s book. <https://www.sc.edu/uscpres/books/2007/3720.html>

<sup>50</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 10

<sup>51</sup> Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Wood devotes a whole chapter to the iconography of the Middle Passage in *Blind Memory*: Chapter 2: ‘The Irrecoverable: Representing the Middle Passage’.

<sup>53</sup> Scott Nethersole. 2018. *Art and Violence in Early Renaissance Florence*, Yale University Press



**Figure 8 Scars of a whipped slave, 1863**

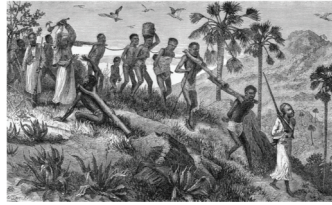
*(Source: <http://picturahistoria.com>)*

### ***'Mauritian' iconography of slavery***

During the slavery period, various artists and travellers' related their travel experience through the colonies they visited. They also produced a large amount of visual material, such as prints, paintings etc. The different stages of an enslaved person's life in Mauritius are often portrayed through these various colonial period prints and reproduced in most Mauritian artistic, literary and commemorative media creations (Fig. 8). But whether these represent actual and true reflections of Mauritius or of slavery can be doubted. Today, therefore, it is difficult to represent slavery through only these historical prints when historical research has shown that often stereotypical images have been represented and moreover that travellers did not fully enter the 'slave world'. It is advanced, that as more local research is undertaken on slavery, a more representative visual history of slavery could be created by local artists. Artists could be at the forefront of a future movement to create a more balanced and historically correct picture of slavery.



Never forgotten, Panthers and Ethiopia.  
 Slave capture in villages  
 (Source: Pinterest.com)



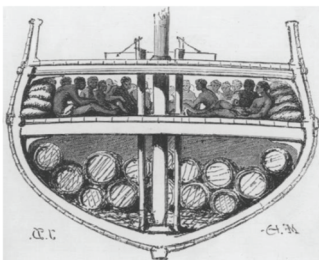
Slavery history and the African complicity: Africans capture and sold other Africans into slavery.  
 (Source: <https://factreal.wordpress.com/2010/07/08/>).



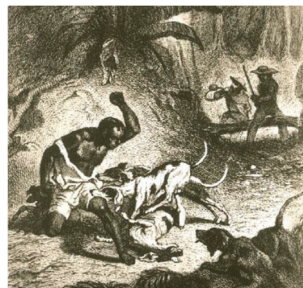
Branding-of-slaves-brutal-act-used-for-identification-purposes-and-severe-punishment.  
 (Source: <https://blackthen.com>).



The slave trade/slave inspection in Cuba.  
 Source: <http://abolitionwya.org.uk>.



Slave Ship Artefacts Recovered.  
 Source: Smithsonian Insider -  
 Smithsonian Institution.



Fugitive Slave Attacked by Dogs, 19th cent  
 Source: <https://sniffingthepast.wordpress.com>.

**Figure 9 Compilation of a few prints used in Mauritius to depict 'Mauritian' slavery**

Eighteenth and nineteenth century travellers to Mauritius also produced prints that have still not been sufficiently analysed or used. By taking as example these prints from Milbert<sup>54</sup>. His prints demonstrate a form of visual communication in terms of calibration and documentation of everything: mountain, landscape and local population are represented. It is interesting that the local population forms part of the landscape and are drawn in small personage forming part of the decor. To analyse his prints from the perspective of finding out about life of slaves, ‘zooming’ in is necessary to capture the little features that often have gone unnoticed in Mauritius. These show slaves’ activities or slaves near their huts (but not inside). These aspects of daily life of slaves become sort of “invisible” if one does not examine documents such as these closely (Fig. 9 and 10). There is nevertheless a sense of erasure concerning slaves, as one has to examine the print very closely to actually see any persons of colour represented.



**Figure 10 View of the Montagne des Calebasses**

(Source: MNA: N2/20, J. G. Milbert, *Atlas du Voyage Pittoresque à l'île de France*, Paris, Nepveu 1812)

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<sup>54</sup> Milbert, Jacques-Gérard. (1766 –1840) was a French naturalist and artist. He is the author of *Voyage Pittoresque À L'île De France Au Cap De La Bonne Esperance Et A L'île De Ténériffe*.



**Figure 11 Close-up of one slave bringing back his catch and accompanied by his dog.**

The prints, somehow create intrigue about how to construct a comprehension of slavery period in Mauritius. For many years, there was the notion that these prints were only artistic representations. Today, scholars are placing emphasis on the power relations implied by these images.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, Terry Smith has developed this idea and put forward with the theory of a visual regime of colonisation.<sup>56</sup> He proposed the idea that colonisation come along with a triple approach in terms of visual culture: obliteration (wiping out slave culture in Mauritian context), calibration (to measure or map out documents) and aesthetic (what is symbolised as important and socially beautiful).

### *The endogenous gaze today*

It has been found that even among artists today in Mauritius, there are few well-researched depictions of slaves and of slavery. The rare prints that are focused on slaves are due to the fact that those slaves were different from most others and led to the artists developing a particular interest in them. One example could be this print of a “Mozambican slave”, covered with ethnic scarification patterns. It is quite a striking image (Fig. 11) and was probably the reason behind the interest of the artist to pay attention to this particular person.<sup>57</sup>

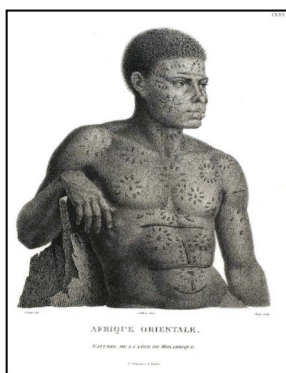
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<sup>55</sup> Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. "Images, Power, and Politics." *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (2009): 9-48.

<sup>56</sup> Terry Smith is an Australian art historian, art critic and artist. Smith, Terry, Martin Jay, and Sumathi Ramaswamy. "Visual regimes of colonization: European and Aboriginal seeing in Australia." *Empires of vision: A reader* (2014): 267-268.

<sup>57</sup> Analysis of Ramduth, Hurrybans Lallah. 'Exoticism and the dynamics of identity construction in the field of visual culture in Mauritius', PhD dissertation, 2015.





**Figure 12 A Native from the Mozambique Coast**  
 (Source: Drawn by Nicolas-Martin Petit (1777-1804,  
 © Muséum d'histoire naturelle. Le Havre. Collection Lesurer)

In terms of visual culture it was found that it is later that the endogenous gaze began to transform itself through the contribution of the first generation of Creole artists. Nevertheless these Creole artists did not concentrate on the concept of slavery. They placed more emphasis on the Mauritian landscape. It is only recently that some artists like Gerard Foy have focused on trying to portray the realities of slavery. Nonetheless, the interest in painting or drawing about slavery is not widespread except during painting competitions initiated by the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, when there is an outpouring of artistic representations of slavery (Fig. 12).



Chaîne brisé ('Broken chains')  
 (Source: Artist Jean Norbert Meunier)



Freedom  
 (Source: Artist unknown)



(Source: Artist K. Tokoro- Diaso)



Esclavage  
 (Source: Artist Jean Claude Baissac)

**Figure 13 Display of the Illustrations of slavery by Mauritian artists at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture**

In conclusion, despite the preliminary studies conducted in Mauritius aimed at reviewing the memorialisations and visualisations of the history of slavery, there has not been as yet an in-depth study of the various historic plantation landscapes of Mauritius in relation to slavery. This genre constitutes an extremely rich source: one could explore power relations on the plantation, as well as “wealth, race, memory, nostalgia, and conflict”. There is also a need for interdisciplinary studies where curators, artists, ethnographers and historians work together to examine these prints to “assess motives and aesthetics”. What seems to be missing however in Mauritius, so far is the emergence of a ‘black aesthetic’: this needs to develop as a ‘dissident counterpoint to this tradition’.<sup>58</sup> The use of the ‘plantation genre’ in the cultural tourist sector in Mauritius, also needs to be critically examined. In recent years, the eighteenth century romantic landscape has been revived in the tourist sector where the history of slavery and indenture is erased or romantically portrayed in tourist brochures and in visits to plantation homes. The choice of using the romanticised view of slavery in Bernardin de St Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie* rather than his *Voyage à l’île de France* where he severely condemns slavery in Mauritius, is a case in point.

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**Figure 14** Stephan Karghoo discussing a painting depicting an 18<sup>th</sup> century scene at the Bassin des Esclaves in Pamplemousses

## Representation of Slavery amongst Primary School Children in Mauritius

*Jimmy Harmon, Member, CRSI & Stephanie Tamby<sup>59</sup> Member, CRSI*

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This publication examines a collection of drawings and texts that were made by 34 pupils of Grade 5<sup>60</sup> of Notre Dame de Lourdes Roman Catholic School in the Republic of Mauritius during a class activity that was conducted on 21 August 2019. The class activity lasted almost one hour and forty minutes in a classroom set-up. Facilitators were the Grade Teacher, one Deputy Head Teacher and the first author of this paper. The class activity was officially conducted as an initiative of the CRSI in collaboration with the Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique (SeDEC)<sup>61</sup> which is the umbrella institution comprising of 46 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in Mauritius. Protocols regarding ethical clearance, consent forms and access to the works of art of the children were followed. Only five out of thirty drawings were selected for analysis because they cover the different aspects of the lives of the enslaved people.

### ***Introduction***

Notre Dame de Lourdes School is a grant-aided primary catholic school. Pupils of this school come from various socio-economic backgrounds and are quite representative of urban and suburban Mauritius. It should be noted that in Mauritius the primary school curriculum for Grade 5 does not make provision for topics on slavery. Therefore it has been assumed that the pupils have scant knowledge of this important chapter of the history of the island. We considered that the representation of slavery by this age group would be interesting.

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<sup>59</sup> Jimmy Harmon holds a PhD in Applied Pedagogy from the University of Western Cape and is a Researcher attached to the CRSI. Stephanie Tamby completed her PhD on Postemancipation Mauritius from the University of Mauritius. She works as Educator in Social and Modern Studies at College du Saint Esprit Quatre Bornes.

<sup>60</sup> In Mauritius, Grade 5 refers to the fifth year before the last year of primary schooling with students who are 9 years of age.

<sup>61</sup> The choice of collaboration with SeDEC was for reasons of convenience. The first author is Deputy Director/Head of Secondary at SeDEC.

A presentation of the findings was made at an evening round table at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund as part of the Slavery Museums Workshop held on 13th and 15th September 2019. This workshop was jointly organised by the then Ministry of Arts and Culture and the University of Mauritius with the support of the UNESCO Slave Route Project. The theme of workshop was “Issues and Challenges of Representations of Slavery in Museums”.

### ***Rationale, Reflexive Methodology & Transformative Pedagogy***

The rationale underpinning this class activity was to compile and examine the representation of enslaved persons by Mauritian youth at primary and secondary levels through drawings or short texts (free writing). The conceptualisation of the research work was done by a team of researchers from CRSI comprising of Jimmy Harmon, Stephanie Tamby and Sophie Le Chartier.<sup>62</sup> The last two researchers were members of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum Concept Committee set up by the Government of Mauritius in May 2019 following a Cabinet decision. For the analysis of the drawings, the expert views of Stanley Harmon<sup>63</sup> were solicited.

The choice of the term ‘enslaved people’ instead of the word ‘slaves’ in the formulation of our rationale was a deliberate choice as it expressed the perspective of the research team on slavery. How one uses language makes a crucial difference when we think about the meanings of our past.<sup>64</sup> It may seem to be a minor difference – for example, when we use the term ‘Mauritians’ and ‘the Mauritian people’ – but it is actually quite powerful. By shifting from the use of a noun “slave” to an adjective “enslaved”, we give “these individuals an identity as people” (Andi Cumbo-Floyd, 2011). The term “enslaved” refers to their position in society rather than reducing them to that position (Andi Cumbo-Floyd, 2011). In other words, they are acknowledged as people though from a legal and social perspective they were considered as a piece of furniture, a ‘possession’. It gives us an idea about the condition of the victim (the slave) and the

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<sup>62</sup> Sophie Le Chartier is an applied anthropologist who has also worked for the Truth and Justice Commission.

<sup>63</sup> Stanley Harmon works as Educator in Art and Design at College de la Confiance. He is part-time lecturer at Rabindranath Tagore Institute and is also a resource person at Caudan Arts.

<sup>64</sup> Painter Nell Irvin, "How we think about the term 'enslaved' matters" in *The Guardian*, 14 August, 2019. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/14/slavery-in-america-1619-first-ships-jamestown> [Accessed February 2020]

perpetrator (slave-trader or slave owner) who caused the enslaved person to lose his/her freedom of choice and action.<sup>65</sup>

This important shift in language also translates into a change in ideology. As scholars of slavery, we understand the power of language to shape us as much as it changes those who read our work. Language should be used to honour people rather than perpetuate stereotypes or systems that dehumanise people based on their skin colour, amongst others. This lexical clarification before entering the field was important as it helped the CRSI team to locate the research within reflexivity and transformative pedagogy.

First, one line of argument here starts from the notion that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (Steedman, 1991: 53).<sup>66</sup> Data and facts are the constructions or results of interpretation: we have to do something with our sensory impressions if these are to be comprehensible and meaningful. This assertion follows a “belief that social reality is not external to the consciousness and language of people-members of a society as well as researchers (who, of course, are also members of a society)”.<sup>67</sup> Second, the issue of slavery in Mauritius is intrinsically linked with the history, memory and identity of the descendants of enslaved that are referred to as the ‘Creoles’ ethnic group. It was essential to reflect upon how to negotiate entrance in the field as native researchers and how to keep a relative distance with the topic that is being explored. It was important that the pupils and the school community did not see the researchers as Creole activists but as engaged researchers exploring the issue of representation of slavery.

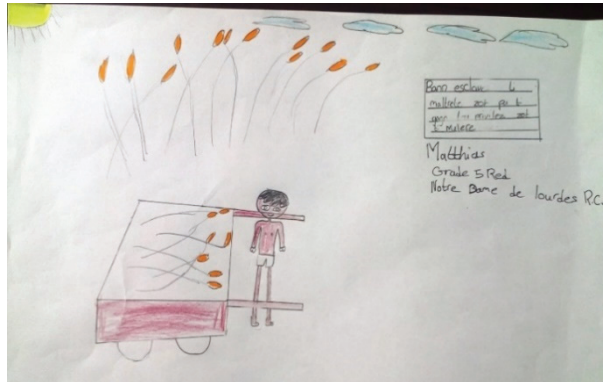
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<sup>65</sup> Cumbo-Floy, Andi, 2011. “Slaves vs Enslaved People – The Subtle, Strong Power of Words” Available from: <https://andilit.com/2011/10/12/slaves-vs-enslaved-people-the-subtle-strong-power-of-words/>[Accessed February 2020]

<sup>66</sup> Quoted from Alvessori, Mats and Sköldberg, Kaj 2000. *Reflexive Methodology. New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London: SAGE Publications, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

## Analysis



**Figure 15 Drawing by Matthias**

Pupil Matthias has drawn a male enslaved person pulling a cart loaded with what seems to be sugar cane. A pair of shorts is the only clothing that he is wearing. Moreover, particularly noteworthy is his facial expression: he is smiling despite having to work the whole day under the burning sun. In addition to his drawing, Matthias has chosen to include a message: "Slaves were ill-treated. They did not enjoy any privilege. They were miserable." The message shows a perfect understanding of the living and working conditions of enslaved people. Yet Matthias chose to portray a male enslaved person who is smiling. This may illustrate the resilience of the enslaved people.



**Figure 16 Drawing by Emilia**

In this drawing made by Emilia, there are two houses (the first one bigger than the other) near a river. A small girl is holding flowers in her hands with a smile on her face. The fact that the small girl is wearing a dress and that she is not working may indicate that Emilia wanted to portray the daughter of a slave-owner. The little girl is looking at the two enslaved persons who are working very hard under the scorching sun. These two images illustrate a sharp reality: the disparity between the experience of the enslaved and that of their owners (though here it is through the innocent eyes of a small girl).





**Figure 17 Drawing by Farell**

Farell has chosen to illustrate enslaved persons working with members of their family. An enslaved man with sweat rolling along his cheeks is cutting sugar cane under the scorching sun while a small child and a woman are helping him. It seems that this represent an enslaved family. On the left, an enslaved woman, who is seated on a bench, is busy working. She is either crying or sweat is rolling down her cheeks. In the background, an enslaved man and a boy are carrying something. There is also an enslaved family (father, mother and child) in the background. There is only one small hut in the diagram where it is written "*maison des esclaves*" (house of the enslaved people). Farell rightly draws attention to the strength of family ties for the enslaved persons. Very often enslaved children worked with their parents. A study of the Slave Census of 1835 has shown that in fact there were many enslaved families on large estates in Mauritius. One such example is the Bazile family owned by Julien Desjardins in the district of Flacq.



**Figure 18 Drawing by Serena**

On the left, two enslaved women are washing clothes in the river. In the background, an enslaved man is being whipped by the overseer. A small enslaved boy is in tears at the sight of this horrible scene. There is also an enslaved man with a sweaty face who is cutting down trees in the forest in the burning sun. Note that there is a child hiding behind the trees most probably horrified by the violence of the flogging scene. The fact

that the child is hiding may indicate the desire of the enslaved persons to escape from the horrors of slavery.



**Figure 19 Drawing by Severine**

In her drawing, Severine has described the working conditions of enslaved women. One enslaved woman is putting clothes out on the line. Another enslaved woman is cutting down trees and we can see tears or beads of sweat rolling down her cheek. A third enslaved woman is carrying straw. It looks like she is building a thatched house. Finally, there is an enslaved woman who has bent over to cut something. Drops of sweat are running down her face. Severine's portrayal of enslaved women as courageous and hard-working indicates an understanding of slavery based on modern concepts of gender. Here enslaved women are not only performing domestic work but also hard work such as cutting wood that normally was performed by enslaved men. She seems to question the notion of gendered division of enslaved labour.

### ***Findings & Some Historical Insights***

An analysis of the drawings has revealed that pupils prefer the portrayal of enslaved children and women, which is normal for their age. Furthermore, the themes of family ties, hard-work, resistance and resilience and gendered aspect of division of labour are recurrent in the drawings as illustrated by the five drawings that were chosen.

### ***Finding No.1: Enslaved children***

Little information is available on the leisure activities of enslaved children outside their working hours. It is believed that they spent most of their free time together with their families in the "camp des noirs" (slave camp) on the plantation. Though there was little time for play, there are several accounts about the leisure activities of enslaved children. For instance, in the West Indies, children had a strong liking for music. They made their own musical instruments and liked to sing and dance when they had the

opportunity to do so. Both enslaved children and adults were particularly fond of storytelling.<sup>68</sup>

Work represented an important aspect of the daily life of enslaved children from a very young age. At first the children had to adapt to the work of their parents and as they grew older, household or field tasks were allocated to them on a daily basis according to their age and strength.<sup>69</sup> In British slave colonies, such as Mauritius, children had to start to work for their owners as from the age of seven years old. For the enslaved children who were involved in non-agricultural activities or who lived in town, they were busy with the preparation of food, collecting fodder for the animals, cultivating the kitchen garden, and various other tasks.<sup>70</sup> All enslaved labourers who worked in the field, children as well as adults, were divided according to their strength into “gangs” or work teams. Old and weak enslaved persons also worked with the gangs, all according to their strength. In Mauritius (and many other slave colonies), age was perhaps the most crucial factor in occupational stratification on any estate: the ages preferred were from 15 to 39 years as the enslaved were at their most productive.<sup>71</sup> In his study of slavery in the West Indies, Barry Higman (1984) has asserted that children did not become profitable until after 14 years and had to be supported until then.<sup>72</sup> In the British Empire it was not until the 1840s, after the abolition of slavery, that public schooling for the children of formerly enslaved persons was introduced.

#### ***Finding No.2: Enslaved women at work***

Planters in slave societies such as Mauritius forced enslaved women and men to perform exhausting work in the fields with little regard for sex or gender. Gender was especially important on sugar estates. Physically arduous tasks such as clearing, hoeing, planting and harvesting were thought to be best fulfilled by men. The ratio of male to female slaves on sugar estates in the West Indies has been used to indicate this preference for males. Higman (1984) has shown that the slave population on sugar estates consisted of only about one-third of women although on some estates, because

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<sup>68</sup> George F. Tyson and Arnold R. Highfield (Eds.), *The Kamina Folk: Slavery and slave Life in the Danish West Indies*. U.S Virgin Islands: Virgin Islands Humanities Council, 1994.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies. St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix*. (Ed. B.W. Higman). Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 1992.

<sup>71</sup> Teelock, Vijaya, 1993. *Bitter Sugar. Slavery and Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Mauritius*. PhD Dissertation: University of London. p. 142.

<sup>72</sup> Higman, Barry, 1984. *Slave Population and Economy of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834*. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, p. 74.

the sugar industry was no longer dominant, the percentage of women had reached 45 percent by 1832. He also observed that the sex ratio fell as the size of the ownership increased.<sup>73</sup>

How about the situation in Mauritius? In her seminal book *Bitter Sugar*, Vijaya Teelock (1993) has calculated that on estates belonging to the largest owners (those owning one hundred or more enslaved persons), 37 percent of the slave population were women. Medium slave-owners had between 39-41 percent women while small owners 39-43 percent women.<sup>74</sup> Through her study of the Protector's reports, Teelock (1993) has revealed that during the era of economic expansion, (when slave trade was completely eradicated) since additional male labour could not be found, enslaved women were used to perform labour that, in a situation of adequate male labour, would have been assigned to males.<sup>75</sup>

### ***Finding No.3: Gendered aspect of division of labour***

Slave societies adopted a profound gendered aspect of division of labour between enslaved men and women. Historians<sup>76</sup> who have adopted a gendered analysis of slavery have shown that enslaved women had little access to skilled occupations, and a higher proportion of women than men were field workers. Beyond the fields, gender continued to structure work. Enslaved men occupied almost all occupations that were considered as skilled. Men were the mechanics, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, masons, carters, carriage drivers, sugar makers, boiler men, and furnace men. The most highly skilled enslaved men enjoyed some prestige and received extra rations and authority over the other bondsmen. On the other hand, enslaved women had a smaller range of skilled crafts, like cooking, midwifery, and nursing, and those granted less prestige and fewer material rewards to the women, and little or no additional mobility. Slave-owners did not consider domestic work — the most common female specialization — as skilled, although house servants sometimes had privileged access to the used clothes and leftover food of their owners.

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<sup>73</sup> Higman, Barry, 1984. *Slave Population*. p. 74.

<sup>74</sup> Teelock, Vijaya, 1993. *Bitter Sugar*, p. 143.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed discussion about the gendered aspect of slavery, see for example: Beckles, Hilary M., 1990. *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Bush, Barbara, 1990. *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650–1838*. London: James Curry; Moitt, Bernard, 2001. *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635–1848*. Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press; Morrissey, Marietta, 1989. *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas.

Furthermore, while enslaved women were expected to show strength and sturdiness in the fields, white women ideally did little or no outdoor work. Afro-Malagasy women were known to perform agricultural work in Africa and it was considered normal for enslaved women to work in the fields. Many accounts from the West Indies report that the enslaved women had their newborns with them when they worked in the sugar fields. The very youngest children were normally attached to the mother's back while she worked. The slightly older children of 1-1½ years slept or played at the edge of the field, where the adults could keep an eye on them. There is a great probability that the situation was the same in Mauritius in the days of slavery. It should be noted that Reverend Patrick Beaton who lived in Mauritius during five years wrote in 1858 that after the abolition of apprenticeship formerly enslaved women stopped working in the fields and chose to remain at home to nurse their children.<sup>77</sup>

### ***The Way Forward***

The presentation of the findings at the evening round table at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund (date) gave rise to an interesting debate on iconic representation in adults' works of art portraying enslaved persons. Hanna Pitkin (1967), perhaps, provides one of the most straightforward definitions: to represent is simply to "make present again."<sup>78</sup> In the on-going debate about representation, it is important that works of art demonstrate not only the narratives of pain and struggle but also joy and pride. In the case of the children's drawings, it was suggested that school children could be invited to make drawings before and after visiting the slavery museum. This would provide an interesting comparative study about their views before and after visiting the museum. The CRSI team intends to conduct this activity with other schools. This activity has shown that visual arts can be used as a means through which children can learn about the troubled and cruel history of enslavement in Mauritius and other slave societies. However, omission or inaccurate portrayal of the sufferings of the enslaved persons can do lasting societal damage to the future generation and how they view the world. As the children themselves have shown it, representations of slavery should celebrate the strengths of the enslaved family as a cultural institution and agency for survival, and bear witness to the Afro-Malagasy's determined struggle for freedom, equality, and dignity.

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<sup>77</sup> Patrick Beaton, *Creoles and Coolies or Five Years in Mauritius*. London: James Nisbet & Co., 1859.

<sup>78</sup> Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*. University of California Press, 1967.



## 14

# Le Quartier de Rivière Noire, Lieu de Reminiscence de l'esclavage et du marronnage

*Benjamin Moutou*<sup>79</sup>

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Grand comme deux fois et demi l'île Rodrigues, le quartier de Rivière Noire est la seule région du pays qui a gardé un cachet particulier lié à son passé servile. Aujourd'hui encore 180 ans après l'abolition de l'esclavage, ce quartier reste un livre ouvert.

Quels sont les traits marquants qui ont perduré malgré le passage du temps pour nous livrer son passé ? C'est ce que nous essayerons de faire revivre au cours de cet exposé.

Quelle que soit la route que l'on choisit pour pénétrer dans ce district, l'on est frappé d'emblée par la splendeur d'un paysage grandiose, encadré par des chaînes de montagnes d'un bleu azur et ceinturé au loin d'une mer d'émeraude et de saphir.

Rivière Noire aujourd'hui : ce sont aussi ces champs de canne qui s'amenuisent pour faire place à de grands travaux d'infrastructures afin de transformer les lieux en une région phare du tourisme haut de gamme sur tout son littoral. Que de changements dans ce quartier où, il y a à peine trois quarts de siècle, le paludisme sévissait sur une population de descendants d'esclaves que l'on avait laissé pour compte durant toute la période coloniale.

Les descendants des colons, détenteurs de concessions, avaient délaissé leur demeure seigneuriale de la région côtière pour migrer vers les hauts plateaux et fuir la malaria dès le milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Seuls y sont restés les descendants d'esclaves chassés des domaines sucriers après l'abolition de l'esclavage. Ils ont élu domicile dans

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<sup>79</sup> Benjamin Moutou était fonctionnaire pendant de nombreuses années dans le secteur des coopératives. Il a effectué des recherches et a écrit de manière extensive sur l'Histoire de la communauté créole de Maurice. Il était un des commissaires de la Commission Justice et Vérité, créée pour étudier l'héritage de l'esclavage et de l'engagisme à Maurice et faire des recommandations.

la région côtière de cette Rivière Noire profonde où les poissons et les fruits de mer leur procuraient une subsistance contre la faim.

Ça et là, ils ont construit des hameaux de fortune devenus villages à Petite Rivière Noire, à Case Noyale, à Chamarel, à La Gaulette, au Morne Brabant à Baie du Cap et aussi dans de petits coins excentrés tels que Trou Chenille. Aujourd'hui encore, ces villages sont pratiquement les seuls à Maurice où la majorité des habitants sont essentiellement d'origine africaine et malgache.

Durant toute l'occupation britannique, ils furent considérés comme des « children of a lesser god » et dès lors, ils furent laissés pour compte car les colons ne 'en voulaient plus puisqu'il fallait les payer. Quoi d'étonnant si ces villages furent dépourvus de tout: point de centres médicaux, d'écoles primaires et d'autres services essentiels. Les gens vivaient et mouraient selon la loi de la sélection naturelle lors des grandes épidémies. Végétant quasiment en autarcie et dans l'illettrisme, demain ne pouvait être un autre jour. Leur seul recours : c'était la pêche et quelques petits métiers juste bons pour leur procurer une protection minime contre la faim.

Ils devenaient pêcheurs de père en fils et tombaient dans les filets des intermédiaires allogènes pour la commercialisation de leurs prises et pour un approvisionnement en biens et services. D'autres encore étaient gardiens de campement ou de chassés ; certains étaient engagés dans la fabrication du charbon et dans une multitude de petits métiers ; les métiers agricoles leur étaient interdits. Les femmes, elles, étaient engagées dans les marées salantes ou les filatures d'aloès ; certaines étaient employées comme domestiques dans les campements des nantis.

Il faut attendre la fin des années 50 du siècle dernier pour que cette partie de la Rivière Noire sorte de sa torpeur. D'une part, la disparition du paludisme provoqua le retour des familles franco-mauriciennes et d'autres nantis dans les bungalows situés aux abords des belles plages et, d'autre part, la découverte des nappes d'eau souterraines donna un nouveau souffle à la culture de la canne dans ces régions pauvres en précipitations. Mais c'est le développement du tourisme qui devint le véritable catalyseur pour transformer ce district.

L'octroi du droit de vote avec le suffrage universel en 1958 et la construction des écoles primaires ont aidé à apporter une nouvelle prise de conscience. Dans les années 2000, un établissement secondaire fut construit dans ce district. Mais ailleurs dans le pays, d'autres concitoyens d'origine africaine et malgache et apparentés élèvent la voix, ils veulent connaître leur histoire. Cette démarche met un terme à l'Histoire de Maurice racontée uniquement à travers la perspective des colons.

Le phénomène du malaise créole enclenché par le regretté prêtre Roger Cerveaux, que l'on pourrait qualifier comme la naissance d'un *creole consciousness*, a contribué



pour situer la place de la communauté créole dans la République de Maurice. Parallèlement, il y a cette quête pour connaître leur histoire. C'est dans ce contexte que le quartier de la Rivière Noire apparaît comme un laboratoire à ciel ouvert, dépositaire des pages d'histoires écrites dans la sueur et le sang des descendants d'esclaves. Ils apprennent à mieux connaître l'horreur de l'esclavage vécue par leurs ancêtres, leur vie sur les négriers pendant la traite et la rigidité du Code Noir. Ils apprennent que leurs ancêtres furent aussi des vrais bâtisseurs de ce pays car pas une seule pierre ne fut posée, pas un édifice ne fut construit sans leurs apports.

Grâce aux récits des voyageurs tels que le Chevalier de la Motte, Bernardin de Saint Pierre et le Révérend Ryan, nous avons appris à mieux connaître un autre vrai visage de l'esclavage et du marronnage lié à la montagne du Morne Brabant et à d'autres lieux du pays. Le cimetière de Trou Chenille au Morne Brabant\* est un autre lieu de mémoire que nous rappelle cet article du Code Noir : « Les Esclaves baptisés dans le Christ seront enterrés en terre sainte, les autres la nuit venue seront enterrés dans le champ le plus voisin ».

Le 20 juillet 2008, l'inscription de la montagne du Morne Brabant comme patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO est un vibrant hommage rendu à ces milliers d'esclaves qui avaient souffert le martyre en essayant de fuir l'enfer de l'esclavage : ils ont choisi de vivre en marrons dans les remparts et les montagnes escarpés au risque d'être décapités par les soldats du roi et d'avoir leur corps déchiqueté par les chiens aux crocs sanguinaires. L'Histoire veut que d'autres esclaves en fuite se jetèrent des falaises du Morne haut de 525 mètres pour rejoindre leurs ancêtres bien-aimés. Mais l'Histoire du marronnage reste à bien des égards une histoire non écrite car emporté par le vent qui ne sait pas lire !

La quête entreprise par les chercheurs de l'Université de Maurice et d'autres passionnés d'Histoire, de concert avec le Morne Heritage Trust Fund et le Centre Nelson Mandela, pour faire toute la lumière sur l'histoire de l'esclavage et du marronnage est loin d'être terminée. Elle se veut pluri-disciplinaire comprenant des études anthropologiques, ethnologiques, socio-économiques, politiques et culturelles.

La Commission Justice et Vérité a livré son rapport en 2011 et a mis l'accent sur l'importance de tout mettre en œuvre pour que les Mauriciens dont les ancêtres ont connu les affres de l'esclavage retrouvent la dignité et le respect, et la place qui leur est due en ce début du troisième millénaire car rien ne sera plus comme avant.

S'agissant des descendants d'esclaves à travers le pays, le constat de la Commission est accablant :

- à l'orée du troisième millénaire, une majorité d'entre eux se trouvent encore parmi les citoyens les plus mal lotis ; ce sont des habitants des cités ouvrières dépourvues d'aménités les plus élémentaires ;
- l'enseignement dispensé tant au niveau primaire que secondaire aux enfants doit être repensé au vu du constat d'échec et des maigres résultats obtenus chaque année - rien d'étonnant s'ils ne sont pas embauchés dans la fonction publique et les corps para-publics ;
- leur absence quasi-complète dans les métiers agricoles, phénomène lié à l'abolition de l'esclavage ;
- leur absence également dans les secteurs du commerce et de l'industrie touchant les petites et moyennes entreprises ;
- leur omni-présence dans des métiers de dur labeur et mal rémunérés ; et
- contrairement aux autres communautés, ils n'ont pas de groupes de pression à même de faire entendre leur voix auprès des dirigeants, ce qui fait que leurs griefs ne sont pas pris en compte.

Toutes ces problématiques ont fait l'objet d'études scientifiques par les responsables de la Commission. Si un certain nombre de recommandations soumises ont été mises à exécution surtout dans le domaine socio-culturel et que d'autres sont en voie d'être réalisées, il reste un long chemin à parcourir pour assainir la situation dans plusieurs domaines : éducatif, emploi, foncier, logement, le racisme qui perdure, et d'autres secteurs tant décriés ; et ce, pour que les tares et les séquelles de l'esclavage ayant marqué ces Mauriciens ne soient qu'un mauvais souvenir.

Enfin, la démarche des autorités de créer un musée de l'esclavage dans la capitale et un centre d'interprétation concernant le marronnage au Morne seront les deux témoins visant à rendre un vibrant hommage à la mémoire de ces êtres humains victimes d'un crime contre l'humanité.

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## Artefacts Relating to Slavery in the Mauritius Museums Council

*Deoraz Ramracheya*

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In 1826, Julien Desjardins and Louis Bouton made a request to Governor Sir Lowry Cole to set up a museum in Mauritius. In 1880, the Mauritius Institute was established (Ordinance No.19 of 1880) by Governor Sir George Ferguson Bowen at the request of the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences. In 1884, the Mauritius Institute was inaugurated by Sir John Pope Hennessy. The Mauritius Institute had a Public Institute, a Public Museum and a Public Library for the purpose of promoting the general study and cultivation of the various branches and departments of Arts, Sciences, Literature and Philosophy. The Mauritius Institute functioned as a national scientific and cultural institution mainly dedicated to carrying out research and disseminating knowledge.

The Mauritius Institute was replaced by the Mauritius Museums Council in August 2000. The Mauritius Museums Council, a body corporate, is responsible for the public museums service under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage. The Mauritius Museums Council has two national museums and five specialised museums under its purview. The National History Museum of Mahebourg comprising of five galleries depicts with short texts and illustrations the history of Mauritius. Paintings, maps, lithographs, watercolour drawings, prints, ship models, archaeological objects and artefacts are exhibited.

Various objects related to slavery are displayed in the Dutch period, French period and British period galleries.

### ***Dutch gallery***

In 1641 the Dutch commander, Adriaen van der Stel inaugurated the slave trade to Mauritius. He brought about a hundred slaves from the east coast of Madagascar.

### ***The Speaker***

*The Speaker*, a pirate ship under the command of pirate John Bowen was wrecked in 1702 at Grand River South East. Maritime archaeological research started in 1979-1980. Various objects were recovered from the wreck and are displayed at the National History Museum at Mahébourg.



**Figure 20** Collection of trading beads of the ship *Speaker*

There are garnets, agates and glass beads some of which have been manufactured in Venice. They had an important role in the slave trade as they were used as trading currency.

### ***French gallery***

The number of slaves in Mauritius increased considerably during the French period (1721-1810). Slave population of Mauritius at the time of abolition of slavery, in 1835, was 76,774 out of the total population of 101,469. Fig.19 shows slave beads recovered from *St. Géran* wreck.



**Figure 21** Glass beads used as currency for slave trade

### ***Saint Gérard***

The *Saint Gérard*, a vessel belonging to the East India Company, was launched at Lorient, France, in 1736. It was wrecked during its fourth crossing on the night of 17 August 1744 as a consequence of faulty steering near Ile d'Ambre off the northern coast of Isle de France (Mauritius). On its way to Isle de France, the *Saint Gérard* had called at Gorée Island and 20 black Yoloff men and 10 black women came on board. They all perished in the wreck. A marine archaeology mission, led by Jean-Yves Blot (Marine Archaeologist) and Alain Le Houx, (French Engineer) explored the wreck in 1979 with the agreement of the Mauritian government.

### ***British gallery***

These tags below are marked with a number and were probably used to identify slaves. They were recently given to the museum by Radha Krishna Ramasawmy and Van Lanza.



**Figure 22 Rectangular shaped Badges**

The badges with two shanks marked with a number and the letter 'A' for artillery, sewn onto clothing or uniform.



**Figure 23 Octagonal shaped Badges**

Badges marked with a number and the letters ART. For artillery or GEN for Génie for the French term for engineering.



**Figure 24 Circular shaped Badges**

Badges marked with a number and stamped with a fleur-de-lis motif.



**Figure 25 Lead tags**

These temporary transfer tags were marked with a number and placed around the neck of a slave for identification



**Figure 26 Early 19th century trading beads from the shipwreck Gustave Edouard (1845)**



### ***Manilla***

African traders considered manillas to be a form of currency. 2-10 manillas used to buy one male slave in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its market value is roughly \$15 (Rs 435). The manillas, which are rarer and valuable, are those of African origin are called, 'King' or 'Queen' Manillas.



**Figure 27 Manilla Token or Slave trade Bracelets**

Early 18th century slave trade bracelets from the *Speaker* shipwreck (1702).

### ***Manilla Token or Slave trade Bracelets***

These bronze rings called *Manillas* were made in Birmingham, England during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and used to acquire slaves. This Manilla slave token has been found on the wreck of the English schooner *Duoro* that sank off the Isles of Scilly in 1843



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**Figure 28 Ankle Fetters**

These 19th century ankle fetters have been hand forged in Calabar south-east of Nigeria. Calabar was a major slave trade port from the late 17th to the 19th century.



**Figure 29 Ankle Fetters, Bar type**

Fetters consisting of a half loop with the eyelets closed by a short bar bearing a button on one end and at the other a hole for the passage of a peg. Captives were generally chained by twos.



**Figure 30 Ankle Fetters, Chain type**

Fetters consisting of a half bracelet ending at each end by an eyelet which receives a kind of rectangular loop. These loops engage into each other closing the half bracelet. Through one of the eyelets passes a ring, which is the end of a short chain terminating in a ring through which passes a chain thus locking the ankle fetters.

#### ***The wreck of *Le Coureur*, a testimony of the illegal slave trade***

*Le Coureur* was a small trading ship built in 1818 in Grand Port. Launched on 28 August 1818, the ship was recorded as a lugger and was authorised to trade with Bourbon Island and Madagascar. *Le Coureur* then belonged to Athanase Touche and was successively commanded by Captains Louis, L'Hoste and Tasdebois. In 1820 *Le Coureur* began to engage in illegal slave trading on the coasts of Madagascar and Zanzibar, with Auguste L'Hoste as owner and Charles Letord alias Dorval as Captain. On 3 March 1821, *Le Coureur* transporting a cargo of approximately 100 slaves was pursued by *Henrietta*, a government coasting vessel and was wrecked at Pointe aux Feuilles. The crew managed to unload the slaves and partially destroyed the ship to erase all evidence of their trafficking. *Le Coureur* was discovered in 2004 and was explored by maritime archaeologists led by Mr Yann von Arnim in 2005.



**Figure 31 Underwater Archaeological campaign at Pointe aux Feuilles in 2005**

*Slave-related artefacts retrieved from 'Le Coureur' wreck*

*Iron rings*

Highly concrete iron rings, one with flat section and two with circular section were probably chain links used in slave fetters.



**Figure 32** Iron ring of fether

*Lead Tag*

A small lead disk with a hole at one edge was identified as a tag that might have been marked with a number and placed around the neck of the slave for identification purposes.



**Figure 33** Lead tag potentially being used as identification marker for the slaves

# 16

## Designing a Trail of Memorial Sites of Slavery in Pamplemousses, Mauritius

*Maurina Soodhin-Runghen*  
*Member and GIS Specialist, CRSI*

### Introduction

A trail is an established route linking sites of significance to an area's heritage. The trail serves to raise awareness about the local heritage and promote the history of the area while providing an educational journey to a diverse audience. The link between the sites can be a geographical feature of the area -as for a natural trail- or it can be a topic such as learning about slavery in general or a theme such as learning about the story of the slaves. For the present project, the last two purposes were chosen, through the trail, the visitor learns about 18<sup>th</sup> century slavery in Mauritius, while the sites give an insight into the life of the slaves in Pamplemousses. Pamplemousses is a good case study, as in the small geographic locality, we find the history of slaves who were owned privately, by the church and by the government institutions. They were employed in activities that ranged from domestic work to the production of gun powder to the maintenance of the botanical gardens that brought recognition and fame to Isle de France. The village also represented the various phases in a slave's life and contribution in Mauritius, from slave trade and settlement to their economic and military activity, and even their health and even their demise.

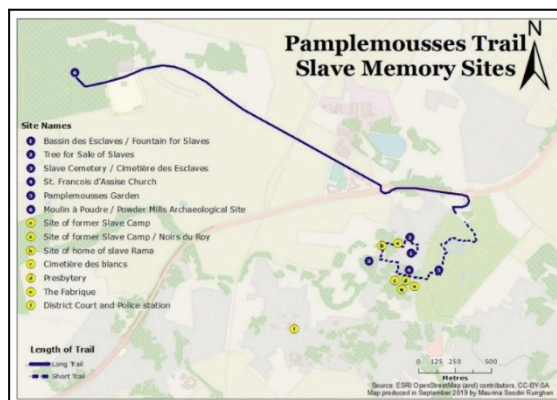


Figure 34 Slave Memory Sites in Pamplemousses

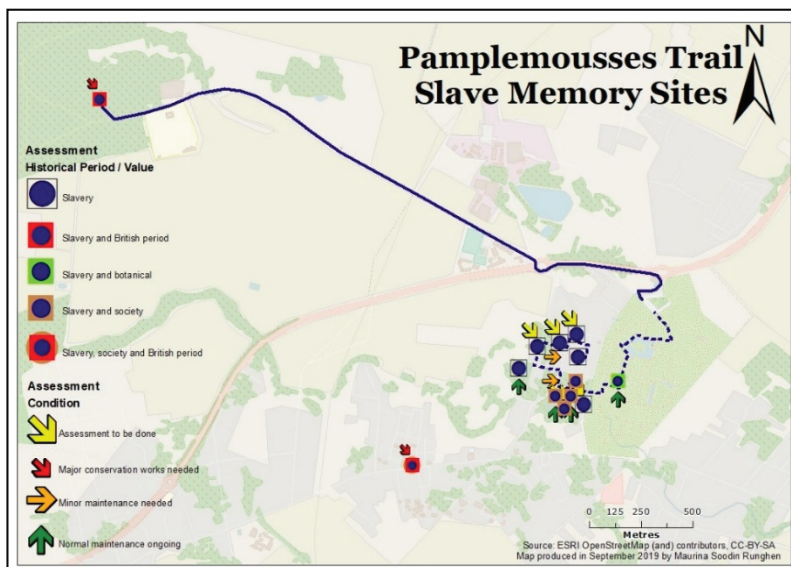
### *The sites on the trail*

The sites included in the trail are described in more detail in the booklet launched by the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, under the aegis of the University of Mauritius; the National Heritage Fund and the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture in September 2019.

### *The choice of sites*

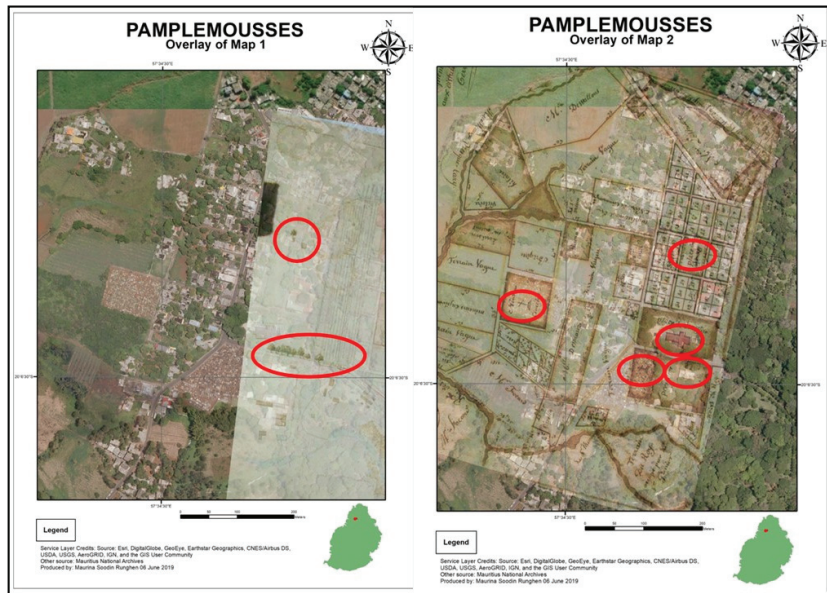
The choice of sites was mainly influenced by the following:

1. The history of each site and its link to that of Pamplémousses and to the theme of the trail was assessed.
2. The condition of each site was assessed to ensure that each site can receive visitors and that the features of the site that best demonstrate the historical aspect is still present.



**Figure 35 Sites along the Trail**

The main difficulty lay mainly in the change that the landscape saw over the past centuries. The location of some sites was retraced through oral history, while others had to be identified through the overlay of maps using Geographical Information System. The steps followed for this process are briefly outlined as follows. High Resolution pictures or scans were taken of historical maps, which were then georeferenced (Briggs, 2008; Florance, ND; Géza Király et al., 2008; Gregory N. Ian and Ell S. Paul, 2007) and digitised.



### ***Why propose a trail instead of opening sites and buildings to visitors***

- According to Croes and Semrad, cultural tourism is emerging as a growing market segment which small island destinations are trying to accede to through policy considerations and broadening of tourist offerings (2013, p. 470). Aruba, a small island, is presented as a case study. Despite being one of the most competitive destinations in the Caribbean region, (Craigwell, 2007; Croes, 2011; Jayawardena & Ramajeessingh, 2003 in Croes and Semrad, 2013, p. 471), it, chose to increase the range of cultural attractions towards “more authentic experiences” to attract “culturally sensitive tourists”, encourage tourists spending and stimulate the local entrepreneurial sector to maintain its appeal. Based on their interview of departing tourists in December 2008, Croes and Semrad found that tourists participating in cultural activities such as “entertainment, to arts, crafts, photography, books, music, education, and historical sites” contributed US\$23.14 million, that is, about 2% of the total international receipts of Aruba(2013, p. 483). Moreover, though the multiplier effect, cultural tourists also generated “US\$8,931,821 in indirect economic impacts for the island” through spending in categories such as transportation, shopping, food, accommodation, among others (Croes and Semrad, 2013, p. 485). However, only the ‘purposeful cultural tourists’ who chose a destination primarily to learn and experience its culture spent more time and money in formal cultural destinations such as museums, historic sites, galleries and festivals, while those who considered sightseeing as more important or those who considered cultural tourism as no motive at all, seemed to prefer

experiencing the culture of a place through “observation and interactional aspects with the host culture in the form of everyday life, practices, and behaviors” (Croes and Semrad, 2013, p. 482) which generated more tourist excitement. Thus, the study concluded, inter alia, that “although the tourist may be involved with all kinds of cultural activities while on vacation, the tourist may not consider himself as a cultural tourist” (Croes and Semrad, 2013, p. 486).

- The cultural trail is thus a means to not only provide an authentic and unique experience to the visitors of the region but also to present the visitors with the opportunity to walk around in the village and experience the daily life while learning about the sites and the theme. At the same time. The local community will also have the opportunity to benefit from this endeavour through the indirect benefits and the prospect of diversifying their activities. The trail is expected to result in accrued recognition of the history and importance of the area, while improving the interests of the local community in the preservation of the heritage of the area.

#### ***Aspects considered in designing the trail***

- Target audience

Given the importance of the theme, the target audience for the trail is varied, be it in terms of geographic origin, age group or even level of education. However, this also means that their needs and expectations are varied.

- Visitor experience

A trail can be guided or self-guided. Both options have their advantages and disadvantages, and both have requirements that would need to be catered to. The first will cater to larger groups that are already organized by a tour operator or a group leader. It includes a guide’s personal touch and appreciation, which could contribute to personalizing the experience of the trail. Furthermore, it is easier to arrange for access to private spaces for such groups as the time slots can be pre-arranged, and thus a balance between private and ‘public’ use of the spaces can be arranged more easily.



Type of audience	Senior citizens & associations	Family (2 adults + 3 children)	School children	Foreign tourists
Information to cover	History: sites, slavery, country			
Pace	Relaxed pace		Normal pace	Relaxed pace
Rest stops	Frequent	at reasonable distance		
Type of guiding	by Association staff / officer	Self-guided	by teacher	Self-guided by Tour Operator
Language	Kreol	Kreol / French / English		Multi-lingual
Additional expectations		Activities / immersive experience for children		Souvenirs shopping

On the other hand, the self-guided tour is cheaper to maintain as it entails less staffing costs. Visitors can start and end the trails at their own time and pace, thus resulting in a better appreciation of the sites that the visitor feels connected to. Interaction with the local community will also be more candid and authentic. However, the installation and maintenance of supporting infrastructure such as information panels and trail signage will be crucial in the trail.

It is proposed that a mixture of both approaches be adopted in the long run. That is, that the infrastructure be put in place for self-guided tours, but that a limited number of organized tours also be put in place on specific days and time according to the staffing capacity. Furthermore, staff from institutions such as primary and secondary school teachers, associations staff can also be trained through regular workshops to ensure that the large groups can be catered for at least cost. Local volunteers could also be trained in a similar manner to assist in peak seasons.

#### ***Resources and infrastructure needed***

1. **Sharing information** (will need to be updated on a regular basis to maintain interest):
  - a. Brochures
    - i. Long version with easy to follow map and comprehensive text for self guided tours.
    - ii. Short version with easy to follow map and minimum text for those following guides.

- b. Web Applications (will also need IT proficient staff to create, update and maintain the applications)
  - c. Information Panels (will also need maintenance)
    - i. Can be on any medium such as wooden, aluminium, stone plaques.
    - ii. Should provide the main information about each site.
    - iii. Should also include the name of the trail, distance and direction to the next site.
2. Marking the trail
- a. Directional signs along the trail either as signposts or incorporated on the footpath, which will also raise awareness on the trail and sites and help in branding the area
3. **Additional infrastructure needed:** Restrooms, Parking, Restaurants, public seating facilities, Information Point
4. **Other facilities that would enhance visitor experience:** Banks, Bureau de Change, Bus Stop, Fuel Pump, other places of interest

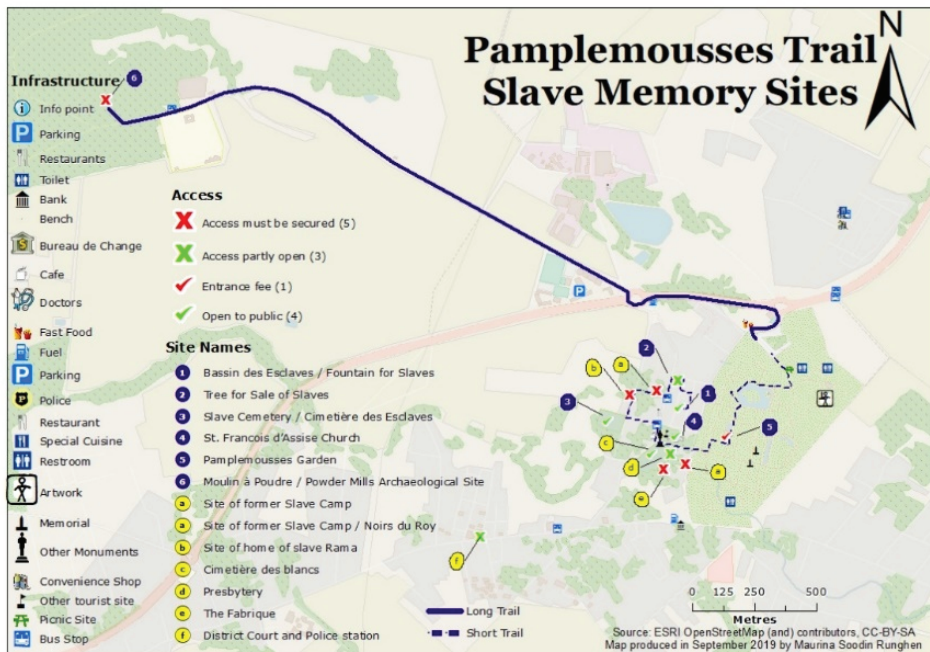


Figure 36. Infrastructure and other considerations that influenced the design of the trail

### *Proposals for the management of the trail*

- a. For the purpose of this project, the model of the eco-museum as described by Davis et al (2010, p. 81) was adopted. According to them, the eco-museum is characterised by its strong link to the geographical locality, out of which a few heritage resources are identified as the symbols of the area. The local community is a main actor in the conservation and interpretation of these sites, and thus claim 'ownership" not only of the sites but also of the trail itself and of the aspects that will be promoted through the trail. Advantages to the local community include renewed pride in the place, rescue of heritage sites they value and even economic benefits.
- b. In order to reach this result, it is proposed that other formal stakeholders be also identified and involved in the management of the trail in line with their respective mandates and existing resources:
  - National Heritage Fund (NHF)
    - Monitoring impact on sites.
    - Maintenance of sites and infrastructure.
  - District Council
    - Cleaning & basic maintenance of sites and infrastructure.
  - NHF & Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture (NMCAC)
    - Preparing & disseminating materials.
  - SILWF / SWC
    - Guiding of senior citizens & associations.
  - Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority
    - Promoting trail.
  - Mauritius Tourism Authority, NHF & NMCAC
    - Training & accreditation of guides.

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## Living Legacy or “Museumification”: Chagossian Musical Heritage

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Music is of vital importance to humans. For Bannan (2014), Music is “embedded in the human genome” and humans are “hard-wired for music.” Koelsch (2012) summarises the social benefits afforded by music as the “Seven Cs”: contact, cognition, co-pathy, communication, co-ordination, co-operation, cohesion. Ruud (2012) identifies four areas of social and personal health which benefit from active music making:

- Vitality (emotional life, aesthetic sensibility, pleasures);
- Agency (sense of mastery and empowerment, social recognition)
- Belonging (network, social capital),
- Meaning (continuity of tradition. Transcendental values and hope)

Despite its central place in human life, music is generally not well represented in museums. As an ephemeral and transient form of communication it exists in the moment and its meaning, life and vitality are not well conveyed by the musical instruments and musical scores which are sometimes used to represent it. Such artefacts provide few clues about the musical life of communities and individuals or the actual music which was practised. Furthermore, the accounts of outsiders, such as those by Arago in Mauritius in the 1820s or by Dussercle on the Chagos Islands in the 1930s, are glimpses by outsiders into the musical life of a community and are often coloured by religious or social prejudice. The voices and experiences of the community themselves are lost. Similarly, transcriptions of music into Western notation often force musical practice into the limitations of an alien musical system and reduce the complex multi-sensory communication system of music to just pitch and rhythm.

Agreement exists among scholars that the Ségá and related forms in the former French colonies of the southwest Indian Ocean, developed as a form of escape, emotional uplift and social bonding in the harsh lives of the slave community. (Considine 2013). “By fashioning instruments made from the natural materials found on the plantation and getting together to sing and dance, the slaves were able to find solace and creativity in music and entertainment.”(Boswell 2006: 62) Basil Considine’s

historic researches into Séga in Mauritius trace the history back to the first escaped slaves of the Dutch in 1640 (Considine 2013: 40). His research reveals accounts of secret nocturnal gatherings during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where slaves and escaped slaves would meet for night-time Séga parties, guarded by dogs. Quoting the writings of Auguste Billiard from 1822 he also describes Séga parties very similar to those in modern day Mauritius, which he summarises as:

- Group dancing around a bonfire in hidden locations
- Dancing and music from late at night to early morning
- Use of alcohol
- Improvised singing and dancing which were “imitative, frequently using call and response for group songs and choruses” (Considine 2013:140)
- Athletic dancing, often led by women

Oral traditions of music, rooted in communities and social practice, link us with the past. In Mauritius, an unbroken community tradition of Séga has been maintained in families, friendships, daily life, festivals and celebrations since the days of slavery. Although its purpose and application have adapted over time, this living tradition, unique to Mauritius, is probably our best and most vivid representation of the ‘music of slavery’. Like our spoken language, music carries within it the history, social structures, values and norms of a community and provides a means of connection and emotional expression for individuals and communities, uniting people with each other, and their ancestors.

Such vibrant and living musical traditions have been all but lost in England, where I live. My dramatic encounter with the living musical traditions of the Indian Ocean in England was a profound and life changing experience for me and many others.

As a result of the British Overseas Territories Act (2002)<sup>80</sup>, which gave right of abode in the UK to first generation Chagossians (and the second generation born between 1969 and 1985), hundreds of Chagossians began to migrate to England (from Mauritius and the Seychelles) and settled in Crawley, West Sussex, due to its proximity to Gatwick Airport. By 2009, about 3,000 Chagossians has settled in the town. I was the head of music in one of four state secondary schools in the town, serving the side of Crawley where most Chagossians were settling in rented accommodation. The arrival of the Chagossians – who were often referred to as ‘Mauritians’, even if they came from the Seychelles – was problematic in many respects. Their arrival was unplanned, unfunded

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<sup>80</sup>British Overseas Territories Acts (2002) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/8/contents>.

and - to many schools - unwelcome. To schools they represented an unforeseen demand on resources, often needing additional support and secondary schools feared they would damage the exam results on which school reputations and resources depended on comparative league-table rankings. The Chagossians themselves experienced hardship and discrimination, struggling to find accommodation and to remain financially solvent in a country which still demanded they pay for full citizenship, visas and passports.

One day in 2009 during a normal music lesson, I let a group of Chagossian students in year 9 work in a friendship group, and it was here I encountered their exceptional musicality, as they played with others from their own community. The performance was of an exceptional standard, and immediately impressed me and all the other members of the class, who began to look on the new arrivals in a new light. Asking to see if they also had musical friends, more arrived over the coming days and weeks to 'jam' in a practice room. I soon discovered there was not a Chagossian in the school who didn't sing, play or dance. Over time a vast repertoire of songs and improvised pieces emerged, eventually completely altering music education at our school.

They displayed exceptional timing, control and instrumental/vocal technique, highly developed ensemble skills and a remarkable sensitivity to changes in mood, tempo and dynamics. They had a creative and improvisatory approach to music making, a real sense of style and 'flow'. They played with commitment, passion, communication and energy, particularly when performing within their own traditions. They also displayed rapid learning by ear/observation and remarkable musical memory. This was the result of family and community music making which they had grown up with, and a musical enculturation process which linked them to their ancestors. As I became a friend to them and many Chagossian families I observed that, like the Suyá people, observed by Seeger (1987: 86), music for the Chagossians "created euphoria out of silence, a community out of the collection of residences, a socialised adult out of physical matter."

In 2009 there were about 80 Chagossians in the school, representing one in 12 of the school population. By 2011 most Chagossians were involved in one of our performance groups and/or involved in classroom coaching and skills development projects. The Chagossians played music from their own cultural traditions, but also worked across musical cultures and genres and in a variety of ensembles, notably the school choir. The success and skill of their music making challenged the prejudices they had first encountered at the school and brought the Chagossians to its heart. The high public profile of the group, appearing frequently on BBC Radio, winning awards and frequently reported on in newspapers and journals, obliged the school to take them seriously.

These musical discoveries were the beginning of a seven-year journey which transformed the attitudes of teachers and pupils at the school and altered our approach and attitudes to teaching, developing a more culturally responsive and flexible curriculum. It extended, expanded and improved the quality of our school ensembles and led to local, national and international success for the Chagossian drummers and the school choir. It also raised the aspirations of the Chagossians and other students at the school and led to musical encounters and exchanges in musical practice between the Chagossians and other musical cultures and ensembles.

Photos from the event "Chagos is Calling" that took place at the Hawth Theatre in Crawley, West Sussex. (Photos by Patrick Allen)



**Figure 37 Chagossian Jean-Noel Narainen sings an original composition about forced and onward migration**



**Figure 38 Chagossian teenagers fuse African and Sega rhythms in front of a painting by Chagossian artist Clement Siatous**





**Figure 39 Native born Chagossians share traditional dances with younger community members**

Writing to the Chagossian musicians after a performance on radio, Michael Emery, Senior Producer at BBC Radio 3 wrote:

We were stunned by the power of these young people..they were superb. You perform with such heart, commitment and passion...you have made the music a bridge between cultures, flying the flag for ideals of acceptance, mutual respect and understanding to which we can all aspire.<sup>81</sup>

An important aspect of our approach to the music and culture of the Chagossians in the school was a preparedness to let them lead the way when they had expertise and skills which we didn't. This involves an openness and flexibility by those in authority to allow for a degree of co-creation of the curriculum by students (Freire 1970) and an encouragement for them to lead their own learning. As culture bearers, the young Chagossian musicians were sharing with us the musical practices, musical passions and expertise of their ancestors as well as themselves and this required an attitude of "unconditionality, a welcome without reservation" from educators (Higgins 2012: 139).

In establishing a museum of slavery, I believe that if music is to be represented as a living and vital force, then the community which has inherited and nurtured the musical legacy of slavery must become central to the representation of music in the museum. Mauritius is lucky to have a number of active and vibrant community musical cultures which connect people intimately with their ancestors and historical events. Shortly after I left the school I became involved in a project at the local theatre, where the Chagossians presented their culture and history through songs, dramatic tableaux and dancing.<sup>82</sup> It included both traditional and newly composed songs and traced their story from slavery to their present day lives in Crawley. For this event I worked as a facilitator, opening up practice spaces, negotiating support and finance and they led the shape and content of the project. It included all generations of Chagossians, and presented musical

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<sup>81</sup> Letter from Michael Emery 6 March 2012.

<sup>82</sup> "Crawley Chagos Islanders tell their people's history on the stage" *Crawley Observer* 9 September 2016 <https://www.crawleyobserver.co.uk/news/crawley-chagos-islanders-tell-their-peoples-history-stage-2133541> (retrieved August 17th 2020)

styles ranging from Séga to Creole rap and Seggae. These musical styles were all felt to be part of the Chagossian identity. The Crawley Chagossian community I knew were less keen to get involved in a similar project organised by ‘outsiders’, despite being well funded. Those I spoke too were reluctant, as they felt they and their culture might be exploited for the benefit of others.

The Chagossians I know also felt strong connections to the music of the wider diaspora of Africans displaced by slavery and indeed Seggae is a hybrid musical form born of this shared past. A museum would hopefully attempt to make sense of this international cultural connection and would encourage both research into local and international traditions as well as encourage and enable creativity in emerging and hybrid local traditions.

Engaging the marginalised in an ‘official’ project is a delicate process. I have been somewhat astonished that Séga and the community cultures of Mauritius do not have a more important place in the official life and education process on the island. However, I believe that in a living and vibrant museum such inclusion could in itself be liberating. Although we must be wary of damaging the social and cultural ecosystems which sustain community cultures, (Cottrell 2011) we should nonetheless aim at a model where heritage and culture are democratised, and can perhaps become emancipatory by ‘rejecting elite cultural narratives and embracing the heritage insights of people, communities and cultures that have traditionally been marginalised in formulating heritage policy’. (Association of Critical Heritage Studies).

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# 18

## Musée En Mode 2.0

*Stephan Rezanna,  
Directeur, Jorez Box*

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L'univers des musées évolue avec son temps. Savoir allier la culture et les nouveaux outils technologiques est donc devenu un enjeu majeur dans le monde muséal.

Les nouvelles technologies sont omniprésentes dans la vie quotidienne du public, comme le smartphone qui est multi-digital et s'adapte à de nombreuses demandes du consommateur ou encore des objets connectés. Et la palette d'outils disponibles est très large : écrans, vidéos, audioguides, VR, réalité augmentée, espace jeux interactifs. Ils offrent une autre approche d'une exposition multi-sensorielle, et aide à comprendre son contenu différemment. D'autres procédés, comme les spectacles en 3D et les maquettes interactives, viennent enrichir le contenu de la présentation et les connaissances des visiteurs. Ils permettent également d'avoir un rapport plus individuel à une œuvre, ou même d'inviter un nouveau public à l'art.

Les musées s'intéressent aussi à la 3D, offrant ainsi une immersion totale au visiteur. Un exemple est le Google Glass; ce sont des lunettes qui permettent de visionner en 3D. Les tablettes numériques permettent aussi de visualiser des séquences en 3D ou à l'aide de casques pour de la réalité virtuelle. Ce sont des outils qui permettront de s'associer à d'autres technologies toutes aussi interactives.

« Les nouvelles technologies permettent de voir le contenu des musées de façon différente. Elles ouvrent la porte à des expériences originales », dit Michel Perron, directeur général de la Société des Musées Québécois (SMQ).

Dans le cas du musée de l'esclavage à Maurice, le multimédia peut faire naître des façons de raconter très novatrices. Les contenus demeurent, mais ils sont explorés et approfondis de façon plus dynamique. Et le fait de personnaliser une visite à partir d'applications technologiques offre une expérience intense.

« Le meilleur usage du numérique est de ne pas vous faire prendre conscience de la technologie, mais de vous faire prendre conscience de l'art », a déclaré Jane Alexander, responsable de l'information au Cleveland Museum of Art.

De plus en plus de musées dans le monde utilisent de nouveaux outils pour enrichir l'expérience des visiteurs. Muni d'une tablette numérique, chacun peut organiser la

visite selon ses propres intérêts. Certes, de nombreux conservateurs du monde de l'art critiquent rapidement l'intégration de la réalité virtuelle.

Cependant, les musées font une découverte surprenante: la technologie n'empêche pas l'appréciation de l'art physique. « La fréquentation des musées a monté en flèche plus que jamais depuis que les ordinateurs et les iPads sont entrés dans le monde de l'art », selon certains experts en art européens.

Le musée donne ainsi la parole au visiteur et ouvre un espace de dialogue avec lui. Certains créent même de véritables communautés dans lesquelles les réseaux sociaux tiennent un rôle de premier plan. Le précurseur en la matière est certainement le Brooklyn Museum de New York. Présent sur tous les réseaux sociaux (Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Flickr, Yelp, Foursquare, YouTube, etc), il invite la communauté en ligne à enrichir l'indexation des œuvres de sa collection en laissant des commentaires ou encore à participer au choix des œuvres pour une exposition temporaire. C'est l'avènement du Musée 2.0.

L'environnement technologique ouvre différentes formes de dialogue avec le public, dont les attentes évoluent très rapidement. Les visiteurs veulent participer au discours, intervenir dans l'exposition et dans les réseaux sociaux.

« Cela élargit considérablement les champs de recherche qui constituent la première vocation des institutions muséales ».

Une réalité subsiste toutefois : le prix ! Les barrières peuvent être de plusieurs ordres, budgétaire entre autres. Dans le cadre de la numérisation des œuvres, se pose la question de l'ouverture des données : le fait de rendre accessible des œuvres à tous, cela nécessite de soulever des licences de propriété intellectuelle, ce qui coûte parfois très cher. « Les outils numériques peuvent également représenter un coût important. Il peut être intéressant d'y avoir recours pour des expositions temporaires, et non permanentes, et donc de louer le dispositif. Il faut savoir adapter son business model.

« L'outil numérique au maximum, il doit être utile, raconter une histoire parallèle », dit Diane Dubray, du salon Museum Connections.



SLAVERY MUSEUMS: MEMORIALISATION PERSPECTIVES

MIZE ESKLAV: MEMWAR NOU ZANSET

12 -16 APRIL 2016

HELD AT

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS

LE MORNE VILLAGE HALL

VILLE NOIRE COMMUNITY HALL



## SMW 2016 Some Preliminary Findings of the Survey on Slavery Museums

*Sophie Le Chartier, Applied Anthropologist*

*Assisted by Urvanee Dookhorun, Assistant*

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Following the announcement of the setting up of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in the Budget Speech 2018-2019, it was imperative to have the insight of the local on this project and more important on their expectations of the museum. The objectives of the survey were to capture information on, first, factors impacting people's decision making process to visit a museum; second, people's perception of ISM; third, their expectations of the future design of the museum and forth, their opinion on the management and funding of the museum.

As prescribed by the Truth and Justice Commission and the CRSI, the setting up of the museum should adopt a people-centered approach. In this respect, a participatory approach is advocated ensuring the involvement of the local population. This survey forms part of the public consultation process that ensures the participation of local communities in the museum's conceptualization. Given limited time and lack of human resources to administer the questionnaires, convenient sampling was chosen. Sixty-nine questionnaires were administered in Ville Noire (located in the South-East of Mauritius), Le Morne Village (South-West) and on the campus of the University of Mauritius. The findings of the survey that are presented below should be considered with caution and solely as indication.

### ***Profile of respondents***

Most of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years old and were mostly women that reached tertiary education. This is understandable given that more than half of the questionnaires were administered at the University of Mauritius. In Ville Noire the profile of participants were a bit older, in the 25-50 age group. Forty-nine respondents were women and nineteen were men out of which 14 were aged 25 to 50 years old; 46 were aged 18 to 25 years old; 7 were aged 50 to 64 years old and one respondent was under 13 years old.

### ***Educational background of informant***

Given that more than half of the questionnaires were administered at University, 78% of the respondents had reached university level. 17% went to school up to secondary level. Fifty-one percent considered they had a good knowledge of Mauritian history while 43% felt they had a fair knowledge. Only 4% and 1 % opted for the 'not good' option and 'poor knowledge' of Mauritian history. To the question on the sources of Mauritian history knowledge, 20% and 30% selected Media/TV/Internet and school respectively, 27% and 17% choose books and discussions respectively and 6% other sources.

### ***Cultural Identity***

We had included an optional question asking participants to tick one or more boxes corresponding to their cultural identity and preferences. Most chose the Mauritian category (72%), the next largest category was Creole (30%). Some 16% listed themselves as Asian; 7.2% as European and 4.3% identified as Afro-Malagasy.

### ***Museums***

- When asked when they had last visited a museum, over half stated they had visited a museum in 2015-2016. Most visited the museum because a special exhibit was being held, others because of the theme of the exhibition. 30% could not remember when they had last visited a museum.
- Preferred times and days were the afternoons and evenings in the weekends.

The factors influencing respondents' decisions to visit a museum were rated. These are shown in the table.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Special Exhibit	6	1	
The topic	8	1	
Location	6	2	3
Cost	5	3	3
Other (please specify)	0	0	0



Ninety-nine percent of the respondents considered important to have a Museum on slavery and when questioned over why a Museum of Slavery was important, the following responses were received:

- To give value to the history of the Creole community
- To promote history and especially the history of slavery
- To preserve Mauritian history
- To preserve memories
- To highlight the struggle for freedom
- To transmit knowledge of history to future generations
- To encourage debates on slavery
- To promote and disseminate knowledge especially on the lives of the slaves
- To connect people to their origins
- To dissipate stereotypes
- To create an awareness about the history of slavery
- To commemorate slavery
- To build Mauritian Citizenship

***On the type and kind of museum*** the latter would expect, 30% would prefer an interactive/multimedia and 25 % opted for multi-sensory museum and touch and feel experience and only 19% choose a traditional type of museum.

***On the question of who should fund the Museum***, there was an almost unanimous response. 98% felt that the Government should first fund the Museum, then the private sector (52%) followed by international bodies (49%) and voluntary contributions (43%).

***On the question on curation***, for most of the respondents, the general public should be included in the decision making process together with official bodies and the descendants of slaves. For some, academics and people who are not of slave descent as well should be included.

## **RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

**Recalling** that the subject of slavery is of international and global importance to humanity and is listed as one of the United Nations major issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**Recalling** the setting up of the Truth and Justice Commission and the submission of 290 recommendations relating to creating a most just society

**Recalling** that 2015 is the beginning of UN Decade for People of African Descent

**Recalling** the Resolutions that were adopted during the International Seminar “Yer Resistans, Zordi Rezilyans Comparative Perspectives on Resistance, Resilience and Accommodation in Slave and post-Slave Societies” held in February 2015

**Taking note** that most of these resolutions have not yet been implemented

The following resolutions were adopted on the subject of memorialisations of slavery and museums:

### ***On the subject of the importance of a Slavery Museum in Port Louis***

- The Intercontinental Slavery Museum should be in Port Louis
- The Slavery Museum project in Port Louis should preserve the historic fabric of the Military Hospital because it is the oldest building on the island

### ***On the subject of the memorialization of slavery in Le Morne***

- It is important not to destroy the living heritage of Le Morne Cultural Landscape and the project of the “Living Museum” should be maintained.

### ***On the subject of Slavery Museums generally***

- A Slavery Museums and Slave heritage trail should be created
- Emotional components/elements should be incorporated into the museum.
- Use more innovative ideas or the creation of a ship to show the reality of slavery
- The project ‘Saturne’ should be included
- As slavery is about slaves and their owners and considering Mauritius was a slave society, the museum must incorporate the slave owners
- The truth about the history of Mauritius should be told
- The Museum should also be an educational experience

- The spirit of democratic and community participation at all levels should adopted as is recommended by the Truth and Justice Commission
- The empowerment of the slave descendants and peoples of African and Malagasy origin should be envisaged at all levels, including at managerial levels and in the conceptualization of the museums
- Slavery Museums must include a strong component of intangible heritage, oral traditions and history and cultural practices
- Themes of resistance and resilience in Africa and Mauritius must be included.
- The museum exhibits should be designed in such a way so as the themes are easily understood and accessible to the general public
- There are many projects and research that have already been conducted on Le Morne and on the subject of slavery: these findings should be used to kick start the projects.
- The Slavery Museum projects should be viewed as a 'Devoir de memoire' and should allow people to re-connect with their origins.
- Museums should be apolitical and not pay allegiance to any political party
- The museum should have a section explaining what slavery is and its origins.
- The team of the CRSI should pilot the project of the museum setting up with community consultation.



## 20

# SMW 2019: Issues, Suggestions, Opinions, Recommendations and Emotions

*Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Teelock*

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The two-day seminar was a memorable one for those who had been campaigning for a Slavery Museum since the 2011 TJC recommendation was made. Despite several Cabinet decisions, implementation committees, workshops, public protests, Government approval and sponsorship of the Slavery Museum Workshop of 2019 was a major step forward. The workshop had been an idea of the UNESCO Slave Route Project and particularly of its Director, Ali Moussa Iye and followed the Charlottesville Seminar of 2018. An 'Indian Ocean' version was mandatory.

Memorable because it vindicated past demands and showed that those conceptualising, campaigning and mobilising were 'on the right track'.

Memorable because listening to those who had trodden that road before us was enlightening.

Memorable because we heard at first hand what a long road still lay in front of us.

This compilation of opinion papers, thoughts, sentiments, suggestions and recommendations is possible thanks to Maurina Soodin-Runghen, rapporteur, who had the good sense to take meticulous notes and compensated for the technical recording failures of Day Two of the Workshop. We were able to retrieve some of the very valid comments, issues and suggestions made by participants and the audience.

### ***Issues and Suggestions***

#### ***1. Identity***

The different identities generated by the slave trade must be represented in the future Museum such as the different ethno-linguistic groups brought to Mauritius. The contemporary manifestations of this identity must also be represented such as the presence of the Makua in Madagascar and in Mauritius.

The 'Intercontinental' aspect of the concept must be defined and refined more clearly and the balance between national and intercontinental aspects more clearly defined.

#### ***2. Decolonisation***

There is a need to decolonise concepts, terms, labels and names.

### ***3. Issue of Memory – Slave testimonies***

- Collection of slave testimonies of realities of slave trade through life histories, stories in a chronological approach. Periodisation should be carefully defined. An interdisciplinary and gendered approach should be adopted.
- The findings of the Mauritius Truth and Justice Commission should be used.
- The Study of postemancipation Mauritius are crucial to study. Archival sources can be used to collect slave testimonies, in mission archives etc in Mozambique Kenya, South Africa etc as well as in Europe, India and USA

### ***4. Educational purposes of the Museum through the National Curriculum***

- African traditions and ancestral voices must be heard as well as the voices representing the origins of the slave trade
- Humanisation of the slave trade; the issue of trauma must be part and parcel of any representation of the slave trade
- The past, present and future must be represented
- A national curriculum must be developed for music, art and dance based on the cultural heritage of slavery, indentured labour and western culture in Mauritius

### ***5. Use of digital technology***

- Digital, interactive and immersive technology must be used :
- To produce an alternative representation of slaves and slavery
- To deconstruct myths about slavery through paintings and other art work
- To create a virtual museum linking Mauritius, Mozambique, Madagascar, Comores, Reunion and Seychelles amongst others
- To exhibit artefacts and objects from different continents
- To further discuss about which topics and exhibits should use technology and which are not appropriate
- To produce musical and other cultural displays and exhibits

## ***6. Representing trauma, emotion, sensory experiences***

- It is important to highlight the trauma of the slave trade and slavery
- Emotional and multisensory experience must be used in the future museum

## ***7. Languages***

- English and French must be the main languages used
- Creole, Malagasy, Portuguese etc to be used depending on item and theme being displayed

## ***8. Oral Testimonies***

- How are facts to be presented? How do we choose what to present in a museum? Are there any parameters to respect? Or present as in past? Or can we modify the facts?
- Definition of representation: make present those who are absent / who is representing whom / representing somebody on his or her behalf
- Facts must be presented but also how to present the facts. It all depends where you place the fact or its representation.
- Our duty as scholars / academics is to say things as they are

## ***Recommendations***

1. After all the technical and research work is completed, the most important activity will be to present in the direct and simplest form possible the fruit of all the research work so that all audiences can appreciate the exhibits. No-one should feel intimidated or feel they cannot relate to what is being shown or heard.
2. Mauritius tends to have museums fixed in time. There is a need to keep the museum relevant, dynamic and lively to maintain a good level of visitors.
3. We have an opportunity to reflect on what needs to be accomplished for the ISM. It is a long process that needs to be well thought. The media should be fully part of this.
4. Facts need to be shown. But how they are shown matters more. The ISM will need to show life histories, but not only about the enslaved but also about all others who were attached to the system. One should blame people in the present. ISM must be a melting pot of ideas and a place of reconciliation

5. Pedagogical tools must be incorporated in the museum. History is not taught properly in schools or in a very basic way at primary / secondary level. Pedagogical tools will enable audience to interact with the material presented.
6. To use past experiences of institutions such as AGTF. When the project was launched and a call for objects made, nobody came forward. This was because Mauritians did not know what the 'objects' were. ISM project will be an opportunity to show people how they can contribute to the museum. Everyone / every Mauritian has a history and is connected to this heritage. Curatorial / administration / museologists /historians must work together
7. There is a need to make the museum more interactive for children and also for the elderly.
8. It is important for the museum not be a 'dead monument', it must promote plurality, reflect the transnational nature of slavery, the multinationality of the slave trades and the multiple interactions. Abolition processes must be included/
9. Museum dynamic through a permanent collection but also a second space open to temporary exhibitions that reflect with themes in collaboration with organisations such as schools and trade unions. Could also be site for inter museum collaboration to share resources. Could start with a smaller special exhibition which will grow
10. Good to showcase the story of slavery for the museum, but also needs to be about today's reality, connection between past and now. For some deprived people the story of slavery is not a priority. Must democratise access to museums
11. Must state the facts, but also be careful about what to write in the label
12. Not only about how much truth, but rather what truth that will be shown
13. Knowing our history, our identity, others, which will lead to resilience and reconciliation
14. Spaces related to indenture and slavery in Mauritius. Museum has several aspect: representation of history, writing the history but also the space of the museum itself. Jewish museum use of space to convey the suffering. The space should convey more.
15. Hope that museum will be opportunity to answer some questions: will be only limited to African and Malagasy? Hope this museum will set a benchmark for the future. Content of museum should not be limited by decision made today,



need scope for future expansion. Museum is a tool to convey history but also need other sites to be studied to uncover other aspects of history not only indenture and slavery

16. Question: Is the buffer zone is a problem for the museum?
17. The new Museology in Mauritius: Hope that in 20 years more such museums are set up in other countries
18. Would like to know more about sites of conscience. This museum would be able to connect the past with today's reality and the questions, claims of the community of slaves' descendants. These dimensions should not be forgotten or erased. The museum should include this dimension because today the traces and legacy of slavery are still present.
19. Museum should be as interactive as possible but also maintain link to history.
20. Question: How is the museum aiming to be intercontinental as a slavery museum. One way is by documenting Mauritius' place in the slave trade.
21. Will it not be a challenge to find artefacts?
22. Museum must be a space for the youth to better conceive their future. They must help us to bring forward and also there is need for present generations to be judged for what they are doing and not what their ancestors did.
23. Museum must showcase reality of slavery, take the opinion of public, pay attention to pedagogical tools for the children
24. The trouble with history is that facts must be chosen. All documents cannot be reproduced. Need to make a choice. History is a consequence of choice. Need to revive interpretation of history every 20 years to reflect new research. There is a lack of research in history of Mauritius. The museum will contribute to some understanding of history. The lapses in knowledge of history must be taken care of.
25. One must not limit oneself by boundaries. People who have moved out can still contribute. There is information outside, which can still be found. Need to think outside the box.
26. Skills to be tapped locally and regionally. Need to bridge between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic.
27. Sustainability: fundraising to develop capital to keep the museum going, need private funding.

28. SSR Chair of African Studies program: build a global PhD program. Theme will be critical museum studies. Need to staff the museum. University is also evolving to become more culturally aware

Notion of intercontinental but also connect Indian Ocean to Atlantic. It is a way to say that we need solidarity, but also others who can participate. Should be permanent and temporary exhibits and make sure that the exhibits also come to Mauritius. Importance of human beings, to have a museum connected to real facts but also with human – give names / face to the slaves

29. Intercontinental slavery museum dimension – how the claim for the identity of the Kreol community claiming their African identity, Malagasy identity, claim for reparations, dimension of slavery, how the TJC (unique in world, only one to look at slavery) recommendation for museum is a form of reparation that evolved from local to universal aspect. Need to look at / show history of all groups who were part of the system, even those who benefitted. Should have an important section for art/performing art
30. Funding needed will be considerable.
31. Important to not get lost in the process. Need to identify phases of implementation
32. Phase 1: contribution of ideas

### ***Most priority themes***

Intercontinental

Grassroot efforts to collect objects

### ***Individual contributions sent post workshop***

**Angela Ramsoondur, Lecturer UoM**

- i. That slaves be portrayed not as subjects but as humans that have faced the cruelty of being treated as non-human
- ii. Various sources be used for the understanding and also to provoke reflections on the part of the public through artifacts, paintings, musical instruments, recordings of people that have souvenirs of what has been transmitted through oral history.
- iii. That part of Mauritian literature or literature about Mauritius be displayed/highlighted as source about slavery. I have some texts in mind that

refer to slaves but from a Eurocentric perspective that in fact denotes the slaves' voicelessness and invisibility and thus dehumanized treatment

- iv. That specific infrastructure be provided to the public who have some physical issues to access (for example avoiding the construction of stairs for those in wheelchair, have sign language videos by the side of displays, or braille. Maybe have copies of displays for the blind people so they can touch the object and read in braille)
- v. That reports from the Truth and Justice Commission be accessible to the public as they are documents
- vi. Portray the information in the museum in such a manner that demonstrates the historiography
- vii. Imperative nature of involving pupils (primary and secondary schools) and educational tours. Recommended for senior citizens as well.
- viii. Regularly workshops for public of all age groups.
- ix. Interactive and use of technology highly recommended. Mobile applications too for the museum.
- x. A section in the museum where those who have information or artifacts from their ancestors can bring forward and the committee involved can examine and decide if it can be displayed.
- xi. Collaborate with AfriEdX and other institutions that can help in using virtual reality and augmented reality for more profound experience.
- xii. My research work on William Faulkner for my MPhil brought me to study and examine plantation slavery in Mississippi. There are many texts (written and visual) that talk and refer to slavery and especially to their suffering and that touched me the most.

**Francois Mark, AfriDex VR creator**

- i. Inclusive - Remote Rural areas
- ii. Deaf people friendly (Sign Language)
- iii. Choice of technologies is very important

**Recommendations:**

- i. Immersive contents should be adaptive and based in context and take into account locations

- ii. Immersive Contents should be portable anywhere, irrespective of internet connectivity
- iii. Part of the immersive should be accessible offline

### **Myriam Cottias, Senior Historian of Slavery, CNRS**

Concept et positionnement du Musée:

- i. Mauritius comme croisement des routes de la traite, transformation vers l'engagisme et ce d'autant plus que le musée Aapravasi Ghat museum est juste à côté de l'ancien hôpital.
- ii. Positionner le musée comme exceptionnalité: Océan Indien, multi facette de la figure de l'esclave. Différent de l'Atlantique. Notion inter-continentalité est importante. Notion de diversité aussi importante.
- iii. Déterminer la Zone concernée: Maurice, Rodrigues. Agaléga. Saint-Brandon? Madagascar. Mozambique.
- iv. Faire discuter histoire et création artistique. En faire un lieu vivant, collection permanent, expositions temporaires.
- v. Mettre l'humain au centre du Musée de l'esclavage. Lien avec les communautés. Avec une salle pour les discussions.
- vi. Nommer les esclavisés, leur donner une dimension humaine. Liste de noms.
- vii. Montrer agency, subjectivités
- viii. Musée citoyen: participatif, inclusif. Faire sortir les témoignages, les objets. Faire des présentations dans les communautés pour leur faire comprendre l'importance des objets qu'ils ont.
- ix. Interactivité importante.
- x. Education très important.

Pistes d'organisation du Musée :

- i. Symbole à l'entrée. Peut-être le Morne avec description du suicide des esclavisés. Hologramme.
- ii. Chronologie qui superpose les différentes vagues de population en lien avec question politique et économique

Présentation par thématique

- i. Routes et origines

- ii. Archéologie.
- iii. Travail contraint.
- iv. Révoltes, résistances, agency
- v. Les femmes et les enfants.
- vi. Les abolitions...
- vii. Transformations de la relation esclavagiste en relations de dépendance.
- viii. Conséquences, stigmates de l'esclavage dans le contemporain. Crime contre l'humanité.
- ix. Place de l'Afrique, questions des réparations.
- x. Culture: musique, danse (séga mais pas seulement).
- xi. Films.
- xii. Makoa: Routes des libérés et des engagés, se croisent.

#### Phases de mise en place

- i. Action préalable: avoir une exposition itinérante sur le Musée dans les communes de l'île Maurice pour avoir des retours des personnes (objets, idées) et adhésion au projet.
- ii. Liens avec public pour recueillir des objets du quotidien et de l'exceptionnel
- iii. Réseau entre les musées dans le monde.
- iv. Pour les expositions temporaires:
- v. Idée exposition sur les poupées noires. Nora Philippe.
- vi. Idée: Exposition sur le modèle Noir.
- vii. 1ère phase: faire la campagne de sensibilisation auprès du public et mise en place d'un plan d'occupation des salles restaurées.

### **John H Stanfield II SSR Chair African studies UoM**

- i. We must assure that the planning processes for the inter-continental slavery museum and the programmatic goals of the SSR Chair of African Studies work hand in hand. So please consider me to be a colleague you can call upon to assist in the planning process as you move along while I am here for 2 or 3 years and after I leave the position. In turn I want to make sure there is a slavery and indentured studies option in the virtual global doctoral studies program in African and African Diasporas Studies.
- ii. I did not want to distract during the conference by injecting my concern for a clearer operational definition of restorative justice such as one embedded in shall we say the 6 Phases Stanfield model I have been testing and modifying over the years and am now writing up as a book. It is hinted at in the following WhatsApp conversation I had this morning with a Senegalese American friend about the conference. I sent her (Aida) a copy of my L'Express interview published last Thursday which the journalist emphasized me observing that most Americans don't even know slavery existed though I should add leaving out the fact that even Americans who do know African slavery did happen presume it was a past experience African Americans experienced with no ongoing impacts ( a point several of us made at the conference):
- iii. The question I have is how do we develop an inter-continental slavery museum model which exhibits the complexities and paradoxes of a restorative justice process holistic in displaying the different phases and the different roles and perspectives of members of perpetrator and victim populations. I have attached three papers to illustrate what I am trying to convey. Perhaps I should offer a seminar on my model.

### **Rosabelle Boswell, Anthropologist**

- i. Who will help us to raise funding for the museum? How can we go about it? I heard Mary Elliott talking about having to raise \$405 million for the museum she presides over and that museum only deals with American history.
- ii. Architectural work to be done at the Military hospital. I'm thinking that they will try to keep the facade of the building as it is a heritage building, but, before any hammer hits the building, they will need to incorporate all the inputs we made at the end into the design build.
- iii. Experiential spaces will have to have particular space & design before any deconstruction of the present building happens. Temperature controlled rooms for art work may need particular design specifications. I was really keen

to hear what Munish Pandit had to say about this kind of thing, as he is an architect. Basically, we can't make box-like rooms inside the building and then just fill these?

- iv. With regard to collecting/borrowing from private collections -- I've seen some interesting stuff in people's homes in Mauritius, especially people who have lived in Africa but, these are part of their personal memories. How do we manage something like that?
- v. There might be a need for a multi-skilled advisory board specifically to deal with implementation of the museum not just its conceptualization?

**Zia Gopee, Museum educator**

First of all I would like to congratulate you for the amazing workshop and I'm grateful for having the opportunity to have participated in this worthwhile event.

I left Mauritius 6 years ago to go to Paris IV where I was selected to study history of art and archaeology and afterwards got a scholarship to go to Sorbonne Abu Dhabi which offered training for the future Louvre Abu Dhabi. I did my BA in History of Art and Archaeology and Masters at Sorbonne Abu Dhabi in collaboration with Ecole du Louvre and Paris IV. I did my specialization in museum education and cultural mediation. I wrote my M2 on 'Les outils pédagogiques dans les musées en faveur de la valorisation du patrimoine culturel mauricien. - Face aux enjeux du 21ème siècle, quelles sont les stratégies de médiation et éducatives envisagées ou à envisager pour les musées de l'île Maurice?'. I would be happy to share it with you. If I will be able to contribute to this great project, I would be more than happy to bring my expertise in terms of museum education and cultural mediation.

Also, if I can contribute to the development of the museum management course that the University of Mauritius is looking forward too, I would be happy to contribute too. My grandfather was an Antiquaire in Mauritius and since childhood I was deeply connected to History and the love of museums and went abroad in mind of bringing something new to my country (museology). I came back to Mauritius in June as the co-curator of the premiere Mauritius International Art Fair (8 - 11 August 2019) and Panel Discussion manager in collaboration with the Economic Development Board where we held a panel discussion on 'modeling the art and cultural ecosystem in Mauritius' where we brought museum professionals and our diaspora. I will be able to share the report once it's published.





## 21

# Un musée pour des humains conscients de leur Liberté

*Dominique Bellier, journaliste*<sup>81</sup>

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Lorsque je suis venue m'installer à Maurice en 1996 et que j'ai commencé à travailler comme journaliste au Mauricien en septembre, j'étais loin d'imaginer que ce pays se doterait par la suite de deux sites du patrimoine de l'Humanité, et verrait tant de musées ouvrir leurs portes. Le pays comptait alors deux musées publics à Port-Louis et Mahébourg et nombre de bâtiments anciens, à l'instar de l'imprimerie du gouvernement, de l'ancien marché de Curepipe ou de maisons traditionnelles, créoles ou coloniales, avaient déjà cédé la place à des constructions plus modernes, en béton armé et blocs de parpaing.

Depuis 1986 que je vivais avec mon compagnon à Paris, nous venions régulièrement en séjour dans son pays natal. J'avais eu vent des combats de quelques amoureux du patrimoine, qui avaient protesté contre ces démolitions, en vain, et je ne pouvais guère concevoir que le patrimoine devienne un sujet de préoccupation crucial, constatant que celui-ci était considérablement négligé et malmené, de toutes les manières avec lesquelles nos sociétés modernes démolissent, entravent, effacent et oublient.

En vérité, le patrimoine a continué d'être maltraité jusqu'à nos jours, comme le prouvent les innombrables bâtiments en béton qui ont remplacé depuis du bâti ancien, des terres agricoles ou des portions de rivages, mais la nouveauté a été de constater qu'il existait parallèlement, de plus en plus de passionnés d'histoire, d'historiens, de linguistes et de spécialistes des sciences humaines ainsi que des intellectuels indépendants qui mettaient beaucoup d'énergie à fouiller les archives pour écrire l'histoire qui ne l'avait pas encore été, celle des anonymes, à commencer par les travailleurs engagés et les esclaves. Ces gens étaient attachés à la symbolique et au sens des lieux du passé et ils tenaient fermement à ce que le patrimoine mauricien prenne tout le sens qu'il avait d'un point de vue historique et mémoriel.

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<sup>81</sup> Dominique Bellier is a journalist and has lived in Mauritius for many years. She has been a keen follower of the Slavery Museum project.

Je lisais avec avidité les articles de mes confrères et consœurs qui paraissaient sur ces sujets, et il m'est arrivé de plus en plus souvent d'écrire des articles sur ces conférences et séminaires de sciences humaines, qui exhumaient des pans entiers de l'histoire enfouie, non dite, non explorée, cette histoire des populations qui n'était jusqu'alors pas vraiment considérée comme de l'histoire. La conscience du patrimoine commençait à essaimer, parallèlement à celle de la culture mauricienne, faite d'une langue parlée par le plus grand nombre, le créole, d'une musique, le sega, de traditions orales qui s'était évanouies depuis que la télévision et les magnétoscopes étaient entrés dans les maisons, et d'une littérature particulièrement dynamique, etc.

Depuis 24 ans que je vis à Maurice et que je suis en tant que journaliste l'avancée des recherches sur l'histoire, le patrimoine et la culture mauricienne, j'éprouve régulièrement le fabuleux sentiment de vivre la renaissance d'un pays à lui-même, grâce à ces données mises au jour pour la première fois et aux analyses qui en sont faites. Moi qui vient d'un pays du vieux monde, la France, où beaucoup semble avoir été fait en matière de culture et de patrimoine, je ne cesse depuis vingt-quatre ans de m'émerveiller en observant cette histoire de Maurice qui s'écrit davantage à chaque séminaire, cette tradition mémorielle qui s'enrichit de nouvelles informations et qui redonne une voix, un sens et même une nouvelle vie aux lieux si longtemps oubliés, en même temps qu'infusent des imaginaires revivifiés.

La honte du descendant d'esclave cède peu à peu la place à la fierté de descendre d'un peuple qui a résisté dans le silence, qui s'est battu pour sa liberté, qui a marronné, un peuple dont on commence à reconnaître la contribution dans la construction du pays, une contribution patiente à la sueur de leur front, à la force de leurs bras, dans les plantations ou les villes, aux champs ou dans les dépendances et cuisines, dans les jardins et les familles.

Avant de venir à Maurice, j'avais été impressionnée par les thèses du philosophe Louis Sala-Molins, qui réexaminaient la pensée des philosophes des Lumières à l'aune de l'histoire coloniale et des « hiérarchies anthropologiques »... Ces hiérarchisations de l'humanité préparaient en quelque sorte le terrain aux nombreuses et terribles déviances racistes qu'ont connu les pays occidentaux aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Aussi, l'actualité des sciences humaines que j'ai pu suivre à Maurice à partir de 1996, a permis de prolonger et enrichir cette réflexion, tout en renforçant mes convictions.

Il faut avoir vécu les colloques et séminaires d'histoire, organisés à l'Université de Maurice, dont les cérémonies d'ouverture parvenaient parfois à remplir l'auditorium Octave Wiehé, avec une assistance composée non seulement d'étudiants et chercheurs directement concernés, mais aussi de multiples représentants de la société civile, des citoyens ordinaires, des Mauriciens qui adhéraient à des associations culturelles, des artistes, etc. J'aimerais avoir le talent de décrire l'atmosphère qui régnaient dans ces

amphithéâtres, les sentiments qui s'affichaient sur les visages, les sourires complices et surtout, cette certitude qui semblait à chaque fois mouvoir toutes ces personnes: la conviction de participer d'une manière ou d'une autre, dans la salle ou à la table, à l'édification d'un récit national plus juste et plus vrai que jamais. Je pense que ce type de conviction est irremplaçable et unique: elle est un peu l'or du temps dans la vie d'un pays.

Ces moments vécus comptent pour moi parmi les plus émouvants de ma petite expérience journalistique à Maurice. Y assister, et écrire ce texte aujourd'hui comme Vijaya Teelock m'y a invitée, représentent pour moi un privilège inestimable, et j'espère que les retombées éducatives qui émaneront de ce musée et de tout le travail qui l'a précédé, deviendront l'ordinaire de tous les enfants, écoliers et collégiens de l'île Maurice. Et pour que ces démarches atteignent complètement leurs objectifs, il faudra aussi que dans un mouvement de générosité sans limite et de totale empathie, les fruits de cette soif inextinguible de connaissance et de compréhension atteignent aussi ceux qui se sentent encore aujourd'hui exclus de ce récit national.

Lorsqu'en 2001, la célébration de l'Abolition de l'esclavage le 1<sup>er</sup> février est décrétée fête nationale, je me suis inquiétée de voir ce nouveau jour de congé public ne concerner qu'une communauté, celle des descendants d'esclaves, que l'on appelle ici à la communauté créole. J'ai alors rencontré différents intellectuels pour écrire un article sur la question de savoir en quoi elle célébrait un acquis pour la population toute entière. Chacun d'entre nous bénéficie aujourd'hui et depuis plus de 185 ans de cette première grande avancée des droits humains, qui a été suivie par bien d'autres depuis, et il importe d'en être tout à fait conscient. L'esclavage est reconnu comme un crime contre l'humanité, son abolition comme un acquis pour cette même humanité.

Pour moi, ce musée intercontinental de l'esclavage permettra en quelque sorte de boucler la boucle sur ce point, en développant en chacun la conscience de cet acquis selon lequel tous les humains sont égaux en droit et nul n'a le droit d'exploiter un de ses semblables sans une juste rétribution pour son travail. Ce musée nous rappellera à travers la description des combats qui ont conduit à cet avènement, que rien n'est acquis d'avance, et que le combat doit continuer aujourd'hui pour la main d'œuvre étrangère dont les conditions de travail sont souvent délétères ou encore pour les victimes des réseaux de prostitution ou les enfants encore réduits à diverses formes d'asservissement dans certains pays. L'histoire du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et de ces dernières décennies nous enseigne qu'un droit n'est jamais définitivement acquis, même s'il l'est sur le papier, inscrit dans la loi, qu'il ne faut ne faut jamais baisser la garde. Je souhaite profondément que ce musée soit le musée de tous les citoyens de Maurice et de l'Océan indien, et que ces derniers vivent sa visite comme une expérience vécue qui les construit. Le musée de l'apartheid à Soweto invite les visiteurs à se ranger dans des files d'attente réparties selon les différentes couleurs de peau, ce qui permet à chacun de

prendre conscience de ce à quoi cette ignoble idéologie a réduit l'humain, la personne. Dès l'entrée, il permet de comprendre ce pour quoi nous devons nous battre: vivre et se mouvoir librement où que l'on aille.

J'attends du Musée intercontinental de l'esclavage qu'il nous fasse vivre des expériences fortes, qu'il nous touche au fond des tripes, pour en sortir grandi dans un esprit de résilience collective, avec une pleine conscience de tout ce que représente la liberté individuelle et collective pour un être humain.

J'attends de ce musée qu'il s'adresse autant à nos émotions qu'à notre intelligence, à nos pensées autant qu'à nos corps, et qu'il nous apprenne à comprendre personnellement, et même intimement, ce que sont la liberté et l'égalité.

J'attends qu'il nous donne des outils non seulement pour comprendre l'histoire de l'esclavage dans l'Océan Indien, mais aussi pour revisiter nos propres vies et nos sociétés d'aujourd'hui avec un regard plus lucide et clairvoyant.



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## ABOUT THE CRSI

The Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture CRSI is a multidisciplinary Research Centre based at the University of Mauritius. It is part of the University's commitment to the scientific study of Mauritian history and in particular the history of slavery and indenture, these two being the most important migratory movements into Mauritius. CRSI is also committed to playing a regional role, in supporting collaborative, interdisciplinary research. We are represented on the International Scientific Committee of the Slave Route Project and since 2015, CRSI activities fall under UNESCO's Slave Route Project. An International Advisory Board also exists. The members regularly provide expert opinions on various issues, research projects and activities of CRSI. The current Head of the Centre is Vijayalakshmi Teelock.

## CRSI PUBLICATIONS

*Ratsitanina's Gift* - Pier Larson

*Inventaire Sélectif de la série Col C 4 Volume 1* - S. Philips, S. Tamby, Y. Argot, T. Vernet, V. Teelock

*Inventaire Sélectif de la série Col C 4 Volume 2* - R. Thiebaut, T. Vernet & V. Teelock

*Maritime Maroonage in Isle de France* (Monograph) - A L. Levasseur Elizabeth

*History and Archaeology of the Moulin à Poudre Cultural Landscape* - A. Benard, H. Maurel, J. Mungur-Medhi, D. Ramasawmy, V. Teelock

*Maroonage and the maroon heritage in Mauritius* - J. Cornet, A. Nagapen, V. Teelock etc

*History Memory Identity Volume 1* - E. Alpers & V. Teelock (eds)

*Traites, Esclavage et Transition vers l'engagisme* - Multiple authors

*Evading enslavement in the Seychelles* (Monograph) - P. Nicholls

*Issues and challenges concerning representations of slavery in museums* - Multiple authors

*Bonded Self, National Disgrace and Human Misery: Indian Nationalists and Campaign for Abolition of Indentured Labour Emigration* - Amit Mishra

*Select Documents: The End of Indentured Immigration including 1895 Report on the Condition of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius & Distribution List of the SS Surada, the last ship carrying labourers in 1921* - S. Ramchurn

### FORTHCOMING

*Esclavage, dépendance et hiérarchie sociale à Madagascar: Réflexion sur quelques faits dans les représentations contemporaines* - Chaplain Toto, University of Toamasina

*Parcours d'un Musicien, Marclaine Antoine* - Vina Ballgobin, University of Mauritius