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**The Royal Navy's anti-slavery campaign in the western Indian Ocean,
c. 1860-1890: race, empire and identity.**

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis explores the Royal Navy's suppression of the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean between 1858 and the mid 1890s. Previous studies of this activity have offered narrative-style histories which have focused on operational matters and the diplomatic background. As such, scholars have written a naval history of slave-trade suppression. This thesis, in contrast, adopts an interdisciplinary approach, and engages with new material and new themes in order to place the anti-slavery campaign firmly in the social and cultural context of late-nineteenth-century Britain and its empire. Using sources such as letters, journals, diaries, memoirs, published and unpublished accounts, graphical representations, and a range of representations of the campaign as portrayed in popular British culture, the aim is to shift the emphasis from the official story of slave-trade suppression. This perspective significantly broadens understanding of the social and cultural background of the campaign. Building on the work of historians such as Catherine Hall and others, the approach taken emphasises how ideas and identities were shaped through imperial connections and encounters with foreign 'others'. An understanding of how naval officers perceived the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean region, as well as its cultures and peoples, and how this was represented, sheds new light on how the British public also viewed the region. A crucial question which underpins this thesis is how racial attitudes and anti-slavery sentiment intersected in this period of high imperialism. In recovering these attitudes, some of the main points of thinking about race, empire and British national identity during the late-Victorian period are highlighted.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives

IOR	India Office Records, British Library
LGL	London Guildhall Library Archives
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
RNM	Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth
TNA	The National Archives

Organisations

ADM	Admiralty
BFASS	British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CO	Colonial Office
FO	Foreign Office
LMS	London Missionary Society
RGS	Royal Geographic Society
UMCA	Universities' Mission to Central Africa

Publications

<i>ASR</i>	Anti-Slavery Reporter
<i>CMI</i>	Church Missionary Intelligencier
<i>ODNB</i>	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
<i>PP</i>	Parliamentary Papers

INTRODUCTION

After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Britain transformed itself from the largest slave trading nation to the world leader of a century-long anti-slavery crusade. Suppression of the international slave trade became both an official aim and an active British policy.¹ In the first half of the nineteenth century, Britain led the campaign which eventually saw the slave trade of the Atlantic world dismantled. In the second half of that century it committed itself to a continuation of this movement by attempting to end the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean. Crucial to Britain's ability to enforce its anti-slavery campaign was the role of the Royal Navy. Over the course of the century, ships from the West African, Cape of Good Hope, and East Indies stations were deployed on anti-slavery patrols while, for significant periods, they were established as specific anti-slavery squadrons.²

This thesis examines the Royal Navy's anti-slavery campaign in the western Indian Ocean. As its starting point it takes 1858, the year in which HMS *Lyra* arrived at the East African coast with specific orders to begin enforcing established anti-slavery treaties. This represented the start of a sustained naval anti-slavery campaign that lasted until the late 1880s, after which the anti-slavery role of the squadron became subsumed in wider

¹ John Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery' in David Brown and Miles Taylor (eds), *Palmerston Studies II* (University of Southampton, 2007) pp. 24-38, p. 28.

² Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968) remains one of the key texts for the history of slave-trade suppression; for the Indian Ocean campaign see chs. 13-19. For the Indian Ocean, see also R. W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (London: Rex Collings Ltd., 1976), ch. 4; and Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987). For a good introduction to both campaigns see Robert J. Blyth, 'Britain, the Royal Navy and the Suppression of Slave Trades in the Nineteenth Century' in Douglas Hamilton and Robert J. Blyth (eds), *Representing Slavery: Art, Artefacts and Archives in the Collections of the National Maritime Museum* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2007), pp. 78-91, and William Ward, *The Royal Navy and The Slavers* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969) for the transatlantic campaign.

concerns of protecting British interests in the rapidly developing 'scramble' for Africa. Previous studies of naval suppression have tended to end their discussion here and some even earlier.³ However, intermittent anti-slavery patrols continued during the 1890s. Moreover, as this thesis demonstrates, the campaign continued to be represented in British popular culture during the last decade of the century. The mid 1890s is therefore the closing point of this study. Explored in this way, this thesis places suppression in a broader chronological and thematic framework than previous studies.

The study of anti-slavery has a long history. The first historical writings on the subject originated in the period in which abolitionists, emerging out of the triumphs of empire-wide abolition and transatlantic suppression, constructed their own self-congratulatory narrative. During this period Britain's commitment to the anti-slavery cause was often rolled out as a symbol of its moral progress, and an indicator of national superiority. This reading, which obscured the nation's darker slavery-related history, was one which dominated the historiography until at least the 1940s, and still exists in some less scholarly work on slavery.⁴ One of the most oft-quoted examples of this view was propounded by the Irish historian William Lecky, who in 1869 wrote that the 'inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous comprised pages in the history of nations'.⁵ The work of the naval anti-slavery squadrons was one of the most visible symbols of this 'crusade' and played a central role in the construction of this narrative. Writing in 1949, for example, Christopher

³ See for example Sir Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1964), p. 217. In this account Coupland described the 1873 Frere Treaty (discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis) as 'the death-warrant of the Arab slave trade'. Similarly for Lloyd the years after 1873 were relegated to the epilogue. Raymond Howell closed his study in 1890.

⁴ For an example of a popular history of naval suppression see Bernard Edwards, *Royal Navy versus the Slave Traders: Enforcing Abolition at Sea* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Maritime, 2007). Some of the less scholarly material produced to mark the 2007 bicentenary of Britain's abolition of the slave trade received criticism for misrepresenting Britain's own part in the slave trade and celebrating British abolitionism at the expense of recognising African agency. The film *Amazing Grace* (2007) stands out as an obvious example.

⁵ Quoted in David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (Routledge: London, 1991), p. 1.

Lloyd stated, 'The heaviest burden throughout that long period [of the anti-slavery campaign] fell upon the junior officers and men of the Royal Navy, and their work on all the coasts of Africa deserves recognition as one of the noblest efforts in our national history'.⁶ In his discussion of what he terms the 'misremembering' of Britain's slaving past, Marcus Wood writes: 'the capture of each foreign slave ship [by the navy] affirmed British enlightenment and disguised the memory of the two hundred years of British domination of the slave trade'.⁷ However, as Wood points out, 'British valorisation of the slave patrols after 1807 has not been adequately examined'.⁸ One of the aims of this thesis is to provide a step towards filling this historiographical gap. The following chapters demonstrate that the East African anti-slavery patrols represented the zenith of this self-congratulatory and imperialistic narrative. If there were ever any doubts over Britain's moral superiority, the continuation of the anti-slavery campaign into the waters of the Indian Ocean appeared to cement Britain's abolitionist tradition once and for all.

The history of British anti-slavery has been the focus of study for numerous eminent historians.⁹ Eric Williams' pivotal study *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) marked a watershed in the historiography of British anti-slavery.¹⁰ It offered the first critique of the imperialistic narrative of abolition, and paved the way for more critical studies. Whilst subsequent historians have questioned Williams' thesis, the principal of his argument which questioned the tensions between the 'moral' and 'material' factors of abolition, have, as David Turley highlights, 'remained major concerns' of historians of slavery and

⁶ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 274.

⁷ Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual representations of slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, see footnote 24, p. 71.

⁹ Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery 1833-1870* (London: Longmans, 1972).

¹⁰ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994, new edn., originally published 1944).

anti-slavery.¹¹ Since Williams, the roots of the anti-slavery movement, its organisation and development, and its place within the cultural and class contexts of Britain have all been extensively examined. Research produced principally since the 1990s has significantly broadened our understanding of the social and cultural aspects of British anti-slavery. Its cross-class and cross-gender appeal has been emphasised, as well as its alliance to many of the key reform, religious and philanthropic movements of the period.¹² Scholarship produced in the last decade or so has begun to examine the importance of imperial networks in the context of slavery and anti-slavery. Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* (2002) prompted scholars to think about how Britain and the empire were culturally connected, and how identities were shaped through imperial connections and encounters with foreign 'others'.¹³ Studies of groups such as missionaries, colonial administrators and settlers have highlighted how British responses to slavery intersected with thinking about matters such as race, colonialism, class, empire, ethnicity, gender and religion.¹⁴ Like missionaries and colonial settlers, naval men also wrote back to Britain with records of their observations and experiences of slavery and the slave trade, yet no equivalent study has ever been undertaken for the men serving on the anti-slavery patrols. There is extensive material in the form of letters, journals, diaries, memoirs, published and unpublished accounts, graphical representations, including paintings, sketches, caricatures and photographs. All of these offer a rich record of the foreign societies which naval

¹¹ Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, p. 2.

¹² Key texts include: Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundation of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Clare Midgely, *Women against slavery: The British campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); John Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Frank Cass Ltd., 1995); Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*.

¹³ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects* (Polity: Cambridge, 2002).

¹⁴ For examples of work that follow Hall's approach see John McAleer, "'The Sharer of My Joys and Sorrows': Alison Blyth, Missionary Labours and Female Perspectives on Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Jamaica' in Hilary M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 199-221; Philip Howell and David Lambert, 'Sir John Pope Hennessy and colonial government: humanitarianism and the translation of slavery in the imperial network' in David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds), *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 228-256.

personnel encountered. Additionally, because the East African anti-slavery patrols coincided with changes to communication technology and the emergence of a mass market and mass media, naval men's observations had a significant impact on how the British public came to perceive both the anti-slavery campaign, and the peoples of the western Indian Ocean region. Despite its potential to shed light on this important aspect of the British anti-slavery campaign, this body of material has remained largely unrecognised, and therefore, vastly understudied.

Discussion of the naval slave-trade suppression campaign is noticeably missing from the historiography of British anti-slavery. The anti-slavery patrols have rarely been considered in the context of the extensive nineteenth-century British debates on the subject of slavery.¹⁵ Nor has the naval campaign been contextualised within the social and cultural background of nineteenth-century Britain and empire. Suppression has instead been written as part of naval history. The main histories of the East African suppression campaign, written by Christopher Lloyd and Raymond Howell, provided a chronological survey of the diplomatic, political and operational background to the campaign. Both authors drew primarily on state records of the Admiralty and Foreign Office, and on Parliamentary Papers.¹⁶ A number of now rather dated histories of British reaction to the East African slave trade also exist.¹⁷ These tended to concentrate on the activities of British missionaries, explorers and diplomats, often presenting hagiographical accounts of 'anti-slavery' figures, such as David Livingstone and Sir John Kirk, and thus side-lining naval activities.¹⁸ A version of events was presented which saw the missionary movement as

¹⁵ For a recent exception to this see Richard Huzzey, "'A Nation of Abolitionists'? Aspects of the politics and culture of anti-slavery Britain, c.1838-1874', (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2008), ch. 3.

¹⁶ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*; Howell, *The Royal Navy*.

¹⁷ Beachey, *The Slave Trade*; Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856-1890: The Slave Trade and the Scramble* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968); Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain and the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise, 1810-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), ch. 4.

¹⁸ Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*; Kirk on the Zambezi: *a chapter of African History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928); *Livingstone's Last Journey* (London: Collins, 1945); Daniel Liebowitz

carrying out the 'internal' work of civilising Africa and, therefore, by association promoting anti-slavery ideas, while the navy was predominantly viewed as an 'external' anti-slavery police force. One of the key themes of this study is a questioning of that interpretation. Rather it aims to explore the way in which these histories were interconnected, and therefore views naval suppression as located *within* this collection of imperial concerns, and not simply as an adjunct to them.

This thesis engages with new material in order to bring new perspectives to the study of the navy's anti-slavery campaign. Building on the approaches of imperial historians such as Catherine Hall and John MacKenzie, who have emphasised the necessity of exploring beyond 'the official mind of imperialism', this study draws heavily on unofficial accounts of slave-trade suppression.¹⁹ It highlights numerous previously unidentified sources. This includes items from the National Maritime Museum's collection which had been overlooked in a recent survey of holdings relating to slavery.²⁰ The illustrated journals of Rear Admiral Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien, which include numerous caricatures of people of the western Indian Ocean; the poems about slavery written by Richard Cotten whilst stationed in Zanzibar; and the collection of over 100 letters written by Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther to his family in London whilst serving on anti-slavery patrols in the late 1880s are a few examples.²¹ Where this thesis also breaks new ground is through its interdisciplinary use of different types of sources. It brings together disparate sources such as letters, journals, memoirs, caricatures, glass-lantern slides and illustrated newspapers,

also focuses on Kirk in *The Physician and the Slave Trade* (New York: Freeman and Company, 1998); Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, 1965, 2nd edn.)

¹⁹ John M. MacKenzie, 'Heroic Myths of Empire' in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular imperialism and the military* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 109-138, p. 109.

²⁰ Hamilton and Blyth, (eds), *Representing Slavery*.

²¹ All three examples come from the NMM collection. Smith-Dorrien's journals are accessioned under SMD/1-7 and Cotten's poems, JOD/119. 1-3. Both are previously unrecognised. Dannreuther's letters, DAN/73, are the subject of an unpublished MA dissertation: Tracy Fash, 'The "Sport" of Dhow-Chasing: An Examination of Late Victorian Attitudes to Slavery in East Africa by Reference to a Case Study of an 1880s Royal Navy Anti-Slavery Patrol', (MA dissertation, Birkbeck, University of London, 2006).

and explores how they relate to one another. This approach brings a more coherent understanding of the social and cultural background of the anti-slavery campaign.

A large proportion of these sources come from the officer class. This shifts the perspective presented in this thesis towards the middle and upper-middle classes. However, in the sources used, a range of ranks and ages within the officer class are represented. Situated alongside a wealth of other varied sources, including representations of the campaign within popular culture in newspapers, periodicals, lectures, books and images, this material adds much to our understanding of the social and cultural aspects of the naval campaign. Building on Hall's approach, emphasis is placed on the idea that the anti-slavery patrols and the way Britons imagined the campaign were part of a dialogue between Britain and those officers stationed in the Indian Ocean. How the campaign was represented in popular culture is therefore an important theme throughout the thesis and is also explored separately in chapter 8. As MacKenzie states, the 'cultural environment' beyond the realm of officialdom 'provides important keys to the understanding of late nineteenth-century empire'.²² This idea is central to the approach taken in this thesis.

A key aim, then, is to shift the emphasis from the official story of suppression based on the political and diplomatic context towards those tasked with carrying out the anti-slavery patrols. By looking at the campaign from this perspective we begin to understand suppression as a cultural encounter, rather than simply as a product of official policy. Crucially, this thesis places slave-trade suppression within the broader ideological context of late-nineteenth-century British culture with a particular focus on how it intersected with thinking about race, empire and national identity. What were the motivational factors for officers working on the anti-slavery patrols? How did they view the work they were undertaking? What did they think about the peoples they were encountering on a daily basis? How did they represent these peoples? In what ways did this intersect with how

²² MacKenzie, 'Heroic Myths', p. 109.

they perceived and represented their own identity? How was the campaign represented to the British public? And what kinds of people in Britain were interested in the anti-slavery campaign? These are all questions which have seldom been interrogated and as such deserve attention.

By the 1860s when the East African anti-slavery campaign was underway, the moral argument against slavery was long won. It is not sufficient simply to state, however, that anti-slavery had become orthodoxy by this time. It is necessary to interrogate exactly what anti-slavery meant to Britons in this period of high imperialism. As a starting point it is possible to say that the issue was no longer simply about an opposition to slavery. It was about ending slavery and planting what British officials called 'civilisation' in its place. Chapters 6 and 7 in particular explore the relationship between suppression and other imperialist and civilising discourses. David Livingstone was the key figure of the East African anti-slavery campaign. Historians have unfailingly viewed him as the figure who kick-started the anti-slavery interest in East Africa, which led to the naval suppression campaign.²³ Livingstone's Zambezi expedition between 1858 and 1864 was pivotal in publicising the full scale of the East African slave trade. His imperial vision, which famously promoted 'Christianity, commerce and civilisation', was rooted in liberal ideology. It struck a chord with the main concerns of the period and formed the ostensible basis of many of Britain's imperial forays into Africa in the late-nineteenth century, whether under the banner of geographical exploration, scientific enquiry, travel, missionary work, commercial ventures, or anti-slavery endeavours.²⁴ An understanding of how naval officers contributed to the veneration of Livingstone helps shed light on the construction of this key narrative of British anti-slavery.

²³ See for example Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp. 193-4; Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 18.

²⁴ John M. MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone and the Worldly After-Life: Imperialism and Nationalism in Africa' in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *David Livingstone and the Victorian Encounter with Africa* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1996), pp. 201-216, p. 207.

Livingstone's published accounts of his travels represented the region as in desperate need of the supposed benefits of British civilisation.²⁵ The fact that the East African slave trade was largely viewed as being in the hands of Islamic or 'Arab' slave traders was a vital part of the rhetoric of the anti-slavery campaign. *The Graphic* wrote in 1872 that it would be 'hopeless to attempt to interfere with the real instigators of East African slavery, namely, the Mahometans of Arabia and Persia, whom we cannot coerce by force, and whose consciences cannot be appealed to, owing to their divergent religion and civilisation, as we might appeal to the consciences of men of European lineage'.²⁶ Britain, of course, had previous experience of the extreme 'divergences' between Christianity and Islam in matters of slavery. The threat of Barbary piracy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was a significant episode in which British imperial anxieties were provoked by the threat of Islam. Operating for Islamic governments out of North Africa, Barbary corsairs had preyed on ships of Western European nations, including Britain, and had captured up to one million European Christians selling them in North African slave markets. While part of the wider campaign to suppress piracy, the aim and largely successful consequences of the Royal Navy's bombardment of Ottoman-ruled Algiers in 1816 was to free enslaved Europeans, and end the Christian slave trade.²⁷ Unlike the transatlantic campaign which had involved the suppression of the slave trade of Christian nations, the East African anti-slavery campaign was viewed in explicitly racial and religious terms. It is essential that naval suppression also be understood in this way. This forms a key theme throughout the thesis; chapters 3 and 4, however, offer a more thorough

²⁵ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858); Charles and David Livingstone, *Narrative of an expedition to the Zambezi and its tributaries; and of the discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyasa, 1858-1864* (London: John Murray, 1865).

²⁶ *The Graphic*, 16 November 1872, p. 457.

²⁷ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002); Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers and Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 23, 27.

exploration of naval officers' racial attitudes, focusing on their response to African and Arab peoples.

The late-nineteenth century has been highlighted as a period in which British racial attitudes hardened. In the context of the empire this was particularly conspicuous: racism was a 'defining feature of late Victorian imperialism'.²⁸ Chapters 3 and 4 explore this within the context of suppression. Writing specifically of the Indian Ocean context, Michael Pearson states that the dominance of Britain in material and military matters within the region 'often flowed into a belief in cultural and moral superiority over, and, as the inverse, contempt for the natives, often coupled with the desire to uplift them'.²⁹ The idea of British superiority was not new. However, the less negative racial attitudes of the eighteenth century had at least allowed for the possibility that non-Europeans, under the 'correct' guidance, might 'progress' to acquire the 'arts and industry' of Europe. Nineteenth-century racial arguments, on the other hand, ensured that non-Europeans were viewed as irredeemably inferior, regardless of the level of 'civilisation' they attained. In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, abolitionism had relied upon the rhetoric of Africans and Britons sharing a common humanity. This idea was most clearly encapsulated by the famous abolitionist campaign message of 'Am I not a man and a brother?'. By the late-nineteenth century, anti-slavery was less about commonalities, instead it was imbued with notions of racial superiority. This world-view crucially underpinned Britain's civilising mission. Britain viewed itself as having responsibility for other supposedly inferior peoples. In terms of the anti-slavery campaign, official abolitionist rhetoric represented Britain as having a civilising duty to lead, through example, non-Christian peoples. As others have elsewhere argued, this was a discourse that was demonstrably different to the attitudes of

²⁸ For a good historiographical review of the central themes amongst historians studying race and empire see Anthony Webster, *The debate on the rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), ch. 6.

²⁹ Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 191.

early abolitionists.³⁰ Andrew Porter has argued that the indirect consequence of this emphasis was ‘a negative conception of trusteeship’, which confirmed the reality of what Rudyard Kipling later called the ‘white man’s burden’.³¹ Rather than being seen as oppressed by the experience of slavery, as early abolitionists had argued, in the discourse of trusteeship Africans were viewed more negatively. They were seen as incapable of speaking for themselves.³²

Raising the standard of Africans through civilising values was a staple of both anti-slavery and missionary rhetoric in this period. Resolutions passed at an anti-slavery meeting convened by the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland in 1876 to consider the question of the East African slave trade, condemned the slave trade as: ‘not only ruinous to Africa, but as entirely opposed to the interest of civilised countries, preventing as it does, the introduction and spread of Christianity and civilisation’. Simultaneously, this rhetoric depended on the idea of continuing Britain’s anti-slavery tradition through reference to the previous Atlantic campaign. The meeting went on to declare that ‘it was incumbent on the nation to continue the policy pursued by the Government in dealing with the West African slave trade’.³³ Ending the East African slave trade provided an opportunity to keep Britain’s abolitionist identity alive, and thus reinforce its own national virtue. Suppression in this period was less about altruism towards Africa and more about promoting Britain’s global image. This premise was summed up by Mr D. Davis, an MP speaking in the House of Commons in 1876, when he stated: ‘if foreigners perceived that we did not now take the same interest in the suppression of the slave trade as we did many years ago, they would

³⁰ For a good overview of this shift in abolitionist thinking see Clare Midgely, ‘Anti-Slavery and the roots of “imperial feminism”’ in Clare Midgely (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 161-179.

³¹ Andrew Porter, ‘Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery and Humanitarianism’ in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 198-221, p. 217.

³² Midgely, ‘Anti-Slavery’, p. 166.

³³ Reported in *The Graphic*, 16 May 1874, pp. 466-7.

begin to think we were wrong and they were right with regard to the slave question'.³⁴

Reviewing an account of the East African anti-slavery patrols written by Captain George Sullivan, the *British Quarterly Review* wrote that, 'English-men are greatly changed, if its revelations do not arouse the dormant spirit of liberty and philanthropy which swept away West Indian slavery forty years ago'.³⁵ Anti-slavery was seen to be at the heart of British national identity and was central to the language of patriotism.

A key question is whether and in what ways this official and popular view of anti-slavery filtered down to those tasked with suppression? Naval officers were, after all, ordered to work on the anti-slavery patrols just as they were on any other commission. Did naval officers believe in the heightened rhetoric of abolitionists and missionaries? Did they see themselves as a humanitarian 'police force', or as carrying out the work of the civilising mission? And, if so, how did these ideas intersect with the more virulent racial attitudes of the period? Chapters 6 and 7 in particular focus on answering these questions. Responses to slavery and the slave trade therefore provide a window on to changing British attitudes towards indigenous cultures, and specifically those in the western Indian Ocean world. The shift of focus of Britain's imperial activities from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean during the course of the nineteenth century makes examination of these issues all the more pertinent. The relationship between anti-slavery and national identity and how it changed over the course of the century is also highlighted. In recovering the racial attitudes of Royal Naval officers, some of the main points of racial thinking that emerged in the late-Victorian period are highlighted. We see how discourses about scientific racism, cultural differences, and paternalistic forms of racism emerged in the context of the anti-slavery patrols. Read in this light, suppression is examined in a way which represents a significant departure from existing studies.

³⁴ *Hansard*, 1876, p. 1231.

³⁵ *British Quarterly Review*, 58:115 (1873: July), p. 224.

Chapter 1 outlines the chronology of suppression, looking at the major impetuses that prompted the British government to introduce and maintain an anti-slavery squadron off the East African coast during the late-nineteenth century. The scale and nature of the slave trade from East Africa is also summarised here. In order to understand naval officers' responses to anti-slavery and to the peoples they encountered, it is necessary to know about the cultural context of late-nineteenth-century British society. Chapter 2 provides this background. The racial attitudes central to this thesis are explored in depth in chapters 3 and 4, which offer a survey of how Royal Naval officers represented two of the main groups involved in the slave trade: Africans and Arabs. The divergent ways in which these two groups of foreign 'others' were represented is emphasised. Chapter 5 follows with an exploration of how naval officers imagined themselves within the context of the anti-slavery patrols, and highlights that 'otherness' was a crucial way in which imperial encounters were perceived, and identities constructed.³⁶ It examines how encounters with foreign others during the anti-slavery patrols shaped or re-shaped the identities of British naval officers. Furthermore, it highlights how these identities were reinforced through the process of transmitting them back to Britain, whether through textual or graphical representations. This chapter in particular highlights the idea which underpins the work of historians such as Catherine Hall; that identities were constructed through a mutually-reinforcing circular process in the context of a 'network of relationships' which made up the 'global cultural system' of the British Empire.³⁷

Chapters 6 and 7 concentrate on the relationship between the naval anti-slavery campaign, the civilising mission and Britain's wider imperial agendas within East Africa. In light of the previous chapters, these chapters will consider more closely how the dominant racial attitudes played out in reality in terms of how freed slaves were treated. Chapter 6

³⁶ A good introduction to the issues involved can be found in Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 8-22.

³⁷ Diane Robinson-Dunn, *The harem, slavery and British imperial culture: Anglo-Muslim relations in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 3.

looks at the period immediately following rescue by the Royal Navy, when recently freed slaves were on board ship. It examines how discourses of the civilising mission, Christianity, and paternalistic racism intersected with the experiences of African freed slaves on board naval ships. This window on to suppression highlights the qualified nature of freedom. Chapter 7 extends this argument. It explores how 'freedom' for liberated Africans was shaped according to imperial ideals. The problem of freed slaves brought the question of imperial trusteeship centre stage. It prompted debates over the nation's responsibility to these newly freed Africans, what shape this responsibility would take, and what form these individuals' freedom would ultimately constitute. The treatment of freed slaves as discussed in this chapter ultimately demonstrates more about British attitudes towards these individuals than the rhetoric that usually accompanied the anti-slavery, civilising and imperial mission.

Finally, chapter 8 explores how the anti-slavery campaign was represented and received in British popular culture. The main ways the campaign entered the public's imagination are surveyed. This discussion takes us into the final decade of the nineteenth century. It provides insight into the way certain ideas and motifs endured from the earliest stages of the Atlantic abolitionist campaign, but simultaneously how anti-slavery was also represented and imagined in new and very different ways. Similarly we will see which groups allied themselves to the anti-slavery movement during this period, a point which also reflects both continuity and change from the early abolitionist movement. This chronology takes the discussion of suppression, and indeed British anti-slavery, at least twenty years beyond some previous studies.³⁸ By closing with this chapter, the naval anti-slavery campaign is located firmly in the ideological and cultural context of Britain, and the interconnectedness of Britain and empire is again emphasised.

³⁸ See above footnote 3.

Marcus Wood has described the history of abolition as ‘a whitewashed historical fiction in which the slave is given the gift of freedom by a beneficent patriarchy and a noble nation’.³⁹ This fittingly describes the way the anti-slavery patrols were represented by contemporaries and by numerous historians. We cannot, however, simply brush aside the anti-slavery campaign as meaningless high-minded rhetoric. Whatever the failings of naval officers, ultimately these were shaped by sincere intentions based on an idealised worldview of offering benevolent paternalism to ‘inferior’ nations. It is not, however, the aim of this thesis to judge those involved in suppression. By their very title, the ‘anti-slavery’ patrols were defined by an opposition to slavery and a commitment to freedom. But the freedom the anti-slavery patrols brought was not a normative state. As a window on to abolitionism, this exploration of suppression ultimately demonstrates the limits of freedom of Britain’s anti-slavery campaign.

³⁹ Marcus Wood, ‘Popular Graphic Images of Slavery and Emancipation in Nineteenth Century England’ in Hamilton and Blyth (eds), *Representing Slavery*, pp. 138-153, p. 141.

CHAPTER 1

The Royal Navy and anti-slavery in the nineteenth century

The decision by Parliament in 1807 to abolish the British slave trade was in one respect an endpoint. Simultaneously, it marked the beginning of a complex and multi-stranded anti-slavery campaign. Within ten years of abolishing its own slave trade, Britain embarked on a campaign to abolish the slave trade internationally and ultimately to end slavery itself.¹ The ships of the Royal Navy squadrons were a crucial tool of Britain's anti-slavery policy, and emerged as a symbol of the nation's apparently unquestioned commitment to anti-slavery. While political and public support for naval suppression fluctuated, there is no doubt that the squadrons were an essential element of the anti-slavery campaign. British efforts to suppress the Indian Ocean slave trade were, initially at least, heavily influenced by the preceding transatlantic campaign. The way suppression in the Indian Ocean was practically implemented, and the ideology that underpinned the anti-slavery movement, had its basis in the transatlantic campaign. In order to contextualise this thesis, it is therefore necessary to survey the major impetuses which led to the implementation and maintenance of the anti-slavery squadrons, first in the Atlantic Ocean and then the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the Indian Ocean campaign was as much based on prerogatives tied to Britain's growing imperial expansion within Africa and the Indian Ocean world as on anti-slavery objectives. This chapter therefore charts the chronology and key events of the naval anti-slavery campaign, and places it within the wider imperial context. Additionally, it discusses the mechanics of slave-trade suppression. Prior to this,

¹ For an excellent overview of Britain's efforts to 'internationalize anti-slavery' see Joel Quirk and David Richardson, 'Anti-slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-historical Perspective', *Journal of Modern European History*, 7:1 (2009), pp. 70-94, particularly pp. 78-84.

however, it is necessary to outline the nature and dimensions of the slave trade within the western Indian Ocean.

The slave trade in eastern Africa and the western Indian Ocean

Most Britons knew little about the slave trade in East Africa until at least the mid-nineteenth century. Foreshadowed by intense interest in the transatlantic abolitionist campaign, understanding of the Indian Ocean slave trade was overwhelmingly and incorrectly based on the Atlantic model of slavery. The same 'tyranny of the Atlantic' has similarly led to a bias in the historical investigation of the ocean slave trades.² It is only since the late 1980s that a more distinct body of historical research focused on the Indian Ocean slave trade and slavery has emerged.³ In fact, the nineteenth-century slave trade in East Africa represented a peak in a trade that began long before the transatlantic trade, and dated back to at least 2000 BC. This growth was broadly linked to the enhanced commercial opportunities and increased labour demand that resulted from the growth in the global economy after 1800. Slavery in the Indian Ocean world often overlapped with numerous other forms of servile and un-free labour. Unlike the Atlantic model of slavery, slaves worked across a far wider range of tasks and responsibilities.⁴ Slaves retained within

² This phrase was used by Edward Alpers to characterize the bias of modern slavery historiography. See Edward Alpers, 'The African Diaspora in the Northwestern Indian Ocean: Reconsideration of an Old Problem, New Directions for Research', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 17:2 (1997), pp. 62-81, p. 62.

³ Texts that have been central to building a more coherent Indian Ocean historiography include: Edward Alpers (ed.), *Resisting Bondage in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007); Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004); Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005); Edward Alpers, Gwyn Campbell, and Michael Salman (eds), *Slavery, Forced Labour and Resistance in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005); William Gervase Clarence-Smith (ed.), *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1989); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴ Gwyn Campbell, 'Slavery and the Trans-Indian Ocean World Slave Trade: A Historical Outline' in Himanshu Prabha Ray and Edward Alpers (eds), *Cross Currents and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 287-305, p. 295.

East Africa, and those working on the French Mascarene Islands, were principally used as plantation workers. The trade to Arabia and the Persian Gulf included the supply of enslaved females to work as domestic slaves and concubines within the houses of Muslim elites in Arabia, Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Eunuchs were also imported in small numbers into these regions. This branch of the slave trade became the target of abolitionists, who tended to characterise it as both 'Oriental' and 'ancient'. Slaves in Middle Eastern regions also worked in military and administrative roles, as agriculture and irrigation workers in the hinterland, and as domestic workers, mariners and dock workers in towns and ports. The majority of Persian Gulf slaves worked as divers in the burgeoning pearl fishing industry.⁵

⁵ William Gervase Clarence-Smith, 'The Economics of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea Slave Trades in the Nineteenth Century: An Overview' in Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, pp. 1-20. This edited volume provides a comprehensive overview of the dimensions and mechanics of the East African slave trade.

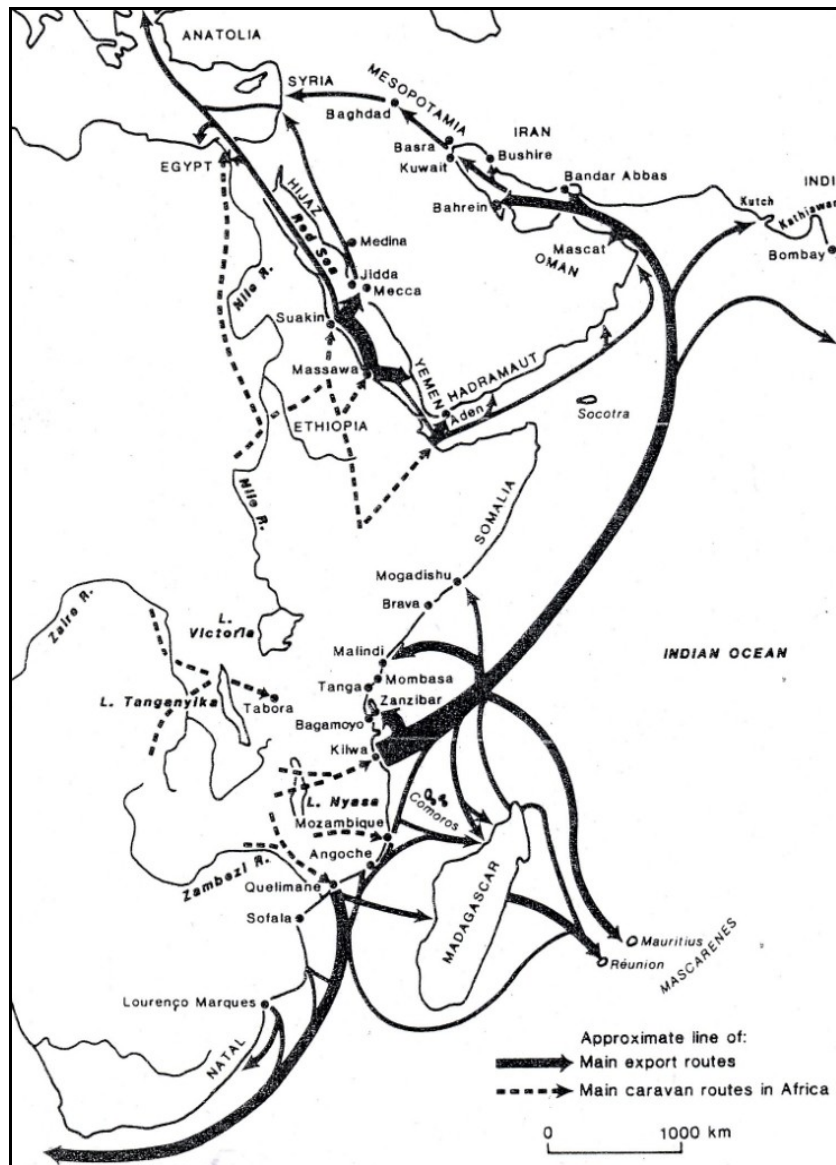


Fig. 1.1: Map showing the principal slave routes in the western Indian Ocean slave trade in the nineteenth century.⁶

The western Indian Ocean slave trade is often discussed in terms of a Northern and Southern network (see fig. 1.1). The navy was variously involved in suppressing both outlets. However, this thesis focuses on its most sustained campaign which took place in the later-nineteenth century against the Northern, so-called Arab trade, centred on the export region of Zanzibar. The principal slave trade route of the Northern network was from East Africa to Arabia and the Persian Gulf region. Smaller numbers of slaves were also

⁶ Map from Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, p. 2.

exported to Madagascar, the Mascarenes and South Asia. Slaves were also re-imported to work on large-scale plantations along the East African mainland and offshore islands.⁷ A trade across the Red Sea existed which was mainly under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Slaves were deployed throughout the Persian Gulf region and were transported onwards to the Ottoman Empire. Estimates place the annual slave export figure across the Red Sea at 5,000. The Red Sea trade peaked in the 1860s and 70s. However, the right to search and detain Ottoman vessels was not granted to the navy until 1880. Furthermore British influence in the Red Sea region was restricted to the port of Suakin.⁸

Central to the growth of the Arab slave trade was the commercial empire of the Omani Sultanate. The Busaidi dynasty came to power in Oman in the 1740s. By the mid-eighteenth century it had begun to extend its authority over the East African region. The large-scale development of date plantations in Oman produced an unprecedented demand for slave labour from East Africa. By the early-nineteenth century, Omani hegemony had been firmly extended over the East African coastal region. This encompassed a territory stretching from Cape Delgado in modern-day south Tanzania to Lamu in north Kenya (this whole region is often termed the Swahili Coast). The island of Zanzibar was the commercial centre of this coastal region. The Omani hold was further consolidated in 1840 by the decision of the then Busaidi ruler, the Sultan of Muscat Sayyid Said ibn Sultan, to transfer his court from Muscat to Zanzibar. The Sultan encouraged caravans to trade further inland for slaves and ivory. He also developed a major slave-based plantation economy on the islands and the mainland coast around Zanzibar, producing cloves, grain and coconuts.⁹ From then on Zanzibar developed as one of the most prosperous ports in the Indian Ocean.

⁷ For a good overview see Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, ch. 3.

⁸ For the Red Sea trade see *Ibid.*, pp. 156-162; Janet J. Ewald, 'The Nile Valley System and Red Sea Slave Trade 1820-1880', in Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, pp. 71-92; Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade And Its Suppression 1840-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). For British efforts to end this trade see Robinson-Dunn, *The harem, slavery and British imperial culture*.

⁹ On the slave trade and its relationship to the commercial and political development of the Omani Sultanate see Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London: James Currey, 1987).

Clove production peaked between the 1840s and 1870s, and this growth was reflected in a parallel increase in the slave trade during this phase. Between 1875 and 1884 the coastal plantation economy peaked, employing between 43,000 and 47,000 slaves on the Kenyan coast. This represented 44 per cent of the total population.¹⁰

The principal port of slave export was Kilwa to the south of Zanzibar, with small numbers also shipped out of Bagamoyo (both on the coast of present-day Tanzania). Slaves mainly came from the region around the Great Lakes in present-day Tanzania and Malawi.¹¹ In terms of naval practicalities, one of the crucial aspects of this slave trade was that slaves were shipped within the traditional monsoon trade. Arab traders used the prevailing winds and currents to arrive in Zanzibar between October and April and returned when the wind shifted from April to September.¹² As was true of other branches of the Indian Ocean slave trade, slaves usually formed part of a mixed cargo, transported alongside other trade goods. Unlike the transatlantic trade, vessels were not specifically designed for the slave trade and slaves were most commonly shipped in indigenous, shallow-draught dhows. A further complication was that legally owned domestic slaves were often transported by dhow, or worked as crew members. The implications for the navy, in terms of the ease with which slaves could be traded clandestinely, were significant. This had enormous consequences in terms of limiting the navy's ability successfully to enforce suppression.¹³

Due to the hegemony of the Zanzibar Sultanate over the coastal exports north of Portuguese East Africa, Arab and Swahili traders dominated the trade. However, some of the most notorious slave traders were probably of Yao (from the southern end of Lake

¹⁰ Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 2nd edn.), pp. 157, 231.

¹¹ See Françoise Renault, 'The Structure of the Slave Trade in Central Africa in the Nineteenth Century' in Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, pp. 146-166.

¹² Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 4.

¹³ The limitations of the campaign have been covered extensively elsewhere see Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, ch. 4, and Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, ch. 16.

Malawi) and Makua (from present-day north Mozambique and south Tanzania) origin.¹⁴

The term 'Arab' trade, used by contemporaries and also commonly by historians, is therefore misleading. It denied the ethnically mixed nature of the East African slave trade. Swahili traders who had adopted Islam and Arabic dress were wrongly categorised 'Arab' by British observers.¹⁵ The primary financiers of the slave trade were Indian merchants who had migrated from the British 'Protected States' in India to port towns in East Africa, Arabia and the Persian Gulf. When the British came to push their anti-slavery campaign in the East African region, the extensive involvement of British Indian subjects was a source of major embarrassment.¹⁶

The main regions of export for the southern slave trade were the Swahili Coast, and Mozambique and Quelimane in Portuguese East Africa. Slaves were principally shipped to supply the French Mascarene islands and Madagascar, and also before 1860 the booming Brazilian and Cuban plantation trades.¹⁷ In terms of overall numbers of slaves traded from East Africa during the nineteenth century, the Mozambique-Brazil route was particularly significant. Over the course of the century, Mozambique was the third largest supplier of slaves to Brazil, ahead of Biafra and just behind Benin.¹⁸ However, the initial expansion of this sector originated with French demand. This followed the successful introduction in the early-eighteenth century of a plantation-based economy centred on sugar, to the Mascarene Islands of La Réunion (Bourbon) and Île de France (Mauritius after 1810, when the island became a British colony). In 1841 the Omani Sultan signed a convention with the

¹⁴ Edward Alpers and Matthew S. Hopper, 'Parler en son nom? Comprendre les témoignages d'esclaves africains originaires de l'océan Indien (1850-1930)' in *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 63:3 (2008): pp. 799-828, p. 807.

¹⁵ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2006), p.28. The implications of using this ethnic 'catch-all' label will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

¹⁶ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, pp. 205-8.

¹⁷ For the 'southern' slave trade in the first half of the nineteenth century see Gwyn Campbell, 'Madagascar and Mozambique in the Slave Trade of the Western Indian Ocean, 1800-1861' in Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, pp. 166-193. For the second half see Gwyn Campbell, 'The East African Slave Trade, 1861-1895: The "Southern" Complex', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22:1 (1989), pp. 1-26.

¹⁸ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 71.

French to allow labour recruitment from the region of the Zanzibar Sultanate. Africans were purchased as ‘free’ contract labourers (*engagés*) to supply the labour demands of La Réunion and the Comoros Islands. Historians and contemporaries alike have viewed the *engagé* trade as a ‘quasi-slave trade’. In the 1850s, approximately 7,500 *engagés* were imported into La Réunion annually, a figure which decreased after Britain allowed the French to import Indian ‘coolie’ indentured labourers from 1861.¹⁹ In chapter 7 we will see that during the 1860s and 70s these islands also became one of the destinations for Africans ‘liberated’ by the naval anti-slavery squadron. Here they worked under the same regulations as indentured Indian labourers. The Mascarenes provide a prime example of the overlapping systems of slavery and un-free labour that existed in the Indian Ocean world slave system.²⁰

Table 1: Volume of East African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century by Region of Departure and Destination.²¹

REGION OF DEPARTURE	REGION OF DESTINATION	SLAVE NUMBERS
Red Sea/Gulf of Aden	Arabia/Persian Gulf	500,000
Swahili Coast	Arabia/Persian Gulf	300,000
Swahili Coast and Mozambique	Mascarene Islands	200,000
	Trans-Atlantic (Brazil and Cuba)*	406,000
All Regions		1.4 million

* This figure is for the period 1801-1867, after which the transatlantic traffic ceased.

¹⁹ Campbell, ‘Madagascar and Mozambique in the Slave Trade’, p 170.

²⁰ See Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²¹ Figures for the Indian Ocean trade are compiled from Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, and for the transatlantic trade, from David Eltis, ‘The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58: 1 (2001), pp. 17-46, table 2.

Several historians have attempted to map the dimensions of the Indian Ocean slave trade.²² However, unlike the detailed records of voyages made in the Atlantic Ocean, records for the Indian Ocean trade rely mainly on sketchy contemporary observations made by European travellers. At best these provide only a rough estimation of scale. The figures are presented in Table 1. An estimation of 1.4 million as a number for Africans exported out of East Africa in the nineteenth century is generally accepted. However, as the century progressed demand for slaves also increasingly came from within Eastern Africa. The dimensions of this trade are even harder to gauge, but the coastal demand alone probably stood at 800,000 for the nineteenth century.²³ The principal target of naval suppression – the trade from East African ports of the Zanzibar Sultanate to Arabia and the Persian Gulf – involved approximately 3,000 slaves annually. The internal trade in the 1860s numbered approximately 10,000 slaves who were re-exported to destinations on the East African coast, and approximately 12,000 were retained in Zanzibar annually.²⁴ This internal trade was made illegal and became a target of naval suppression after the 1873 Frere Treaty. The above survey provides an impression of the size of the problem with which the navy attempted to grapple. With an average of only six or seven ships dedicated to the East African anti-slavery patrols, it is no surprise that naval officers frequently complained to officials in London that the task they faced appeared insurmountable.²⁵

²² See for example the collective chapters in Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Economics*, and B. Esmond, Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, 'A Quantitative Assessment of the Arab Slave Trade 1700-1896', *Kenya Historical Review* 5:1 (1977), pp. 71-91.

²³ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, p. 156.

²⁴ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, p. 229.

²⁵ 'Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade (East Coast of Africa), *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *PP*) 1871 (420). See for example the statements of Admiral Sir Leopold Heath pp. 52-6, and Captain Philip Colomb, pp. 81-3.

The mechanics of slave-trade suppression

The use of the navy as an anti-slavery 'police-force' required significant organisation and investment on the part of the British state. This section begins by briefly outlining the substantial legal and bureaucratic system which supported suppression. It also considers the extent to which the Admiralty considered suppression a priority. Throughout the campaign, naval patrols and diplomatic pressure provided the mutually supportive tools for attacking the slave trades in both oceans. During the course of the nineteenth century, the government used diplomatic leverage to secure an impressive bank of bi-lateral treaties with slave-trading nations. Having rendered different legs of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades illegal, the treaties formed the legal basis upon which the Royal Navy could act. They provided the mutual right to search suspected slave-trading vessels belonging to those nations agreed by treaty.²⁶

Supporting this system was a series of Vice Admiralty Courts, or Courts of Mixed Commission, established around the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coastlines, in which suspected slave traders could be tried. Any slaves found on board were also 'liberated' by the courts (a system discussed in greater detail in chapter 7). A network of British consular posts and Royal Navy commanders and officers stationed in various locations around the Atlantic and Indian Oceans were tasked with the implementation of anti-slavery policy. Their reports and correspondence were returned to the slave trade department at the Foreign Office in London, where they were bound and presented to Parliament on an annual basis.²⁷ Britain's suppression campaign involved numerous governmental departments. Those officially tasked with most direct responsibility were the Foreign Office, which during the nineteenth century numbered less than forty staff, and the

²⁶ See Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, Appendix E, for a list of anti-slavery treaties secured by Britain during the nineteenth century.

²⁷ For a more detailed description of the bureaucratic systems which supported anti-slavery policy see Richard Huzzey, "A Nation of Abolitionists?", pp. 15-21.

Admiralty (and within this a whole host of naval departments). However, the complex diplomatic and legal ramifications of pursuing anti-slavery policy had significant consequences for British colonies, therefore the Colonial and India Offices also had responsibilities and interests in suppression. The complex financing of this immense anti-slavery system relied upon the Treasury, and the High Court of Admiralty was required to deal with any appeals from the Vice Admiralty Courts.²⁸ Referring to the transatlantic campaign – although the same can be said of Indian Ocean suppression – David Eltis has emphasised the high level of British expenditure involved in its implementation. He argues that taking into account the costs of maintaining the squadron and the courts, treaty payments to foreign governments, compensations for wrongful arrests, and other aspects of the anti-slave trade structure, ‘the potential economic rewards for never undertaking the campaign . . . would have been even more considerable’.²⁹

In fact the Admiralty appeared to have concurred with this view as slave-trade suppression remained something of a low priority throughout the campaign. In 1831, the newly appointed Head of the Admiralty complained to the Foreign Office that the squadron was ineffective as a tool of suppression. ‘Wherein consists the necessity of [such] a squadron[?]’ he asked.³⁰ During the transatlantic campaign 160,000 Africans were freed by naval patrols, which represented only a small percentage of the total numbers exported from Africa. These figures suggest the insurmountable task the anti-slavery squadron faced, and the inefficacy of their operations.³¹ Other factors similarly suggest a lack of Admiralty commitment. The numbers of vessels specifically dedicated to anti-slavery duties only ever represented a small proportion of Britain’s potential naval fleet. Furthermore, the ships that were employed were generally old, ill-suited to the particular requirements of the patrols, and poorly equipped. As outlined below, the stationing of HMS *London* as an anti-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

²⁹ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, p. 7.

³⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹ Quirk and Richardson, ‘Anti-Slavery, European Identity’, p. 80.

slavery 'headquarters' at Zanzibar between 1873 and 1884 represented a period of improvement. This phase stands out as the most sustained period of commitment to the East African campaign.³²

Speaking before the Select Committee on the East African slave trade in 1871 however, Reverend Edward Steere, a missionary of the Universities' Missions to Central Africa (UMCA), stated that, in his opinion, both the naval authorities and the officers on the station had consistently failed to take suppression seriously. To the same committee, Colonel Christopher Rigby noted that during his term as consul in Zanzibar (1858-1861), the squadron sent by the Admiralty 'was a common cause of joking' amongst other nations based there. 'That such a squadron should be sent out to check the slave trade was an absurdity'. He went on to describe one ship, HMS *Sidon*, as 'an old tub, that any dhow on the coast could beat', and another, HMS *Gorgon*, as 'perfectly useless for any other service'.³³ Even with the improvements that steam technology brought from the 1860s, naval officers still complained that dhows could outstrip the British ships.³⁴ The shallow draught of dhows gave them supremacy over the navy as they could sail closer in-land and along waterways that were impassable for the deep-hulled naval ships. To counteract this problem, the naval squadron generally sent ships' sail boats away on detached patrols. These were manned by small crews of around six to eight men, who would patrol for days, or weeks at a time. The inadequacy and often dangerous nature of patrolling in this way was evident to those involved.³⁵

For the Admiralty, suppression was always of secondary concern to more pressing imperial matters requiring naval attention. For example, the demands of the Crimean War

³² Blyth, 'Britain, the Royal Navy and the Suppression of the Slave Trades', pp. 79, 88.

³³ *PP 1871 (420)*, pp. 75, 44.

³⁴ Phillip H. Colomb, *Slave Catching in the Indian Ocean: A record of naval experiences* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873), p. 38. For the impact of British steam technology developments in the Indian Ocean see Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, ch. 7.

³⁵ See for example William Creswell, *Close to the Wind: the early memoirs, 1866-1879, of Admiral Sir William Creswell, K.C.M.G., K.B.E.*, edited by Paul Thompson (London: Heineman, 1965), p. 145; and Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 192.

(October 1853-February 1856) meant that vessels were withdrawn from anti-slavery patrols in the Mozambique Channel despite some recent progress in stemming the slave trade. At the same time cruisers were steadily withdrawn from the West African Squadron. By 1856, the numbers had been reduced from nineteen to fourteen ships, leading to a revival in the slave trade out of the Bights of Africa.³⁶ Another example was the massive scale of the Abyssinian expedition of 1868 which required all available naval vessels. This included withdrawing the only three ships that were dedicated to East African anti-slavery patrols at the time. Slave traders were therefore able to continue shipping slaves that year without the concern of naval surveillance. By contrast, during the years 1888-89, the numbers of ships employed off the East African coast under the 'name of slave trade suppression' was increased from an average of seven or eight, to eleven. However the primary reason for this augmented force was to fulfil a wider political role in the build-up to the scramble for Africa, as will be explored in greater detail below.³⁷ The ships of the anti-slavery squadrons were therefore treated as a kind of reserve pool by the Admiralty, which often withdrew or increased its services when matters perceived to be of greater importance than slave-trade suppression required action.

Slave-trade suppression and imperial agendas

The decision to suppress the East African slave trade in the late nineteenth century was a continuation of a longer if sometimes wearied campaign, which began after the passing of the 1807 bill. It was at this date that a small naval force was deployed to the West African coast and tasked with carrying out anti-slavery patrols. Growing British maritime supremacy and the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 permitted the establishment of a permanent West Africa squadron, which had a specific anti-slavery

³⁶ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp. 167, 221.

³⁷ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, pp. 44, 196.

remit. With the onset of the American civil war in the 1860s, and the closure of the Cuban slave market in 1869, the Atlantic slave trade was finally seen to be at an end.³⁸ In 1867 a motion was brought to the House of Commons for withdrawal of the Atlantic anti-slavery squadron. At this point the West Africa squadron was amalgamated with the Cape Station.³⁹

Although the primary focus of suppression in the first half of the century was the transatlantic slave trade, sporadic attempts were also made to curb parts of the western Indian Ocean slave trade. With a focus on stemming the trade to the British sugar colony of Mauritius and the Brazilian trade out of Mozambique, this activity to a large extent formed part of the wider transatlantic anti-slavery efforts. It was also as much a consequence of the nation's growing imperial presence within the western Indian Ocean region.⁴⁰ The number of vessels deployed in the region in the early decades of the century was small, and reflect the low level of importance when compared to the number employed in the Atlantic. The ships employed came under the command of the Cape Station, which patrolled over 2,000 miles of west and east African coastline.⁴¹ Between 1845 and 1860 the station averaged only nine vessels. Moreover the main priority of the station was the protection of the Cape itself, and thus the sea lanes to India and China, rather than enforcing slave-trade suppression. The Cape was the smallest station in the empire in terms of ship numbers. In contrast, the Mediterranean station numbered over seventy ships, which reflected the preoccupation with the naval threat from France and Russia.⁴²

³⁸ Slaves trafficked to Cuba were carried by ships of various nations, including the United States. One of the consequences of Abraham Lincoln's administration was to agree to a new search treaty, and to order an enhanced American naval anti-slavery squadron.

³⁹ For the transatlantic suppression campaign see Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, chs. 1-12 and Ward, *Royal Navy and The Slavers*.

⁴⁰ Blyth, 'Britain, The Royal Navy and the Suppression of the Slave Trades', p. 84.

⁴¹ The limits of the Cape of Good Hope, West Coast and East Indies stations shifted continuously, for clarification see Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, Appendix D.

⁴² Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 12.

Two treaties primarily aimed at stemming Arab piracy in the Persian Gulf, but with an additional clause of slave-trade suppression, were secured between Britain and various Arab sheikdoms of the Gulf in 1820 and 1836. In theory, both the ships of the Royal Navy and the Bombay Marine (the navy of the East India Company) were permitted to capture slave-trading vessels of those tribes bound by the treaties. However, the Indian government effectively took a policy of turning a blind eye to suppression. They feared that actively pursuing suppression would result in a resurgence of hostilities that had plagued the gulf region for much of the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Such interference would, they believed, have detrimental effects on trade in the region. Evidence of the Indian Government's lethargic approach to suppressing the slave trade as well as the many legal loopholes which undermined the treaties is demonstrated by the fact that not a single slave-trading vessel was captured in the Persian Gulf between 1820 and 1844.⁴³

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, as a result of the greater push to end the transatlantic slave trade, increased commitment was given to anti-slavery patrols in the Mozambique Channel. This helped stem the volume of trade to Brazil and Cuba. The 1839 Palmerston Act and the 1845 Aberdeen Act were vital because they allowed the navy to intercept the ships of Portugal and Brazil respectively, both north and south of the equator. In 1846, Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary also ordered active suppression off the coast of Brazil. Others have stressed the importance of Lord Palmerston as a key figure in the pursuance of slave-trade suppression as official policy.⁴⁴ As Foreign Secretary for much of the 1830s and 40s, and Prime Minister twice in 1855-8 and 1859-65, Palmerston persistently pursued the system of using bi-lateral treaties and Royal Naval suppression as the primary tools of anti-slavery policy. In 1851 he declared the slave trade to be piracy. The tactic of pressurising foreign governments into agreeing anti-slavery treaties,

⁴³ Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean*, pp. 155-7.

⁴⁴ See Huzzey, "A Nation of Abolitionists?", and Oldfield, 'Palmerston'.

supported by naval 'policing', was largely set in stone by Palmerston during this period. Crucially, and in opposition to the hopes of abolitionist societies, this set a precedent for the pursuance of anti-slavery through the non-interference of indigenous slave-holding.⁴⁵ Foreign Office officials were continually concerned by any actions which might undermine this approach. In the context of the Indian Ocean, where the distinction between the slave trade and indigenous slavery was rarely clear-cut, this approach seriously limited the navy's ability to implement suppression successfully. This remained an ongoing area of contestation between the Foreign Office and the navy throughout the campaign.

Another consequence of the increased patrolling of the Mozambique Channel in the 1840s and 50s was a growing awareness of the scale of the East African slave trade.⁴⁶ As outlined above, over the course of the nineteenth century Zanzibar had grown in commercial importance. By 1840 it was well established as the primary entrepôt for all trade on the East African coast. This led to the decision to appoint in 1841 the first British consul on the island – Colonel Atkins Hamerton. Since establishing his permanent residency in Zanzibar, the Sultan had furthered commercial relationships with major merchant powers, including the United States, Britain and France and German merchants from the Hanseatic towns. Additionally he had fostered links with the British Indian community, who were the main financiers of the slave trade. The Sultan signed treaties with the French, which encouraged the southern slave trade through the export of *engagés*. In particular, one article, which permitted Arab traders to sail under the French flag, came to represent one of the most enduring problems for the navy's anti-slavery patrols. As the French were one of the few nations to refuse Britain the right to search its vessels, the French flag provided Arab traders with security to trade slaves without fear of naval interception.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Oldfield, 'Palmerston', p. 24.

⁴⁶ Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p. 196.

⁴⁷ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp. 226-32.

The decision to appoint a consul at Zanzibar reflected a significant step towards the expansion of British influence within the region. Hamerton's remit was to gather information about the slave trade, and to monitor the movements of the French. He was also placed under pressure by the Foreign Office to try and achieve an extension of the Moresby Treaty previously agreed between Britain and the Omani Sultanate in 1822.⁴⁸ This treaty prohibited Omani subjects from trading slaves outside the limits of the Zanzibar-Muscat dominions. It also specifically banned the selling of slaves to Christians. Its objective was to end the slave trade to the British possessions of India and Mauritius.⁴⁹

The principal problem of the Moresby treaty was that whilst it limited the slave trade outside the Muscat-Zanzibar dominions, it essentially condoned the internal trade. In line with his more determined efforts to abolish transatlantic slavery during this period, Palmerston also wanted an outright ban of the entire Omani slave-trade network.⁵⁰ Hamerton developed a strong relationship with the Sultan but only managed to achieve a compromise in terms of a new treaty. The 1847 Hamerton Treaty banned the slave trade between Africa and Arabia and gave the Royal Navy (and the Bombay Marine) the right to search all Omani vessels within certain latitudes. However, it still permitted the significant internal slave trade between the Omani dominions in East Africa. For the purposes of suppression this was problematic. With a domestic slave trade still permitted, it was virtually impossible for the navy to distinguish between the illegal slave trade and the trade between the Sultan's dominions.⁵¹ One American trader estimated in 1847 that the slave population of Zanzibar itself was over 60,000.⁵² Furthermore, the number of naval vessels committed to the anti-slavery patrols remained low, with none ever patrolling further

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

⁴⁹ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp. 229-31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

⁵² Quoted in Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*, p. 230.

north than Mombasa.⁵³ Certainly the main objective of Indian Ocean suppression throughout the 1840s and 50s was the Mozambique-transatlantic trade. Lloyd states that the main consequence of Hamerton's term as consul (1841-56), was to strengthen the Omani-British alliance.⁵⁴ The northern sector of the slave trade, however, remained little diminished. The continued uncooperative attitude of the Indian government did nothing to aid the anti-slavery campaign. Various estimates placed the export of slaves to the Persian Gulf region at around 10,000 annually.⁵⁵ However, it was from this point that Britain's informal control within the region became more established.

During the 1840s the policy of slave-trade suppression came under significant attack within Britain. Opinions were profoundly divided over how anti-slavery policy should best be pursued. Questions were asked by British politicians about the soaring costs of maintaining the squadron, the high mortality rates, and the general level of poor health amongst the naval crews of the West Africa Squadron. A Select Committee, headed by the free-trade MP, Sir William Hutt, was ordered to investigate naval suppression. Hutt's free traders argued that the navy had so far failed to suppress the transatlantic slave trade and that the policy in fact increased the suffering of the enslaved. But the principal complaint of free trade MPs was that the anti-slavery patrols ran counter to the now established domestic policy of free trade, by creating enemies of potential international trading partners. By 1848, after a sustained period of parliamentary debate, the content of which has been extensively detailed by others, the balance was restored in favour of the Royal Navy. However, the use of force as a means to slave-trade suppression remained a significant point of contestation.⁵⁶

⁵³ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁴ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 232.

⁵⁵ Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, p. 48.

⁵⁶ For more detail on the parliamentary debates and the Hutt enquiry see Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, chs. 7-8 and Huzzey, "A Nation of Abolitionists?", ch. 3.

Other opponents of suppression (as a group these have often been called ‘anti-coercionalists’) at this time included abolitionist groups. In 1839 Joseph Sturge founded the British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), with the commitment to end ‘world slavery’. At the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840 and again in 1843, the BFASS considered a list of those countries in which it hoped to abolish slavery. ‘Mohammedan’ countries were placed last, after various European colonies, Texas and South America.⁵⁷ Nonetheless this marked the beginnings of a shift of attention towards Indian Ocean slavery and a move towards the internationalisation of anti-slavery. The society’s pledge was to pursue abolition through ‘moral, religious and pacific’ means. The implication of this was that the society opposed naval suppression. However, this was not its avowed aim, and certainly by the period of high imperialism in the 1880s and 90s, naval suppression and imperial expansion became more acceptable to the society if they could achieve anti-slavery objectives.⁵⁸ Also in 1839 Thomas Fowell Buxton founded the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade. His ideas for the civilisation of Africa as a means to abolition were published in *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (1840). In this he outlined his plans for the government-funded Niger Expedition of 1841, which aimed to bring civilisation to Africa through the promotion of legitimate commerce.⁵⁹ The idea of replacing the slave trade with legitimate commerce was originally proposed in the Atlantic context by prominent abolitionists including Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp.⁶⁰ Though Buxton’s expedition failed, and resulted in high numbers of deaths amongst the expedition team, its ideological influence was significant. It marked a shift towards a closer alliance between notions of a civilising mission and anti-slavery.

⁵⁷ Huzzey, “A Nation of Abolitionists?”, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the twentieth century: The evolution of a global problem* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), p. 10.

⁵⁹ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840).

⁶⁰ Michael Turner, ‘The Limits of Abolition: Government, Saints and the “African Question”, c. 1780-1820’, *English Historical Review*, 112:446 (1997), pp. 319-357.

The way in which these ideas intersected with changing perceptions of race and national identity will be explored in chapter 2. But for the East African anti-slavery campaign, this thinking was to become central. Most influential in forwarding the mantra was the explorer and missionary David Livingstone. In terms of key events in the history of the East African anti-slavery campaign, Livingstone's explorations of Africa in the 1850s and 60s were crucial in raising governmental and public awareness of the East African slave trade, and ultimately kick-starting the East African anti-slavery campaign.⁶¹ Riding on a wave of immense popularity, Livingstone managed to persuade the government to fund his costly expedition up the Zambezi River in 1858. This had the objective of exploring commercial, missionary and colonial possibilities in Eastern and Central Africa.⁶² The main consequence of this expedition, however, was Livingstone's realisations of the immense scale of the East African slave trade, and his subsequent publicising of it in Britain. At Lake Nyasa he observed one of the main slave trade routes which in turn powered the bulk of the Indian Ocean slave trade, feeding into the Arab, Portuguese and French markets.⁶³ His observations were recorded in *Missionary Travels* (1858), which, as testimony to the level of public interest, sold 70,000 copies in its first year.⁶⁴

Livingstone not only identified and publicised the East African slave trade, but proposed a method for its extinction. Much of this echoed Buxton's previous Niger proposals. However, Livingstone also saw the introduction of Christianity as crucial to ending the slave trade and to civilising Africa. Following the publication of *Missionary Travels*, Livingstone embarked on a lecture tour ending at Cambridge University. In

⁶¹ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 18; Iain MacCalman, 'The East African Middle Passage: David Livingstone, the Zambesi Expedition, and Lake Nyasa, 1858-1866' in Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus and Marcus Rediker (eds), *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 39-51.

⁶² Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 186-7.

⁶³ MacCalman, 'The East African Middle Passage', p.43.

⁶⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness, British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 179.

response to the mid-century tiring of the missionary movement, Livingstone urged the universities to take up the missionary cause. This was a great spur to action for the East African anti-slavery campaign. In 1860 a coalition of universities from Oxford and Cambridge, joined later by Durham and Trinity College, Dublin established the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). The society was the first to be operated by the High Church faction of the Anglican Church. The mission station established at Zanzibar in 1866 was one of a number of mission stations founded by the UMCA across East and Central Africa during the 1860s. The initial objective of the society was concerned with ending the slave trade.⁶⁵ Historians of the East African anti-slavery campaign have consistently emphasised the Livingstone narrative. However it is not the intention of this thesis to build on that historiography. Instead the narrative is explored from the point of view of naval officers, rather than that written by historians. Chapter 5 considers how Livingstone's anti-slavery philosophy influenced how naval officers perceived the anti-slavery campaign, and how they themselves highlighted Livingstone as an important figure.

As chapter seven explains, one of the primary reasons to attract missionaries to East Africa was to provide care and education to slaves freed by the navy's anti-slavery patrols. Between 1863 and 1888 seven European mission societies established themselves in the region.⁶⁶ Compared with regions such as South Africa or the Mascarenes, which by 1875 had European settler populations of 300,000 and 70,000 respectively, the European presence in East Africa was still diminutive.⁶⁷ The growth of missionary activity therefore represented a noticeable expansion in the number of Europeans in East Africa. When one adds to this the permanent squadron of naval men, in numbers of up to 1,500 for over

⁶⁵ Porter, *Religion versus empire?*, p. 184-5.

⁶⁶ B. Sundkler and C. A. Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 510.

⁶⁷ Robin Hallett, 'Changing European Attitudes to Africa' in *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume 5, c. 1700-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 6th edn.), pp. 458-496, p. 464.

three decades, one begins to see how the anti-slavery campaign resulted in a significant expansion of the European presence within the East African region.

In fact Livingstone's expeditions, growing missionary intervention and the anti-slavery campaign itself, all reflected the increasing importance of Africa and the Indian Ocean world to Britain's imperial interests, a development which culminated in the full-blown imperialist agendas of the 1880s and 1890s. The mid-nineteenth century was a key phase in the European exploration of East and Central Africa. Famous feats of exploration included Livingstone's crossing of the African continent completed in 1856, and John Speke's and Richard Burton's expedition to locate the source of the Nile between 1856 and 1858. Aided by developments in print technology, the published accounts of these epic journeys sold in their thousands, and were highly popular with the British public.⁶⁸ British missionary and scientific societies working in Africa, such as the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), experienced a significant rise in donations and subscriptions over the course of the nineteenth century. Having emerged from the war with France, the British government now found itself with enough money, and the technological know-how, to be able to support such exercises. The same was true of the naval anti-slavery campaign itself.⁶⁹

Another crucial factor which furthered Britain's commercial interests in the Indian Ocean world was the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. By the mid-century, British trade previously dominated by the western hemisphere had become increasingly cosmopolitan.⁷⁰ The shortened distance between Europe and Asia as a consequence of the canal meant that the shipping route that had previously passed West Africa and rounded the Cape

⁶⁸ For an overview of European exploration in East Africa during the period see Roy Bridges, 'The Christian Vision and Secular Imperialism: Missionaries, Geography, and the approach to East Africa, c. 1844-1890' in Dana Lee Robert (ed.), *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), pp. 43-59, pp. 47-9.

⁶⁹ Hallett, 'Changing European Attitudes', p. 462.

⁷⁰ For more on Britain's shifting trade patterns in the nineteenth century see Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, p.14.

became far less profitable. The majority of British shipping passing through Suez was directed to India and the East, but a growing proportion was diverted to Zanzibar, furthering its commercial importance.⁷¹ The opening of the Suez Canal was in fact part and parcel of a wider and more significant shift which, over the course of the nineteenth century, saw the focus of Britain's economic, imperial and moral concerns swing from the Atlantic world towards the East. The Suez Canal, growth in African Exploration, and the East African anti-slavery campaign were all manifestations of this change in focus.

The opening of the Suez Canal also marked a watershed in communication developments between Britain and the Indian Ocean world. Richard Burton noted that it was a vital link in the imperial system.⁷² Commenting in 1877 on the new Eastern telegraph lines and the opening of the Suez Canal, an ex-lieutenant of the Bombay Marine wrote that the 'Persian Gulf is no more a *mare incognita* than the Red Sea and the East Coast of Africa'.⁷³ In conjunction with developments in the steam ship, extension of colonial rail networks, and the laying of submarine telegraph cables from Britain to India in 1870 and to East and South Africa in 1879, both distance and time between Britain and the Indian Ocean world were dramatically reduced. A six- or seven-month journey from Britain to India via the Cape was reduced to approximately six weeks. Similarly news reports and postal communication that would have taken months to reach Britain could be received in weeks. The consequences of these links in communication were not only economic, but also cultural. Improved mail lines and the electric telegraph meant news and ideas could pass between Britain and the Indian Ocean world far more quickly. This served to raise the British public's awareness of the region. East Africa and the Indian Ocean world, which had

⁷¹ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 259.

⁷² Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 211.

⁷³ Charles Rathbone Low, *History of the Indian Navy (1613-1863)* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1877), p. xii.

seemed relatively peripheral in the early century, became more accessible to Britain.⁷⁴ As will be shown in later chapters, these technological developments had a vital influence on the way in which the anti-slavery patrols were represented and received by the British public. The faster rate at which communication could be reciprocated between Britain and East Africa was a vital element of the cultural background of the anti-slavery campaign. The navy's activities played an influential role in bringing the region into the public's consciousness, and by default also had an influence on how the western Indian Ocean region was represented in British popular culture.

Importantly, the increased numbers of Europeans within East Africa was not only vital in raising awareness of the East African slave trade, but individuals also observed and reported on the inefficiencies of the current naval suppression arrangements. The British consul at Zanzibar, Colonel Christopher Rigby, reported to government officials in Bombay in 1861 that 10,000 slaves were still being exported from Zanzibar annually, and 19,000 imported.⁷⁵ From the 1850s a more consistent campaign to suppress the East African slave trade began to emerge. And from 1858 until 1883 a specific anti-slavery squadron was deployed and operated as part of the East Indies Station. From the late 1860s the anti-slavery squadron was increased to an average of around seven ships, with a total complement of between 1,000 and 1,500 men. Experimenting with various tactics, in three years between 1866 and 1869, the squadron captured 129 slave vessels and freed 3,380 slaves.⁷⁶ This represented around 7 per cent of the total slaves traded in and out of Zanzibar. Unsurprisingly, this was viewed as a poor return in Britain. Of further embarrassment was the slave-market in Zanzibar, which continued to flourish openly as a result of the growing trade.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ For both the economic and cultural effects of the opening of the Suez Canal see Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, pp. 210-11 and 238-9.

⁷⁵ Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, pp. 55-6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 76.

⁷⁷ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 256.

In 1867, the BFASS organised a conference in Paris, out of which emerged a sustained attempt to lobby Parliament into more drastic measures to end the slave trade out of East Africa and around the Muslim world.⁷⁸ In 1870, the BFASS, supported by the former Governor of Bombay Sir Bartle Frere, embarked on a tour of Britain with the aim of raising public awareness of the East African slave trade. As outlined above, the reports of slave trading atrocities sent by Livingstone had already enlivened public interest. Furthermore, now captivating the public's imagination was the ongoing mystery of the explorer's whereabouts. Certainly the considerable publicity given to Henry Morton Stanley's search mission helped focus eyes on East Africa and matters relating to the slave trade. Frere, the BFASS, and in fact all anti-slavery campaigners, used the Livingstone story to maximise public interest in the East African campaign.⁷⁹ The immense public interest surrounding Livingstone, and his death in 1873, had a determining influence in persuading the government to take up the East African anti-slavery cause.⁸⁰ The CMS also played a significant role in lobbying the government into further action.

The culmination of this pressure was the appointment of a Select Committee in 1871 by the Liberal party's Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon.⁸¹ The Committee, representing the Foreign Office, the India Office, the Admiralty and the Colonial Office, was tasked with reviewing the slave trade in East Africa, and suggesting a better policy for its suppression. This was a key development in the anti-slavery campaign. It marked the first point at which the government could be seen to be taking notice of those key figures such as Livingstone, Frere and Rigby, who had continued to press for greater action. Naval matters were an important priority for the Committee. Their recommendations were important in terms of (theoretically) strengthening naval ability successfully to enforce

⁷⁸ Coupland, *Exploitation of East Africa*, p. 148.

⁷⁹ R. J. Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere mission to Zanzibar, 1873', *Historical Journal*, 5 (1962), pp. 122-48, p. 140.

⁸⁰ Bridges, 'The Christian Vision', p. 49.

⁸¹ *PP 1871 (420)*.

suppression of the Omani slave trade.⁸² The Committee concluded that the East African slave trade was almost entirely confined to between Zanzibar and Arabia, but also noted the existence of the trade between Portugal's East African territories and Madagascar, and the trade into the Ottoman Empire via the Red Sea. It proposed a new offensive stating 'that all legitimate means should be used to put an end altogether to the East African slave trade'.⁸³ Their most important recommendations were political in nature, and proposed the negotiation of a new anti-slavery treaty with the Sultan of Zanzibar. Sir Bartle Frere was dispatched as a special envoy to secure the treaty. With the incentive of compensation offered to the Sultan in the form of the cancellation of his annual payment of the Muscat subsidy, previously negotiated in the 1861 Canning Award, reinforced by the threat of a naval blockade, Frere was successful in negotiating a new treaty.⁸⁴

The Frere Treaty, signed in June 1873, marked the culmination of those negotiations. It achieved the aim of agreeing the total abolition of the Zanzibar slave trade. This included the transportation of slaves between the Sultan's East African dominions. It also ordered the closure of the Zanzibar slave market, and agreed the maintenance of British influence at Zanzibar by an increased consular establishment.⁸⁵ The anti-slavery

⁸² For a detailed discussion of these negotiations in the context of to Britain's foreign policy towards East Africa and the Middle East see Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere mission'.

⁸³ *PP 1871 (420)*, p. iii.

⁸⁴ For the background to Frere's negotiations see also Howell, *The Royal Navy*, ch. 4 and Moses Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery in East Africa* (Washington: Three Continents Press), pp. 125-36. The Canning Settlement is explored in detail by Robert J. Blyth in *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), ch. 3. The settlement became a vital tool for Britain to obtain greater anti-slavery concessions. Following the death of Sayyid Said ibn Sultan in 1856, the Omani sultanate split between rule in Zanzibar and Muscat. As a way of maintaining political calm for India, the Bombay Government imposed the Canning Award (arbitrated by Lord Canning, Governor-General of India). The settlement established Zanzibar as a separate Sultanate from Oman, and in order to compensate for the comparative wealth of Zanzibar, ordered the Zanzibar state to pay an annual subsidy of 40,000 crowns to the ruling sovereign of Muscat and Oman. Both rulers agreed to the settlement in 1861. The payment became a huge economic strain for the Zanzibar sultanate, and was vastly subsidised by revenues from the slave trade. In 1867 when political instability in Muscat raised the question of releasing the Sultan of Zanzibar from the annual payment, the Foreign Office seized the opportunity to use it as leverage to force the Sultan to agree to a total abolition of the slave trade within the Zanzibari dominions.

⁸⁵ Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere Mission', p. 134.

squadron was augmented with steam launches for in-shore patrolling, and a stationary depot ship, HMS *London*, was moored permanently in Zanzibar harbour. This served as the centre of the navy's anti-slavery activities from 1873 until 1884, and represented an important improvement in naval capacity.⁸⁶ In theory, the Frere Treaty was a highly significant addition to Britain's anti-slavery armoury, as it provided the navy with the legal power to search and detain any Zanzibar-owned vessel suspected of slave trading. In reality the fact that the treaty aimed to abolish the slave trade, but still sanctioned slavery as a legal institution, meant that the very crux of British anti-slavery policy rested on highly ambiguous arrangements. Slavery itself was not abolished in Zanzibar until 1897, by which time it was a British protectorate. A major loophole in the treaty was that so-called domestic slaves could still be legally carried on board dhows provided they were not for sale. This severely undermined the navy's ability to enforce the treaty successfully and the practical consequences of this inconsistency were highly apparent to the naval crews.⁸⁷

Another consequence of the Select Committee's recommendations was the introduction of a state subsidized mail steamer service to Zanzibar. This followed Frere's advice. Frere had encouraged William Mackinnon to extend his British India Steam Navigation Company's mail services from the Persian Gulf to East Africa. In 1872 Mackinnon was awarded the contract of the mail service between Aden and Zanzibar (with an annual governmental subsidy of £16,000), whilst the Union Steamship Company ran the line between Cape Town and Zanzibar.⁸⁸ The economic motivations of encouraging lines of communication and the subsidisation of imperial ventures were part and parcel of Britain's overall 'forward policy' that was rapidly progressing within the East African region. Frere, and a small number of officials from the Foreign Office (notably Clement Hill, who accompanied Frere on his 'mission' to Zanzibar), had recognised the commercial

⁸⁶ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, pp. 182-3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.

possibilities of the region, and on those grounds aimed to encourage the government to extend British influence into Eastern Africa.⁸⁹ To Frere, mail steamships were not only instrumental in advancing communication and commerce, but were 'part of the anti-slavery machinery'. By increasing British maritime presence, and encouraging commerce, they too could support suppression.⁹⁰ In his first term as Liberal Prime Minister (1868-1874), William Gladstone, debating with Palmerston, argued that the slave-trade would not be destroyed by force but by the introduction of legitimate commerce.⁹¹ Despite the fact that by 1871 Britain held the monopoly of trade at Zanzibar, the island was not considered to be of particular strategic importance. Frere's negotiations should therefore be seen as driven by anti-slavery objectives rather than strategic ones.⁹²

For some historians, the increased period of British intervention during the early 1870s represented the conclusion to the East African anti-slavery story.⁹³ However, although the slave trade was significantly diminished as a result of these negotiations, slave traders by no means saw this as bringing an end to their livelihood, and significant demand for slaves still existed. The destruction of much of Zanzibar's agriculture as a result of a hurricane in 1872 essentially destroyed large-scale slave demand on that island. However, the nearby island of Pemba soon emerged as one of the world's primary clove producers, and in addition the demand for slaves in the northern market of the Middle East and the Red Sea trade remained an ongoing reality. In fact, a sustained revival of the East African slave trade occurred directly after the implementation of the Frere Treaty. The result of increased naval surveillance was to force a rise in the land-based trade, and the smuggling of slaves out of less well developed ports. Another period of resurgence was seen in 1883,

⁸⁹ M. E. Chamberlain, 'Clement Hill's Memoranda and the British Interest in East Africa', *English Historical Review*, 87:344 (1972), pp. 533-547.

⁹⁰ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 35.

⁹¹ Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere Mission', p. 138.

⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 146-7; Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 259.

⁹³ See Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, final chapter. Beachey's discussion of the Zanzibar slave trade also concludes at this point.

when the withdrawal of HMS *London* significantly reduced naval capacity.⁹⁴ Naval anti-slavery patrols continued to work along the East African coast and within the Red Sea region into the twentieth century. Between the years 1860 and 1890, the navy seized 1,000 dhows, and approximately 12,000 slaves were liberated.⁹⁵

Many of the records of naval personnel that this thesis relies upon refer to the period before 1890. These reflect the longevity of suppression well beyond the 1870s. Furthermore they provide insight into the way in which the anti-slavery campaign became increasingly intertwined with wider imperial prerogatives, not only in terms of action, but in the way that naval personnel perceived suppression. By the mid 1880s the anti-slavery role of the squadron began to be overshadowed by political developments. Roy Bridges has charted the development of the 'prelude' to partition in the region, seeing 1876-1885 as a crucial period in which British individuals and organisations became more directly drawn into responsibilities on the mainland. Missionary activities and the commercial ventures of men like William Mackinnon, who led the Imperial British East Africa Company from 1885, were vital in encouraging the development of this 'unofficial empire'.⁹⁶ British naval hegemony played a crucial role in providing a foundation to expansion during these years. Anti-slavery objectives formed an intersecting element of these imperial activities.

From the mid-1880s the colonial expansion into East Africa by Germany in the form of the chartered merchant company the *DOAG* (Deutsch Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft), marked the start of the shake-up which was to destabilise the balance of power in the region. From this point on the informal control that Britain had enjoyed since around the 1850s came under challenge. In 1885, the German chancellor, Bismarck, officially accepted the informal commercial treaties of the *DOAG*, and declared a formal protectorate of 'German East Africa' over the mainland area of present-day Tanzania. Settlement

⁹⁴ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, pp. 101, 181.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁹⁶ Roy Bridges, 'Towards the Prelude to the Partition of East Africa' in Roy Bridges (ed.), *Imperialism, Decolonization and Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 65-113.

boundaries within the region were resolved following the partition negotiations of the Berlin Conference (1884-5). Both nations agreed to the division of the Sultan of Zanzibar's territories, with Britain ceding control of Zanzibar and Pemba, which was declared a British protectorate in 1890. The Sultan of Zanzibar was left with a 'claim' to the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, and a ten mile coastal strip on the mainland.⁹⁷ Whilst it is not the focus of this thesis to discuss how the scramble for Africa intersected with the Royal Navy's role in the region, it can be said that the previous multi-purpose nature of the anti-slavery squadron continued. The navy remained a crucial symbol of British presence, and the previous monitoring of French activities switched to surveillance of the German fleet. In addition, the squadron was vital for the maintenance of order in the region, and quelling indigenous uprisings that had increased in response to growing European incursion.⁹⁸

The decision to deploy an anti-slavery squadron off the East African coast fulfilled a mix of humanitarian, political, economic, and religious incentives. Naval patrols remained at the heart of Britain's anti-slavery policy. However, anti-slavery motivations were not exclusive of other imperial prerogatives, and the maintenance of a naval squadron off the East African coast was also a reflection of Britain's growing imperial interests in the region. East African slave-trade suppression was also intertwined with African civilisation plans. Increasingly, the idea of spreading civilisation *within* Africa became as central to anti-slavery policy as the preventative measures provided externally by bi-lateral treaties and naval suppression. Anti-slavery became part of Britain's civilising mission which has been described by Suzanne Miers as 'an ideological package' which included the spreading of British views of freedom, democracy, law, Christianity and commerce to other supposedly 'backwards' nations.⁹⁹ As the following chapter will discuss, racial arguments, which had

⁹⁷ For detail of the British and German partition of East Africa see Jan-Georg Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition in German East Africa c. 1884-1914* (London: James Currey, 2006), pp. 102-3.

⁹⁸ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 185.

⁹⁹ Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, p. 10.

been less important in Britain's early abolitionist movement, increasingly came to the fore.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Quirk and Richardson, 'Anti-slavery, European Identity', p. 88.

CHAPTER 2

Race, anti-slavery and the world-views of British naval officers in the late-nineteenth century.

In 1873, the same year in which David Livingstone died, Captain George Lydiard Sullivan, a veteran of the East African anti-slavery patrols, published an account of his experiences entitled *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa*.¹ Sullivan was viewed as an authority on the East African slave trade by the British press, and numerous reviewers recommended his book to the British public.² His account included recommendations for how the East African slave trade would best be extinguished. The book concluded with the following lines:

Africa has to be civilised and Christianized, and eventually must be.
When is the work to be commenced? Are we to postpone it for future generations to accomplish? To sit on the cushions, stuffed by our forefathers, and wear them out, leaving no feathers for our descendents? If nations and individuals are to be judged, so also will generations be, for omission of good as well as commission of evil, and the evil begins where the omission of duties ceases . . . Unless the tide of civilisation continues to advance, unless we as a nation continue to be of some use, as instruments in the hands of the Almighty, as we have been hitherto, in moulding and planing the world into a civilised form, as the Anglo-Saxon race has been forward in doing – we shall surely be put

¹ George Lydiard Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa* (1873; Reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968).

² See chapter 8 of this thesis, pp. 275-80.

aside like a blunt instrument, and one of a keener edge taken up
instead.³

This rousing conclusion was meant to stir feelings of patriotism and commitment to anti-slavery amongst its readers. Simultaneously the idea that Britain might be 'put aside like a blunt instrument' also reflected a fear of imperial decline. Such anxiety was a common theme in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and it is important that the navy's campaign and the attitudes of naval officers are located in this wider imperial context. In particular, the historical significance of the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the Maori wars of 1863, and the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica in 1865 have been widely interpreted as marking a watershed in British attitudes towards race and empire.⁴

These events form an important chronological marker for this thesis, as their timing broadly coincided with the beginning of the navy's East African anti-slavery campaign. For British contemporaries, the spate of these so-called 'rebellions' demonstrated the 'inability' of indigenous cultures to be 'civilised'. The impacts of these events were seen throughout the empire. As a result, a more pessimistic view of Britain's civilising mission and of the capabilities of liberal reformism emerged. Racial attitudes in Britain hardened, and belief in white racial superiority became orthodoxy. This had important consequences for the anti-slavery movement which by this period was largely inseparable from the civilising mission. A less optimistic version of anti-slavery than that which characterised the early-nineteenth century emerged.⁵ The supposed inability of indigenous peoples to cope with white culture led humanitarians to espouse paternalism and imperial trusteeship above all else.⁶ 'Imperialism as an element of British culture

³ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 294.

⁴ Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 6-7, 31-3; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 12; Porter, 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery', pp. 198-221.

⁵ Hall, *Civilising subjects*, ch. 6; Midgely, 'Anti-slavery', pp. 161-79.

⁶ Porter, 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery'.

became increasingly noisy, racist, and self-conscious'.⁷ Sullivan's words were clearly indicative of this shift in thinking, demonstrating as they do unquestioned belief in Anglo-Saxon racial and cultural superiority.

School textbooks, naval cadet training and ideas of race and national identity

In order to understand further what Sullivan's words meant, it is necessary to know more about the attitudes of late-nineteenth-century British society and the world-view of the British naval officer in this period. This chapter provides that background. Though no statistics exist, the majority of naval officers during the late-Victorian period came from the middle or upper-middle classes. Most cadets were the sons of upper-middle class professionals, sometimes termed 'the public school middle class'.⁸ The entry system for naval cadet training favoured the upper-middle classes by requiring high academic ability and relying on a system of nomination which was often advanced by political and social connections.⁹ It is important to understand how officers' attitudes were shaped by their class background as thinking about race and class always operated in relation to each other. There was constant slippage, for example, between middle-class

⁷ Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 33.

⁸ Quintin Colville, 'Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer: the role of uniform in shaping the class and gender-related identities of British naval personnel, 1930-1939' in Andrew Lambert (ed.), *Naval History 1850-Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 61-85, pp. 62-3.

Of the officers whose records are studied in this thesis, it is known that William Creswell, Tristan Dannreuther, Charles Todd and Philip Colomb were certainly educated in public schools. Creswell, *Close to the Wind*; Notes on the Dannreuther family, NMM, DAN/262; Todd's background is provided in Gordon Taylor, *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy* (Oxford: Oxford Illustrated Press, 1978), pp. 297-303; and for Colomb see J. K. Laughton, 'Colomb, Philip Howard (1831-1899)', rev. Barry M. Gough, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5981, accessed 13 November 2009].

⁹ H. W. Dickenson, *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth and nineteenth-century education for officers* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 165.

attitudes towards lower-class 'heathens' in Britain and indigenous 'heathens' in the empire.¹⁰

Children's literature provides a useful medium for examining the views and values of nineteenth-century middle-class authors, educators and publishers, and the ways in which these views were instilled in the upcoming generation.¹¹ Educational textbooks in particular provide a window on to the dominant middle-class ideas of race and national identity in this period. The following section will explore the world-views that naval officer cadets were exposed to in their schooling. Furthermore, it offers a baseline for discussions in later chapters which explore the attitudes of naval officers while posted on anti-slavery patrols.

The examples of geography textbooks given below aimed to help British children understand their own nation and its place within the wider world. Crucially they encouraged children to absorb a particular definition of self and other, which continually reinforced ideas of British and European superiority. Peter Parley's *Universal History on the Basis of Geography for the Use of Families and Schools* was a popular textbook first published in 1837, which underwent many revisions throughout the century.¹² The 1869 edition provides a sense of the stereotypical images of the racial 'other' which pervaded Victorian culture. In answer to the question 'How may Africa be considered?' the textbook taught its young readers that, 'Africa may be considered as, on the whole, the least civilized portion of the earth. The people are mostly Mahometans, and one half of them are nearly in a savage state. The rest are in a barbarous condition'. It went on to describe that outside Egypt and the Barbary States, 'Most of the other regions of Africa can hardly be said to have any history. The inhabitants possess no written records, and

¹⁰ Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds), *Empire and others: British encounters with indigenous people, 1600-1850* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 4.

¹¹ See for example Robert G. David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), ch. 6. For the eighteenth-century cultural background to abolitionism as viewed through children's literature see Oldfield, *Popular Politics*, ch. 1.

¹² David, *Arctic in the British Imagination*, p. 190.

cannot tell what events happened to their forefathers'.¹³ Before the late-nineteenth century, race was understood as a relatively flexible term. Different societies within the world were ranked according to their relative levels of civilisation. Cultural factors such as religion, language and the relative level of technologies and arts were seen to define the 'most' and 'least' progressed societies; biological differences were viewed as important but not paramount. Parley's textbook was largely a product of this thinking. It incorporated the standard ethnocentric view, in which societies from Europe and America were seen as amongst the most civilised and progressed in the world, but focused less on biological differences.

This more flexible view allowed for the possibility of some non-European cultures being accommodated within the 'superior' bracket of development. In the eighteenth century, the Chinese were, for example, given special status for their ancient wisdom and lack of superstition, and late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century British Orientalists admired elements of Sanskrit and Arabic literature and arts.¹⁴ Within this model it was believed that non-Europeans under the correct guidance and within Europeanised social structures and institutions could learn to acquire the supposedly advanced benefits of European culture. This thinking underpinned abolitionism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. Abolitionists during this period believed in the idea of a shared common humanity in which superior whites would help raise their inferior black brothers and sisters.¹⁵ In this scenario, Africans had the potential of becoming equal to Europeans. Racial differences were largely attributed to external circumstances. Africans, for example, were seen to have been kept in a state of savagery by the degrading system of slavery.¹⁶

¹³ Peter Parley, *Universal History on the Basis of Geography for the Use of Families and Schools* (London: William Tegg, 1869), pp. 103, 121.

¹⁴ David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 12; Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 162.

¹⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 338-47.

¹⁶ Midgely, 'Anti-slavery', p. 165.

Parley's section on the history of the African slave trade provided his young readers with sympathetic account in which 'poor negroes' were described as having been 'taken from their homes, and separated for ever from all they hold dear'.¹⁷

Hugh McLeod notes five defining tenets of British national identity in the nineteenth century. 'Britain was Christian, Protestant, prosperous, civilized, and free'. These values were the staples of British children's education in the late-nineteenth century. In fact, a key aim of public school education in this period was to instil a strong sense of national identity, and one that was often heavily biased towards Protestantism.¹⁸ Describing British industrial prosperity, J. Goldsmith wrote in *A Grammar of Geography for the Use of Schools* (1867 edn.): 'the manufactures of England surpass, in amount and variety, those of any nation that has ever existed, and present the most astonishing display of the fruits of human industry and science'.¹⁹ Peter Parley provides an apt example of how the key value of the association between Christianity and 'civilization', was communicated to British children:

In all parts of Europe, except Turkey, the religion of Jesus Christ prevails. If you were to travel in Asia or Africa, you would meet with no churches, or only now and then, where the true God is worshipped. But would see a great many temples where the people bow down to idols of wood, stone, or metal. But in Europe the traveller everywhere meets with churches, and these show that the people are Christians. In Europe, also, there are many colleges, academies and schools, which prove that the people set a higher value on education. It is a fact which I wish you to remember, that in those parts of the world where you find churches, you

¹⁷ Parley, *Universal History*, p. 124.

¹⁸ Hugh McLeod, 'Protestantism and British National Identity, 1845-1945' in Peter Van Der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (eds), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 44-70, pp. 46, 51.

¹⁹ J. Goldsmith, *A Grammar of Geography for the Use of Schools* (London: William Tegg, 1869), p. 19.

will find that the people are more or less advanced in civilization and the arts which render mankind happy. This shows us that the Christian religion tends to make people wiser and happier; which is rendered still more clear by the fact, that in all the countries where the Christian religion is unknown, the greater part of the people are ignorant, degraded and miserable. All false religions tend to injure mankind; the true religion tends to improvement of mankind. How important is it, then, that every individual should be a real Christian!²⁰

As many imperial historians have stressed, British national identity was most sharply defined in juxtaposition to an alien or hostile 'other'.²¹ Linda Colley has forcefully argued that in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, Catholic France represented the chief enemy 'other' against which a Protestant British identity was forged.²² For British Protestants in the nineteenth century, France posed less of a threat, and Catholicism as 'other' existed instead in Ireland. At the same time a number of different, non-European hostile 'others' also emerged, the importance of which fluctuated at different times. These offered a different basis for comparing and defining British national identity.²³ The above quote highlights a comparison that became increasingly important during the nineteenth century – that of the supposed 'falsity' of 'heathen' religions versus the 'true' religion of Christianity.²⁴ It emphasised a European versus non-European identity. It was in this context that greater emphasis was simultaneously placed on the racial superiority of 'white' over 'black'.²⁵ Across the globe, groups from Native Americans, to the South African San, to Aborigines, to Maoris, were frequently classified in analogous terms, which

²⁰ Parley, *Universal History*, p. 128.

²¹ See, for example, the collected essays in Daunton and Halpern (eds) *Empire and others*; also Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; McLeod, 'Protestantism and British National Identity', p. 46.

²² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003 edn.)

²³ McLeod, 'Protestantism and British National Identity', pp. 46-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁵ Daunton and Halpern (eds), *Empire and others*, p. 13.

helped define them as 'other', as 'non-European', or as 'indigenous'.²⁶ In the setting of empire, a shared 'whiteness' between Europeans therefore often took priority. In this way, race frequently overrode (but might also have worked in conjunction with) other ways in which Britons and Europeans identified themselves. This said, there also remained considerable areas of continuity in terms of how British national identity had been defined in the eighteenth century, notably in terms of a continuing tradition of anti-Catholicism.²⁷

An important comparison in the context of anti-slavery in East Africa was between British Christianity and Islam and between British Christianity and the 'superstitious' beliefs of Africans. A key aspect of the discourse of indigenous 'heathenism', and one particularly propounded by British missionaries throughout the nineteenth century, was the supposed link between the cruel and oppressive regimes that 'heathen' religions were seen to encourage and tolerate. *Sati* (widow burning), infanticide and ritual murder in India, slavery in the East, foot-binding in China, cannibalism in New Guinea, polygamy among Africans and Native Americans were viewed as examples of heathen cruelty. These were some of the '*causes célèbres*' used to paint an increasingly dark picture of indigenous peoples. As described earlier, racial thinking also cut across class boundaries, and the 'condition of the British poor' and the 'condition of the native' were subject to analogous debates.²⁸ Chapter 4 will show the dominant discourse of the anti-slavery patrols contrasted the 'regressive' nature of Islam against the supposedly modern and progressive tenets of Christianity. The attitudes of naval officers towards the different religions and peoples they encountered on anti-slavery patrols were therefore part of a broader trend in which indigenous peoples across the empire were viewed by Britons in increasingly negative terms.

²⁶ C. A. Bayly, 'The British and indigenous peoples, 1760-1860: power, perception and identity' in Daunton and Halpern (eds), *Empire and others*, pp. 19-41, p. 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; McLeod, 'Protestantism and British National Identity', p. 47.

If, as demonstrated in the above examples, British children were encouraged to absorb a particularly arrogant and inflated view of the national self, then the values instilled in naval officer cadets represented the zenith of this narrative. Throughout their training, cadets were indoctrinated to believe in national superiority and in imperial might and that as future naval officers they possessed super-charged capabilities because of their nationality, race and gender. Naval-officer training during this period lasted for two years and took place on board the naval training ship HMS *Britannia*, which was moored at Dartmouth. The whole ethos of officer training at *Britannia* was closely aligned to the public school system.²⁹ It served to reinforce class distinctions. The Admiralty offered to its officer cadets and their families ‘a tuition in gentlemanly attributes; the way of life it held out to [working-class] ratings tacitly withheld that’. The upper-middle-class monopoly amongst the officer rank meant that the ‘socio-cultural values and attributes of this grouping became indistinguishable from the desired qualities, professional and otherwise, of the naval officer’.³⁰

Naval cadets were trained in the public school and Protestant ethos of ‘muscular Christianity’. The idea that men should be both physically and morally strong, and that their strength should be ‘used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes’ fitted, at a general level, within the dominant racial and gender discourses of the period, but was an explicit element of naval officer education.³¹ Such an ethos aimed to massage a sense of superiority. A series of end of term sermons given at *Britannia* between 1877 and 1879 provide a clear sense of the values espoused to cadets.

²⁹ Dickenson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 74-7, 94-113.

³⁰ Colville, ‘Jack Tar’, p. 63.

³¹ Hughes, *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1889), p. 99, quoted in David, *Arctic in the British Imagination*, p. 224. Muscular Christianity has been commonly identified as having its origins in novels written by Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley. Hughes’ *Tom Brown Schooldays* (1857) was set at Rugby School, where ideas of muscular Christianity embodied the school’s mid-century reforms instituted by Dr. Thomas Arnold. See Donald Hall, ‘Muscular Christianity: reading and writing the male social body’ in Donald E. Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: embodying the Victorian age* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994), pp. 3-13.

The sermons were on the subjects of: Strength, Obedience, Christ's Boyhood, Fearlessness, Hope, Self-Control, Sin, Pleasing God and Patriotism.³² In the sermon on 'Fearlessness', the preacher told his young audience that 'the fearless character of a manly Christian' which 'by thoughtfulness and by perseverance, and, if strong, by seeing that justice is done to the weak and by delivering the oppressed and afflicted, you will come to know what fearlessness of consciousness means, and to understand how infinitely noble it is to do right'.³³ Certainty in the supposed benefits of empire for the improvement of the 'weak' was a central element of the sermon on patriotism. Delivered at the end of the summer term in 1879, this sermon provided cadets with their final words of guidance before leaving *Britannia* for their first commission. It stated:

True patriotism, moreover, consists not merely in that love and zeal for one's country which will cause the citizen to arm in defence of her rights and interests, but in an earnest endeavour to promote the well-being and social improvement of all . . . wherever the interests of this great Empire are threatened or its honour involved, or its help righteously invoked, the name of Briton shall be one to be proud and fond of as those who can claim it, and one to be respected and admired and feared by those who cannot claim it.³⁴

Importantly, the language of this kind of indoctrination was carefully structured to accommodate the nations of the United Kingdom under an inclusive umbrella of British national identity. The preacher spoke of 'Englishmen', 'Scotchmen' and 'Irishmen' (he did not mention the Welsh) who were stirred by their own specific cultural traditions and histories, but were bound by a 'spirit of union – that union which is strength – which binds

³² John Neall Dalton, *Sermons to Naval Cadets* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1879).

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

together every true son of Britain'.³⁵ The intention was to mould a class of men that were committed ambassadors of empire, who exhibited those valued traits of patriotism, martial prowess, masculinity and duty, and who, as they travelled throughout the empire, represented a *United Kingdom*.

By the mid-eighteenth century the representation of the navy as identified with 'defence of liberty, the protection of national religion, and with the prosperity of the nation' was already strongly established.³⁶ However, in the Victorian period the navy's role in securing empire was given increasing national prominence. In contrast to the regional structure of the army, the navy celebrated the different identities of the four nations but accommodated them within a shared and united vision of 'Britishness'. As such it provided a prime symbol of national and imperial unity. Jan Rüger has examined how as Britain's position as a naval world power began to decline in the run up to the First World War, the symbolic power of the navy as a symbol of British identity became ever more powerful. Naval displays became increasingly ostentatious and costly.³⁷ And public depictions of naval men as symbols of national, imperial and naval strength proliferated popular culture.³⁸ Nation, empire, monarchy and technological excellence were celebrated through the symbol of the navy. This vision of national greatness was projected nationally and internationally through the media, and was patriotically consumed by all classes within Britain and across the empire.³⁹

This rise in British 'Navalist' sentiment together with the increasingly dominant culture of popular imperialism and militarism which consumed Britain in the late-Victorian period was a vital context for the imagining and representation of the anti-slavery patrols.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³⁶ Margarette Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750-1815* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), p. 2.

³⁷ Jan Rüger, 'Nation, Empire and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914', *Past and Present*, 185 (2004), pp. 159-187; Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 3.

³⁸ Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 5-6.

³⁹ Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, ch. 2.

Furthermore, by incorporating another potent symbol of national identity – Britain’s commitment to anti-slavery – the campaign in fact helped to shape this glorified vision of the navy. The anti-slavery patrols were a unique period of naval commitment different to the traditional role of national or imperial defence. They involved the defence of a ‘weaker’ race. This clearly fitted the model that the preacher at *Britannia* invoked when he spoke of ensuring that ‘justice is done to the weak’ and ‘delivering the oppressed and afflicted’.⁴⁰ The anti-slavery campaign was also an explicit endeavour to destroy the supposedly ‘archaic’ institution of the Islamic slave trade which was viewed as standing in the way of ‘civilisation’. Aligned to the national ideals of imperial trusteeship, anti-slavery and the civilising mission, the patrols were a symbol of the navy and nation at their very best. They provided an ideal platform for displaying national honour and national greatness.⁴¹

As much as it is possible to generalise, the world-views of naval officers, shaped by their upper-middle class social backgrounds and by their public school and naval education, may be loosely described as dependent on the discourses of imperialism, militarism, patriotism, Protestantism and liberalism, all of which were underpinned by an unquestioned belief in British superiority. In the words of Benedict Anderson, this was the ‘imagined community’ of the naval officer.⁴² These were the cultural constructs that were at the core of how naval officers characterised the British nation, and these were the standards to which they measured others whilst stationed in the western Indian Ocean. An interesting recommendation was made by Captain Edward Inglefield in his handbook entitled *Words of Advice to Young Naval Officers* published in 1864. He wrote:

A general insight into political and moral institutions, especially those of your own country, will induce you to examine the fabrics of foreign

⁴⁰ Dalton, *Sermons*, p. 77.

⁴¹ Chapter 8 will show how these ideals were portrayed through representations of the campaign in British popular culture.

⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

jurisdiction. An acquaintance with the admirable and liberal constitution under which it is your good fortune to have been born, will enlarge your discrimination upon the subject, and enable you to form perspicuous comparisons with others, to ascertain whether their inhabitants are more free than your own countrymen, . . . whether the mass of the people are more ingenious, honest, discreet, moral, or benevolent, or, on the contrary, more proud, disorderly, or voluptuous, more reserved and sincere in their manners and address or more insinuating and agreeable.⁴³

Typical of children's education in this period, Inglefield praised the British national character and stressed the idea that Britons were uniquely blessed by providence.⁴⁴ Naval officers were explicitly encouraged to make comparisons between self and other. And as propagandised through their education and in print, they were provided with the standards by which to make such judgements. Inglefield went on to advise his young readers that they should keep a journal in which to record such observations.⁴⁵ It was these comparisons between self and other which, as later chapters will show, proliferated in the accounts written by naval officers serving on anti-slavery patrols.

Anti-slavery and scientific racism

In the mid-and especially late-nineteenth century, a shift in racial thinking occurred in which race came to be viewed as based on fixed, immutable biological differences.⁴⁶ The publication in 1849 of Thomas Carlyle's the 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question' in *Fraser's Magazine* has been seen by historians of British anti-slavery as a watershed in

⁴³ E. A. Inglefield, *Words of Advice to Young Naval Officers* (Liverpool: Webb & Hunt, 1864), pp. 30-1.

⁴⁴ McLeod, 'Protestantism and British National Identity', p. 51.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 13.

terms of British attitudes towards Africans and slavery.⁴⁷ Carlyle challenged the abolitionist orthodoxy of common humanity, arguing instead that African people belonged to an inferior race which was biologically determined. Africans were viewed as inherently different to Europeans. Seen in this light they could never reach the same superior level of Europeans. Carlyle argued that the emancipation of slavery had been disastrous for British colonies. He believed abolitionists had unrealistic expectations of the capacity of Africans to 'progress'. The supposed lack of advancement made by ex-slaves living in the West Indies, in other words their 'failure' to adopt Western cultural values in matters such as labour practices and religion, was taken as evidence of the inability of Africans to govern themselves and to progress from their savage state. According to Carlyle, Africans were naturally born inferior and were meant to serve superior white people. In this view Africans were predestined to be slaves. For Catherine Hall, the publication of Carlyle's 'Occasional Discourse' represented 'a discursive break with the hegemony of universalism' that had underpinned earlier abolitionist thinking.⁴⁸

These ideas simmered in debates about slavery and emancipation throughout the 1850s. By the 1860s ideas of essential racial difference were becoming more widespread, and by the period of high imperialism this form of racial thinking was largely orthodoxy. Within this model, white, Anglo-Saxons were seen to derive from a common race, which shared similar biological traits, in addition to the same liberal institutions and Christian religion. Discourses of liberalism and European nationalisms were therefore increasingly underpinned by racial thinking, and an inherent belief in European superiority.⁴⁹ At the same time the development of new scientific subjects including natural history, ethnography, anthropology and crucially, Charles Darwin's studies of evolution, became incorporated into British perceptions of race. The use of biological scientific explanations

⁴⁷ See *Ibid.*, ch. 6 for a good overview.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 378.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 363-70.

as ‘evidence’ for racial theories came to be highly influential. Scientific racial theorists and social Darwinists compiled racial hierarchies in which biological characteristics such as skin tone, head shape, facial features, eye colour, hair type, stature, and so on, were seen as the markers of race. Using the increasingly popular technique of phrenology, the prominent anatomist and lecturer Professor Robert Knox, for example, speculated on cranial measurements as a way of ‘scientifically’ proving that Europeans had larger brain sizes than non-Europeans.⁵⁰

Within this pseudo-scientific thinking, particular racial ‘types’ were seen to possess essential, inbred characteristics. At the most general level, Europeans were seen to possess higher intelligence than non-Europeans and more ‘advanced’ behavioural traits, including industriousness, self-restraint, independence and courage – exactly those traits that naval cadets were encouraged to display. Measured by these standards, non-Europeans were usually characterised by what they lacked. Groups with darker skin tone were seen to be ‘naturally’ more barbaric, violent, deceitful, and superstitious than white people, and therefore predisposed to certain cultural activities. The basic tenets seen to define African society were savagery, sexual proclivity, cannibalism, and a lack of technology, culture, history and religion.⁵¹ Knox’s statement in *The Races of Man* (1850) that ‘Race is everything’ is often quoted by historians to demonstrate a turning point in British racial thinking.⁵² Although in 1850 the idea that race was the sole determinant of history was still relatively radical, Knox promulgated ideas that were gaining ground. His

⁵⁰ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 49. Darwin’s own religion led him to universalism. He rejected the work of racial theorists including Knox on religious and biological grounds. Notably in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin argued for the common descent of humankind. His ideas were strongly rooted in the early-nineteenth-century anti-slavery movement and the idea of the ‘brotherhood of man’. See Adrian Desmond and James More, *Darwin’s Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), particularly see introduction, and pp. 281-3, 348-75.

⁵¹ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p.35.

⁵² Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 39; Desmond and More, *Darwin’s Sacred Cause*, p. 236; Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 49.

claims demonstrated an emerging world-view in which race and culture were increasingly viewed as synonymous.⁵³ Such arguments not only shifted the study of evolution, but had policy implications for the way indigenous groups across the empire, from Irish, to Jews, to aborigines, and as shown in chapter 7, to Africans liberated by the anti-slavery patrols, would be managed in terms of imperial policy.⁵⁴

As they travelled throughout the western Indian Ocean region, naval officers overwhelmingly relied on a language of physical difference to distinguish between racial 'types'. Often this formed nothing more than the basis of essentially benign observations. Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther writing in 1887, for example, described the inhabitants of Aden in a letter to his mother in the following terms: 'As far as I could make out they belonged to 3 tribes, one of which had a habit of shaving all the hair off their heads, another had a habit of dying their hair red & keeping it long & the other tribe kept theirs in very small curls & about an 1/8th of an inch long'.⁵⁵ This kind of detailed physical 'typing' was a prevalent element of Victorian culture. In the children's textbook, *The World at Home, or, Pictures and Scenes from far-off Lands* (1869), in answer to the question 'How do the [Arab] women dress?', the book stated: 'They have a handkerchief around their heads. They are very fond of trinkets, and have silver rings in their ears and noses. They prick their lips and dye them blue, by way of making themselves look handsome'.⁵⁶ These were some of the points of reference used by officers to locate their observations of the foreign cultures they observed. Dannreuther's description of African women in Zanzibar, for example, more than echoed such accounts, he wrote: 'The black women were [sic] rings of silver about 3 inches in diameter and about 1ft in circumference round their legs,

⁵³ Desmond and More, *Darwin's Sacred Cause*, p. 190.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Aden, 10 November 1887, NMM DAN/73.

⁵⁶ Mary and Elizabeth Kirby, *The World at Home, or, Pictures and Scenes from far-off Lands* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1869), p. 291.

and keep three penny pieces on the sides of their noses'.⁵⁷ A visual account of this racial typing can be seen in figures 2.1 and 2.2. Typical of European ethnography, both images relied on physiognomy and 'typical' attributes such as headgear, hairstyles and costume to distinguish between peoples from different regions.⁵⁸ Figure 2.1 appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in July 1873. The engravings were based on drawings produced by Sir Bartle Frere during his anti-slavery 'mission' to Zanzibar. It depicted the different groups of people that according to Frere were connected to the East African slave trade. The physiognomic comparisons bear the hallmarks of typical 'scientific' racial studies in which profiles, head-shapes, and often skulls, were compared in order to provide racial comparisons and hierarchies. This image, like Dannreuther's descriptions, demonstrates how the 'science of race' penetrated everyday thinking in this period. Figure 2.2 purported to show 'the figures of different classes and race of the inhabitants' of Zanzibar. The article reported on the 'considerable improvement' which had occurred in Zanzibar over the course of twenty years as a result of British support and increased British enterprise.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Tristan Dannreuther to Master Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 10 November 1887, NMM DAN/73.

⁵⁸ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 93. For more on the development of racial taxonomical classification, and the relationship between ideas of race and the aesthetics of the human body in the eighteenth century see Bindman, *Race to Apollo*, particularly pp. 11-21. Bindman emphasises that beauty was an important category used to order groups of others. The recognition of beauty and ugliness in others was also used to assess their civility. This had connections to the development of scientific racism in the late-nineteenth century. For Darwin's thinking about human racial aesthetics see Desmond and More, *Darwin's Sacred Cause*, pp. 281-4.

⁵⁹ *ILN*, 9 March 1889, p. 3.

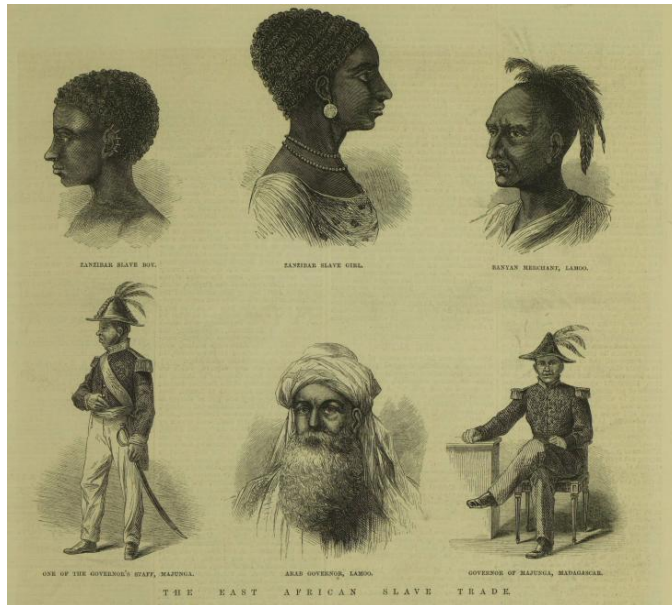


Fig. 2.1: 'The East African Slave Trade', *Illustrated London News*, 12 July 1873, p. 38.⁶⁰

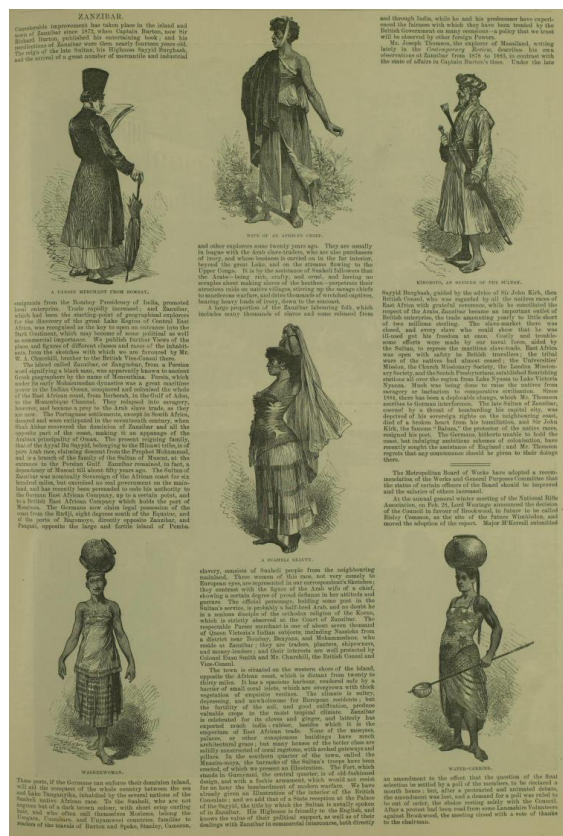


Fig. 2.2: 'Zanzibar', *ILN*, 9 March 1889, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Hereafter *ILN*. For eighteenth-century antecedents of this kind of facial and skull typing see Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, pp. 201-21.

Historians of British anti-slavery have traditionally seen the mid-nineteenth century as the point at which anti-slavery was in decline.⁶¹ Catherine Hall quotes a powerful statement made by a correspondent to *The Times* in India in 1858 on the subject of the Indian Mutiny. The writer highlighted his concern that amongst his fellow countrymen there was a growing contempt for all 'natives'. In a significant admission he wrote Britons 'hate slavery' but they 'hate slaves too'.⁶² This was the nub of the argument and the context for the late-nineteenth-century anti-slavery campaign. As later chapters demonstrate, British naval officers clearly absorbed what had been preached to them as cadets. Their unquestioned sense of superiority tended to undermine any sense of empathy towards enslaved Africans, and some officers clearly fitted the category of 'hating slaves'. As highlighted by Quirk and Richardson, in this negative scenario Africans may feasibly have been (re)enslaved by Europeans, or at least left to suffer in enslavement. Instead, however, Britain sought to extend its abolitionist policy across the globe. The reason for this lay in the fact that Britain's commitment to abolition had become a staple of British national identity. Britain had abolished slavery within its empire. It had followed this by taking the lead in the international fight against slavery, a campaign in which the Royal Navy had played such an essential role. All this was taken as a sign that Britain was the most morally progressive nation in the world. As summed up by these two scholars, 'anti-slavery advocacy depended less upon favourable conceptions of the "other" than upon more durable conceptions of the virtuous self'.⁶³ Other European nations that had given up slave trading, and America after 1865, could also be ranked amongst the world's progressive nations.⁶⁴ As Howard Temperley argues, the ending of

⁶¹ See for example Seymour Drescher, *The Might Experiment: Free Labour versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 166; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, ch. 6; Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, p.167. For a recent questioning of this decline thesis see Richard Huzzey's PhD thesis, "A Nation of Abolitionists?"

⁶² Quoted in Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 361.

⁶³ Quirk and Richardson, 'Anti-slavery, European Identity', pp. 88-9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

slavery in America's colonies was a watershed after which it became much easier for Britain to attack slavery in non-Western regions.⁶⁵ A commitment to liberty became a 'measure of human progress', and abolitionism was increasingly interwoven into ideas of European nationalism.⁶⁶ Conversely, the existence of slavery was seen as a marker of the backward and archaic nature of African and Eastern societies. The idea of progress interwoven with a language of race became the staple rhetoric of Britain's attack on the Arab slave trade.

Returning to the words of Captain Sullivan, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it was this doctrine that he invoked when he wrote of 'moulding and planing the world into a civilized form, as the Anglo-Saxon race has been forward in doing'. As he looked back on the history of anti-slavery, and forward to the task in hand, it was with unquestioned racial and moral superiority that he stated 'Africa has to be civilized and Christianized'.⁶⁷ Anti-slavery and the growth of Britain's imperial presence were connected and supported by the commitment to civilising Eastern Africa. Anti-slavery had by this period therefore morphed into something quite different from the early century. Instead of being concerned with Britain making up for the past wrongs that it had committed in Africa, in the late-nineteenth century anti-slavery was concerned with a sense of national identity based on discourses of freedom, progress, liberalism and racial superiority. The above survey has defined the central elements which underpinned the world-view of the naval officer in the late-nineteenth-century period and how these views intersected with thinking about race and anti-slavery. The extent to which naval officers' experiences of the anti-slavery patrols came to inform or reinforce these attitudes is the crux of this thesis, and will be explored in the following chapters.

⁶⁵ Howard Temperley, 'The ideology of Antislavery' in David Eltis, James Walvin and Svend E. Green-Pedersen (eds), *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa and the Americas* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), pp. 21-35.

⁶⁶ Midgely, 'Anti-slavery', pp. 173-5; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 370.

⁶⁷ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 294.

CHAPTER 3

Africans imagined and represented: 'victim' and 'savage'

A great deal has been written about how Britons imagined and represented Africans in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹ How slavery and abolitionism influenced this thinking has also been widely discussed.² The following exploration of the attitudes of naval officers towards Africans therefore has much available historical scholarship to draw upon. The anti-slavery crews serving off the East African coast encountered Africans in a variety of contexts beyond simply contemplating them as slaves. Sometimes these would be fairly transient encounters: a commercial transaction in Zanzibar, or an attempt to gain information and supplies whilst patrolling for slave dhows in remote locations. In other cases the impressions naval men formed were based on longer-term interactions: after the seizure of a slave dhow, for example, it was not uncommon for African freed slaves to be on board ship for days or weeks at a time. The anti-slavery crews themselves included African crew members. In the detached-boat patrols, African and British men worked together in particularly close confines. The accounts of naval officers therefore provide the opportunity to examine their attitudes towards Africans across a variety of settings. At a general level their observations duplicated standard racial prejudices of the period, and Africans were characterised in especially unflattering ways. However, there were also gradations within this, and the way

¹ See for example Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*; Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*; Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978); Pieterse, *White on Black*, chs. 1-4; Shearer West (ed.) *The Victorians and Race* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996).

² Much of this work is focused around the late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth abolition movement: Ralph A. Austen and Woodruff D. Smith, 'Images of Africa and British Slave-Trade Abolition: The Transition to an Imperialist Ideology, 1787-1807', *African Historical Studies*, 2:1 (1969), pp. 69-83; Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Wood, *Blind Memory*, pp. 22-3; Wood, 'Popular Graphic Images of Slavery'.

in which different groups of Africans were imagined and represented clearly reflected these variations. The first section begins by exploring how enslaved, or recently freed, Africans were predominantly represented.

The victim

By the time the East African anti-slavery campaign was underway, the image of the kneeling African begging for liberty needed no explanation. Since its creation in the late 1780s this image had become an icon of British anti-slavery propaganda.³ Often accompanied by the motto 'Am I not a man and a brother' (or 'a woman and a sister'), the African figure reminded its white audience of common humanity, and appealed for their equal right in a share of freedom (fig. 3.1). Historians have since pointed out that this enduring image, which repeatedly reproduced the supplicant pose, ensured that Africans continued to be seen as passive, subservient and eternally grateful for their liberty long after the moment of emancipation.⁴ In fact victimhood, gratitude, and a lack of slave agency are themes which dominated the vast majority of British representations of African slavery in the nineteenth century, and still continue to emerge in the present day in some of the less scholarly work on slavery.⁵ By the late-nineteenth century this view of the enslaved African was utterly entrenched, and this chapter will show how it prevailed in the minds of naval officers. However, although the image of the 'poor negro slave' was demonstrably enduring, naval officers' attitudes simultaneously reflected the shift towards a more aggressive strain of racial thinking. The language they used to describe Africans was frequently hostile and negative. Recently rescued slaves were for example as commonly

³ This image was first designed as the seal of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the late 1780s, see Oldfield, *Popular Politics*, pp. 155-9 for the history of this image.

⁴ See for example Colley, *Britons*, p. 355; Clare Midgely, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), pp. 48-55; Wood, *Blind Memory*, pp. 22-3.

⁵ For the most detailed discussion of African victimisation and graphical representations of slavery see Wood, *Blind Memory*.

called 'idiotic-looking from bad treatment' or 'creatures' who showed 'not suffering, but want of idea', as they were 'poor negroes'.⁶



Fig. 3.1: 'Slave Emancipation Society medallion', William Hackwood for Josiah Wedgewood, c. 1787-90'.⁷

The idea that Africans were helpless and dependent victims who could not achieve liberty without British intervention was central to the rhetoric of abolitionism. Marcus Wood's research in particular has emphasised how this self-aggrandising, philanthropic discourse had been crucial to both past, and to some extent continued, denial and 'misremembrance' of Britain's slave-trading past. He sees this narrative as central to the

⁶ William Cope Devereux, *A Cruise in the Gorgon* (1869; Reprint, London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1969), p. 89; Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 267.

⁷ NMM, ZBA2478.

way in which Britain has attempted to erase the ‘inherited guilt of Atlantic slavery’.⁸ Particularly relevant is Wood’s brief discussion of the naval anti-slavery patrols, which he argues played a fundamental role in the construction of this rhetoric.⁹ As already outlined, the East African anti-slavery patrols represented the zenith of this narrative. The continuation of the campaign into Indian Ocean waters was seen as confirmation of Britain’s abolitionist identity, and an affirmation of national virtues. Britain’s relationship with Africa was remembered in the late-nineteenth century less in terms of slave-trading, but in terms of abolitionism. Naval officers clearly concurred with this thinking. The representations discussed below include many of the key British abolitionist tropes. Many of these were originally conceived in the late-eighteenth century, but when re-shaped by late-nineteenth-century racial attitudes they became imbued with different meanings. Their repeated use over many decades meant that they were instantly recognisable by the time of East African anti-slavery campaign. They demonstrate the way in which the self-glorifying abolitionist agenda was maintained and reinforced by the duplication of established discourses over the course of the nineteenth century. Like Wood’s work, they also highlight the importance of visual representations in the portrayal of Africans as victims.

⁸ Wood, *Blind Memory*, p. 19; Wood, ‘Popular Graphic Images of Slavery’, p. 138.

⁹ Wood, *Blind Memory*, p. 24.

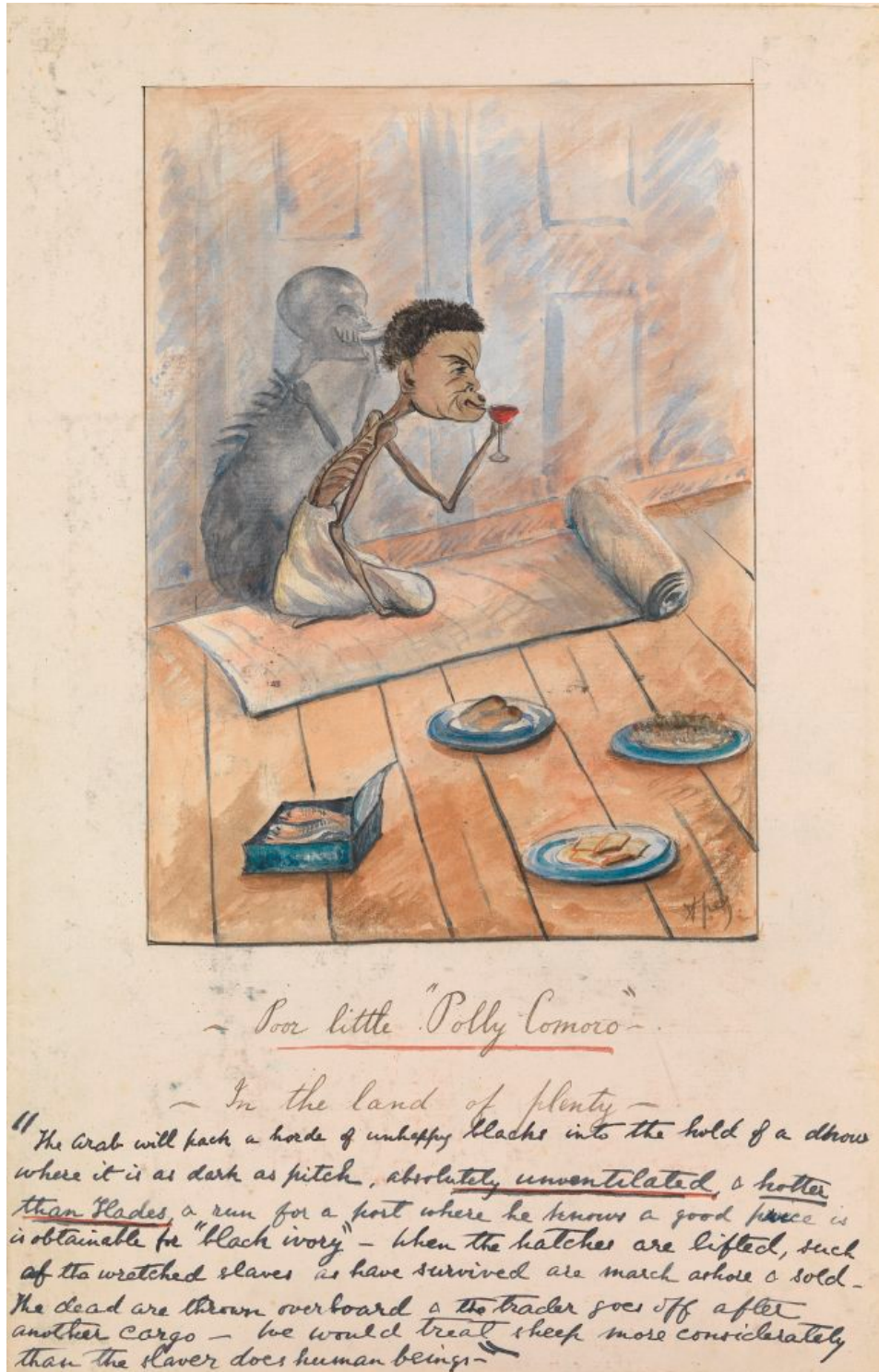


Fig. 3.2: 'Poor little "Polly Comoro" In the land of plenty', Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien.¹⁰

¹⁰ Volume of caricatures and sketches by Rear Admiral Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien, 1856-1933, unpaginated, National Maritime Museum (hereafter NMM), SMD/6. (Hereafter images by Smith-Dorrien are referenced as NMM, SMD/6).



Fig. 3.3: 'An emancipated Negro', A. Ducote, published by Thomas McLean (1833).¹¹

Figure 3.2 shows a particularly striking example of a representation of the African slave depicted as victim. The caricature shows an enslaved Nyasa woman immediately following her rescue by HMS *Eclipse* off the Comoro Islands in the 1880s. The image was created by one of the ship's officers, Lieutenant Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien. Like other naval men, Smith-Dorrien was conscious of the power of first-hand testimony as an apparently corroborative source of anti-slavery propaganda. Entitled 'Poor Little "Polly Comoro" In the land of plenty', the caricature was reproduced for a missionary exhibition in Berkhamstead to show 'the horrors of the slave trade'. The image was one of over 100 watercolour paintings, caricatures and pencil sketches produced by Smith-Dorrien during his naval

¹¹ NMM, ZBA2713.

career, and assembled in scrapbooks some time after. Smith-Dorrien wrote that he painted the caricature for a missionary exhibition in his home town of Berkhamstead in July '24, presumably 1924.¹² It is unknown whether it was reproduced from memory or from an eyewitness sketch produced at the time of the rescue. The text accompanying the image stated: “The Arab will pack a horde of unhappy blacks into the hold of a dhow where it is as dark as pitch, absolutely unventilated & hotter than Hades & run for a port where he knows a good price is obtainable for “black ivory” – when the hatches are lifted, such of the wretched slaves as have survived are march [sic] ashore & sold – the dead are thrown overboard & the trader goes off after another cargo – we would treat sheep more considerably than the slaver does human beings”.¹³

The image of Polly Comoro relied on a series of well-trusted visual and narrative codes. Figure 3.3, for example, shows a lithograph produced in 1833 entitled ‘An emancipated Negro’. This caricature of an emaciated African was a comment on the idea that emancipation in the West Indies would lead to economic collapse and thus starvation amongst the former slave population.¹⁴ The centrality of the slave body as a symbol of physical suffering was one of the main ways African slavery was represented in Western abolitionist material.¹⁵ The shocking physical condition of the woman in figure 3.2 was portrayed to the point of absolute caricature. Although her skeletal shadow speaks of her immense suffering, her facial features are also exaggerated in an extreme example of Negrophobe caricature, and she appears more child-like, or even monkey-like, than adult woman. The image therefore combines two of the standard European views of the African, depicting her as both child and animal. In this way she appears dehumanised and her individuality is removed – she could be any enslaved African. Her audience does not know

¹² He wrote that the organisers were so pleased with the image that they asked if they could keep it for future exhibitions.

¹³ NMM, SMD/6.

¹⁴ Hamilton and Blyth (eds), *Representing Slavery*, p. 294.

¹⁵ Wood, *Blind Memory*, pp. 236-7.

her real name, and her infantilisation is completed by her new name: ‘Poor Little “Polly Comoro”’. Smith-Dorrien’s reference to the term ‘black ivory’ and the practice of throwing dead slaves overboard also invoked a language well-known to the British abolitionist audience. The latter was powerfully immortalised by J. M. W. Turner in his painting *The Slave Ship (Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and the Dying, Typhoon coming on)*, 1840.¹⁶ An image contemporary to Smith-Dorrien’s showing ‘Arab slave-traders throwing slaves overboard to avoid capture’ appeared in the *ILN* in 1889 (see fig. 4.7). It is notable also that ‘Polly Comoro’ is depicted in profile in the traditional kneeling position of the supplicant slave. However, the profiled arrangement and the emphasis given to the woman’s skull may also locate this image in the specific context of the late nineteenth century by alluding to scientific racist debates about polygenesis, in which comparative analysis of skull sizes were used to support standard arguments about race.

The minute size of the women in this image is exaggerated by the size of the gifts of food laid before her on the deck of the naval ship, thus representing ‘The land of plenty’. Smith-Dorrien wrote that when this woman ‘who was too weak to move’ was brought on board he gave her ‘a glass of port and some sardines, when the doctor suddenly rushed in and dashed the glass of port out of her hand – he said it would have killed her’. There is some incongruity between the riches of these items – particularly the naval officer’s fine port glass – and the impoverished state of the woman. This appears to emphasise the social and racial distinction between the woman and the absent naval officer. Simultaneously, the items given are representative of the humanity of her naval rescuers, which existed alongside the greater gift of freedom. The contrast between the philanthropy of the naval crew and the cruelty of the Arab slave traders is a central message of this image. It highlighted how this woman, like other enslaved Africans, was dependent on the Royal Navy for her liberty and her life. This image demonstrates how enduring abolitionist

¹⁶ See Wood, *Blind Memory*, pp. 41-53 for discussion of Turner’s painting.

representations were re-used but also re-shaped in light of altered racial thinking in the late-nineteenth century. A crucial point is that in the East African slave trade, although the African remained the victim, the crimes committed against Africans were now seen to be perpetrated by Arabs instead of the British (and other Europeans) as had been the case in the earlier transatlantic slave trade. Most vitally, the British had switched from slave trader to liberator.

A different example of the African victim representation can be seen in the poems of Richard Cotten, who served on anti-slavery patrols aboard HMS *Bacchante* in the early 1880s. In an unprepossessing notebook, Cotten wrote three poems on the subject of slavery and the slave trade, alongside a number of other fiercely patriotic poems.¹⁷ One poem entitled 'Jack's Dive (A True Yarn)' tells the story of the 'White Swan', an Arab dhow which is chased and captured by a Royal Navy ship. In the poem, 'Jack' (the generic naval rating) is depicted as the archetypal Romantic hero, who confronts a malicious sea swarming with man-eating sharks – depicted as otherworldly 'monsters' – to rescue a drowning African slave boy.

'Jack's Dive (A True Yarn)'

As off the coast of Mozambique

The "White Swan" skimmed the waves

A Sail was in the distance seen

Freighted, twas thought with slaves

For when she sighted our brave ship

Fast fled the Arab dhow

And after her in chase we sped

Hurrah we have her now.

¹⁷ Private papers and diary, kept by Richard Cotten in HMS *Comus*, China and Pacific, 1879-84, and HMS *Bacchante*, East Indies, 1885-86, unpaginated, NMM, JOD/119.1-3.

And when we overhauled the craft
We found that we were right
For crowded full of slaves was she
It was a hideous sight
Pass them on board, our captain cried
And soon that work was done
When safe beneath the British Flag
All stood excepting one.

A Boy, who fell poor little chap
While climbing up our side
And scarce the water had he touched
When with his blood twas dyed
The cruel sharks, that ever tend
These slave ships for their prey
Like lightening seized the hapless lad
And tore his legs away

Then one of ours with knife in hand
Leapt in the crimsoned waves
Right in the midst of ravenous sharks
Oh, what a fate he braves
One arm enfolds the dying boy
The other wields the knife
Sticking the monsters swarming round
It was a fearful strife.

We rushed to help him, heaven be praised

We managed him to save

Still holding fast the poor remains

Of that still breathing slave

Just fancy how we welcomed him

Our brave true hearted mate

And what you think that he deserves

Will leave for you to state.¹⁸

It is unclear whether Cotten's poem was based on his own personal experiences of slave-trade suppression or was second-hand. Characteristic of imperial writing though, Cotten was keen to assure his reader through the title, 'A True Yarn', that the scene he depicted was a genuine one. Whether or not the poem was based on reality, its central narrative of the slave boy being eaten by a shark incorporated one of the most well-established motifs of the transatlantic slave trade. Numerous accounts of the middle passage depicted predatory sharks accompanying slave vessels as they crossed the Atlantic. As an image, the shark was associated with the idea of the violent and predatory nature of the Atlantic slave trade.¹⁹ Again Turner's romantic painting *Slave Ship* was perhaps the most famous of all such representations.²⁰ Certainly the dominant images of Cotten's poem: the legless African slave, 'the crimsoned waves' and 'monsters swarming round', appear to more than echo the scene depicted by Turner. In 'Jack's Dive' the chaotic and action-filled scene forms a stark contrast to the passivity of the Africans. The slaves found in the dhow are 'passed on board' – they do not even move by themselves. By the very nature of his injuries, the body of the legless boy is similarly inert. He is entirely dependent

¹⁸ Book of poems written by Richard Cotten onboard HMS *Comus*, Pacific Station, dated 7 June 1883, unpaginated, NMM, JOD/119.3.

¹⁹ Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 68-77.

²⁰ For detailed analysis of Turner's painting see Wood, *Blind Memory*, pp. 41-69.

on the naval tar to save him from death. Again the sense of African victimhood is central and provides the basis for celebrating the bravery and humanity of the British naval crew.

Cotten also wrote 'The Slave Ship' which tells the story of an African mother whose children have been stolen and taken on board a slave ship. The mother calls out to the Royal Navy 'thou God of Christians / Save a Mother from despair. 'Oh God of Christians / I am strong and young and hardy / He's a weak and feeble boy / Take me, whip me, chain me, starve me/ Oh God of Mercy save my boy'. In response, the mother receives only violence from the enemy slave dealer: 'Down the savage Captain struck her / lifeless on the vessel's floor'. Having presented this cruel and hopeless scene, Cotten ends the poem with the final climactic verse, which sees England and its navy once more exalted as the deliverer of liberty to the 'poor negro slave':

Old England-old England the land of the free
Whose home is the waters, whose flag sweeps the Sea
Still stretch out thy hand o'er the oceans broad wave
Protecting the helpless unfortunate Slave
And nations that call themselves free shall repent
Of the thousands in pain to eternity sent
Each who forwards the cause on the verge of the grave
Shall gain strength from the prayer of the poor negro slave.²¹

The trope of kidnapping and family separation was a mainstay of anti-slavery discourse throughout both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean campaigns. As Clare Midgely discusses, this was invoked to appeal to the sympathy and sentimentalities of British audiences, and especially to women. The idea that the woman in this poem will be a martyr in order to save her son, in particular fits into what Midgely has called 'a cult of sensibility . . . aimed

²¹ Journal of Richard Cotten kept on board HMS *Comus*, Pacific station, November 1879-March 1884, unpaginated, NMM, JOD 119/1.

at female readership'.²² Like 'Polly Comoro', the poem was set up in a way in which the only hope for the woman rests with the great protector and liberator England. The sense of female, African victimhood also fits into a discussion elaborated by Joanna de Groot in which she emphasises the structural connections 'between the treatment of women and non-Europeans in the language, experience and imaginations of western men'. This connection rests on the idea of domination and subordination that was central to the way in which western males assumed power, and imagined both the weaker races, and the weaker sex during the nineteenth century.²³ The emphasis on prayer and atonement for sin in this poem invokes, however, a narrative more readily characteristic of the earlier transatlantic abolitionist campaign. A vital point which will be evident throughout this thesis is that East African slavery was not a national stain that needed to be eradicated. This was about fighting an external 'Arab' enslaver. Discourses of anti-slavery were therefore more about national honour than national guilt.

Whether Cotten wrote his poems with an audience in mind is unclear. Regardless of this, however, these poems, like Smith-Dorrien's caricature, demonstrate the absorption of famous anti-slavery motifs created by the likes of Turner or Wedgwood into the personal musings of naval men many decades later. There was clearly a belief that their work on the East African anti-slavery patrols was a continuation of Britain's transatlantic abolitionist campaign. These two examples provide a representative and clear sense of how the discourses surrounding the East African campaign fitted into a far longer tradition of abolitionist material which captured what David Brion Davis called 'the emancipation moment'.²⁴ That is the moment at which Africans were gifted their freedom and remained indebted thereafter. Similarly they fit Marcus Wood's description of

²² Midgely, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 48.

²³ Joanna de Groot, "'Sex' and 'Race': The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century' in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), *Sexuality and Subordination*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 89-128, p. 91.

²⁴ David Brion Davis, *The Emancipation Moment* (Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1983).

strategies developed throughout the nineteenth century which 'celebrated white philanthropy ever more extravagantly, and which disempowered and misrepresented black people ever more effectively'.²⁵

For Wood, the abolitionist image which depicted the passivity of African bodies at its most extreme was the *Description of a Slave Ship* authorised by the London Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1789. This print, depicting the plans and section of the Liverpool slave ship *Brooks*, showed the manner in which slaves could be packed into slave ships according to the legal allowances at that time. Wood argues that this image depicted Africans in the way in which white audiences wished to view slaves: 'Silent, supine [and] suffering'.²⁶ The influence of this image endured throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. An example of its adoption in the context of the East African campaign can be seen in figure 3.4, which appeared in Captain Sullivan's 1873 account *Dhow Chasing*. Here the replicated image was used to depict the transport of enslaved Africans within Arab dhows.

²⁵ Wood, 'Popular Graphic Images of Slavery', p. 143.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

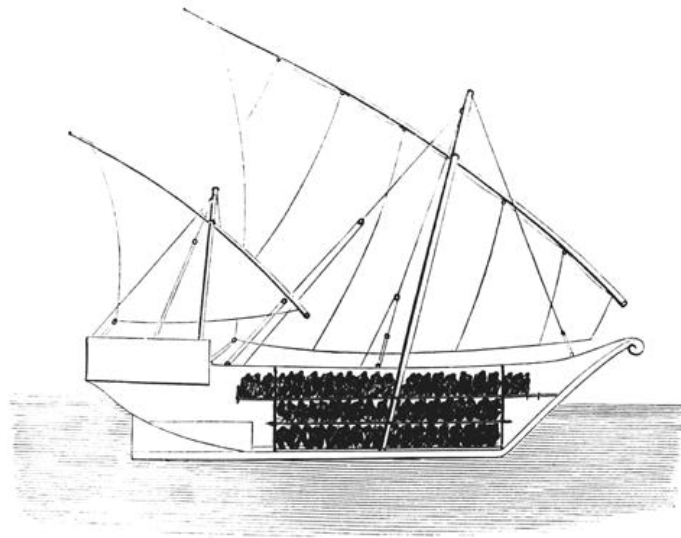


Fig. 3.4: ‘Section of Vessel, showing the manner of stowing slaves on board’ in G. L. Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa* (London, 1873), p. 114.

In fact, the stowage of slaves shown in this image is quite different to what many naval crews observed when working on the East African anti-slavery patrols. As described in chapter 1, slaves were often shipped in small numbers, they were not always restrained, and often they were shipped alongside other trade goods. Dhows were also seldom wholly decked as shown in this image.²⁷ It is interesting then that Sullivan chose to employ this recurring image to depict the dhow slave trade. His book was an appeal to the British public to take up the cause of anti-slavery once more. In this context, he relied upon the tradition of this well-established image as a way of reinvigorating abolitionist sentiments.

The importance of repeated descriptions of the horrors of the middle passage in late-eighteenth-century abolitionist propaganda was similarly present in the East African campaign. However, unlike Sullivan’s image above, the majority focused not on the sea passage, but on the passage from inland to the coast. One of the most recurring images was of a slave coffle, with enslaved Africans joined by wooden yokes and chains, and driven by armed Arabs overland (figs. 3.5 and 3.11). This scene provided a focus for emphasising

²⁷ Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, p. 69.

extreme bodily suffering as a consequence of the yoke and the whip, and on mental suffering again caused by family separation. The image of the slave coffle first appeared as an engraving in David Livingstone's *Narrative*, and depicted a scene witnessed by the explorer at Tette on the Zambezi River in July 1861.²⁸ Livingstone's observations of the depopulation of the continent as result of inter-tribal warfare and slave trading, and the forced journey of slaves from inland to coast, provided the basis for many later derivative representations.²⁹ Echoing what Livingstone had observed and recorded in *Narrative*, accounts of naval suppression were commonly preceded by gruesome descriptions of slaves that had been left to die on the march to the coast. Sub-lieutenant George Gordon framed his memoirs of the anti-slavery patrols in this typical way. He wrote: 'Now comes the march to the coast, food is scarce, and the driving hard; sickness comes quickly, and the weak and the old soon succumb. Knocked on the head, and left to feed the hyenas is their fate. So the trail is marched by bleaching bones until the journey ends at the sea coast'.³⁰ Figure 3.5 shows a visual account of the same narrative.

²⁸ For discussion of the image of the slave coffle and its reuse in later contexts see Jerome S. Handler and Annis Steiner, 'Identifying pictorial images of Atlantic slavery: Three case studies', *Slavery and Abolition*, 27:1 (2006), pp. 51-71, pp. 52-4.

²⁹ Livingstone, *Narrative*, pp. 188, 285, 310-11. Livingstone recorded: 'The many skeletons we have seen, amongst the rocks and woods, by the little pools, and along the paths of the wilderness, attest the awful sacrifice of human life, which must be attributed, directly or indirectly to this trade of hell', p. 310.

³⁰ Typed account of service of HMS *Briton* by George Keith Gordon on anti-slavery operations in 1873. Account written retrospectively in 1932, NMM, FIE/43, p. 102.

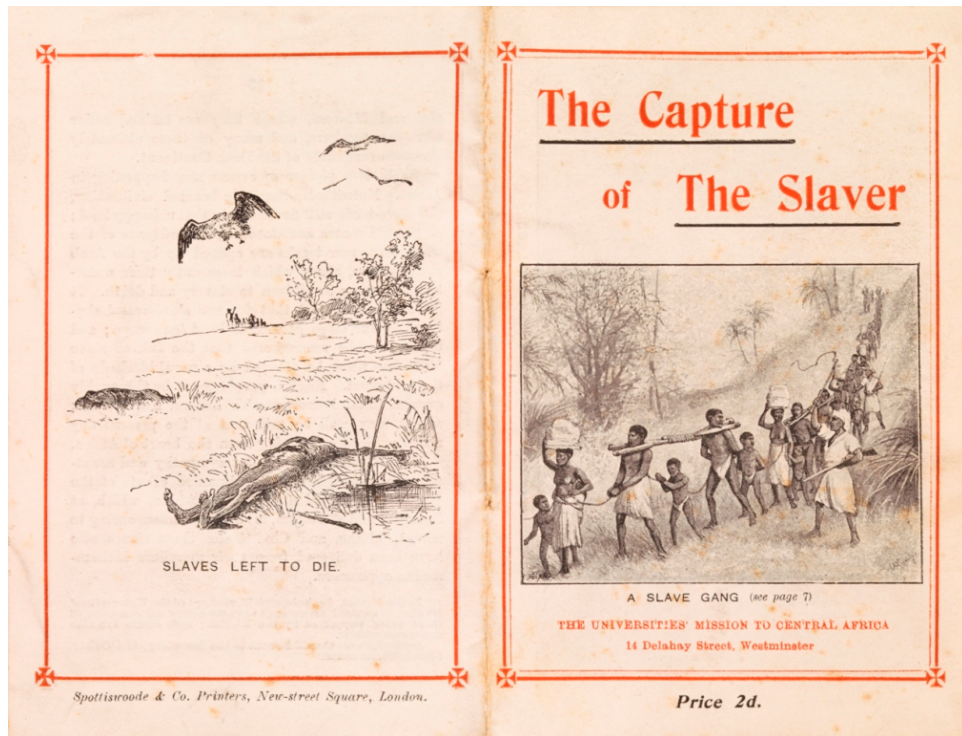


Fig. 3.5: Rev. D. Gath Whitley, *The capture of the slaver* (London, UMCA, c. 1895), front and back cover illustrations.³¹



Fig. 3.6: 'A slave raid in Central Africa' by Harry Johnston, *The Graphic*, 29 September 1888, pp. 340-1.³²

³¹ NMM, MGS/62.

³² NMM, ZBA2589.

Figure 3.6 depicts 'A slave raid in Central Africa'. The text which accompanied the image also spoke of family separation, and again appealed to female sentiments: 'The little children are rarely tied except by their heart strings, for their attachment to their mothers, and the mother's determination not to be parted from their children . . .'.³³ This image employed accepted visual emblems of 'Islam' and 'African' to type the two groups. The turban and flowing robes of the Arab were clearly contrasted against the naked African 'savage' with bow and arrow. Readers would have known instantly who were the victims, and who were the perpetrators of the slave trade. Such straightforward visual narratives clearly elided the ethnic complexities of the slave trade.



Fig. 3.7: 'Showing 33 slaves captured by the boats of the *Racoon*', c. 1901.³⁴

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ NMM, ZBA2632.

On board the naval ship the 'moment of emancipation' could be signified through similarly racially overt images. Photographs of the anti-slavery patrols which featured naval crew members posed alongside groups of freed slaves on board ship quite literally placed black and white, (ex-) enslaved African and British liberator, side by side (fig. 3.7). What the relationship was between the two groups featured in this photograph needed little or no explanation. The representations of slaves on board ship after rescue also fitted into the wider iconography of slave powerlessness. Freed slaves were predominantly depicted as a collective – as a mass of communal bodies, their movements and actions to be directed by the naval crew, with little or no autonomy themselves. Practices such as washing and feeding freed slaves communally and under the supervision of the naval crew served to reinforce Africans as non-individualised, passive bodies, and reflect what Wood has termed the imposition of 'anti-personality'.³⁵ Captain Sullivan for example described how 'Each morning, whilst the decks were washing, the whole of the negroes would be assembled in the gangway and the steam-hose taken to the bridge and water pumped over them'.³⁶ In another example, Captain Colomb wrote: 'At feeding time the slaves are grouped – generally by the shoulders – in messes of eight or ten'.³⁷

³⁵ Wood, *Blind Memory*, p. 216.

³⁶ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 180.

³⁷ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 278.



Fig. 3.8: 'The slavery question in Eastern Africa – Negroes taken from a captured dhow in a state of starvation', the *Graphic*, 8 March 1873.³⁸



Fig. 3.9: Photograph taken on board HMS *Daphne*, c. 1869, Captain George Lydiard Sullivan.³⁹

³⁸ NMM, ZBA2574. Originally published in Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 168.

³⁹ G. Romaine, Admiralty to Foreign Office, 31 March 1869, enc. 'Annual Report on the Slave Trade', The National Archives (hereafter TNA), FO 84/1310.

A number of engravings of freed slaves on board ship, produced originally from photographs, were used to illustrate Sullivan and Colomb's published accounts. The engravings were also widely circulated in popular illustrated newspapers. Figure 3.8 shows an example that originally featured in Captain Sullivan's 1873 account *Dhow Chasing*. Typical of such images, the Africans are depicted nearly all seated, and are entirely subjective. As Wood has argued 'the slave emerges predominantly as an object afflicted, not as a subject capable of describing his or her affliction'.⁴⁰ Here the Africans are captured motionless: they do not talk and the children do not play. Again suffering is a central theme of this image; a suffering that has been inflicted by their enslavement on board an Arab dhow and which only now might be relieved on board the British ship.

It is vital to stress that the argument presented here does not seek to deny the suffering of the enslaved, or to suggest that all images were false representations. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 provide a rare opportunity to compare the photograph on which the engraving of this group of freed slaves was based. Overwhelmingly this demonstrates the engraving in no way falsely represented the shockingly emaciated condition of the enslaved as originally photographed by Sullivan. The development of photography at this time held out to contemporaries 'the promise of value-free representation' – a 'scientifically' neutral record of fact.⁴¹ It became a key way in which 'others', whether 'savage native' or the lower classes and criminals, were explored and objectified. The authority of this 'scientific' method 'proved' the 'inferiority' of the subject.⁴² However, photographs were not free from the social context in which they were produced, circulated and read. The photographer was as much a creator as an artist. Specific images were produced at the exclusion of others in order to present a particular account which was shaped by the

⁴⁰ Wood, *Blind Memory*, p. 216.

⁴¹ Clare Anderson, 'Oscar Mallitte's Andaman Photographs, 1857-8', *History Workshop Journal*, 67 (2009), pp. 152-72, p. 155.

⁴² James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ch. 5.

cultural objectives of the photographer (in this case Sullivan).⁴³ A narrative of suffering was captured and reproduced repeatedly through the transmission of the image in mass-circulating newspapers. Here images were juxtaposed against interpretive text which reinforced this specific narrative to the reader. The argument presented here seeks to locate these individual images in the broader cultural context of anti-slavery ideas and racial thinking as they intersected in the late nineteenth century. To a large extent, all the images presented in this chapter offered a collective representation of the imagined African. Whether represented as child, animal, martyr, or almost ghostly skeleton, all relied on the idea that enslaved Africans were victims, rather than aggressors. This was essential to invoking sympathy from the British abolitionist audience. However, when placed in the imperial and racial context of the period, such images also undeniably provided a vital canvas upon which the vision of British white philanthropy and superiority could be ever more embellished.

Racial hierarchies and biological racism

The extent to which biological difference really mattered to late-nineteenth-century naval officers is patently clear. As chapter 2 showed, naval officers overwhelmingly relied on a 'language of race' to explain difference.⁴⁴ Some men were certainly more colour prejudiced than others. But reflecting wider racial thinking, naval officers were most prejudiced towards Africans. Well-established negative (and occasionally positive) stereotypes were repeatedly projected on to the Africans they met. Whether the stereotypes actually fitted the reality of those people was a question rarely asked. What connects the narratives, and particularly the imagery, of victimised Africans with scientific racism is that these depictions also served for the purpose of categorising racial types.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 17; Anderson, 'Oscar Mallitte's Andaman Photographs', p. 155.

⁴⁴ This phrase is borrowed from Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 338.

Describing the Oromo tribe, which as discussed below was generally represented favourably by the naval crews, Captain Sullivan stated that ‘their bright intelligent faces and long curly hair gave them quite a civilised appearance’. If they could ‘but exchange the dark copper-coloured complexion for a white one, it would be impossible to make slaves of them’.⁴⁵ In this description we get to the very nub of the western racialization of slavery, which imagined free whites defined in opposition to enslaved blacks. The idea that because of biological determinism black Africans were natural slaves but white Britons could never be slaves reached its height in this period, and largely underpinned British naval officer’s thinking.

The racial observations of officers were strongly influenced by the discourse of scientific racism. The presence of large groups of African freed slaves on board ship existed to naval officers as a kind of anthropological collection ready for scientific consumption. New techniques that had emerged out of subjects such as anthropology and natural history were used as the tools for collecting ‘empirical’ data. Groups of Africans were explicitly compared, and popular racial theories tested. Again, techniques such as photography offered an apparently ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’ means for recording and ‘proving’ such racial theories.⁴⁶ Naval officers put great efforts into describing the anatomical features of Africans. Skin tone, head shape, facial features, hair type, stature, and also costume and adornment were often meticulously described. The conviction that permanent physical differences could distinguish one group from another – and the assumption that racially attributed behaviours were not only unchangeable but could be placed in a hierarchical order of inferiority and superiority – was consistently applied. The idea of human difference systematically explained through the spheres of science, rationality and (usually male) professional expertise, gave such ‘evidence’ an enormous

⁴⁵ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 174.

⁴⁶ Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, p. 146.

amount of prestige and authority. This was one of the ‘most authoritative and influential ways of grounding the “Otherness” of . . . ethnic identity in ‘real’ knowledge’.⁴⁷

The fact that naval crews were to a large extent Britain’s main witness of the Indian Ocean slave trade gave their observations a certain amount of prestige and authority. This was something naval men were clearly conscious of, and they frequently constructed their language and observations of Africans through the guise of the scientific field-expert. By studying the racial characteristics, ‘native languages’ and habits of a large group of freed slaves on board HMS *Daphne*, Captain George Sullivan, for example, confirmed the presence of eleven different tribes.⁴⁸ On another occasion Sullivan remarked how Mr Churchill, the acting British consul at Zanzibar who was travelling on board HMS *Daphne*, described one tribe as ‘a new species altogether till then undiscovered’. He stated that for the ‘benefit of natural historians he would call it “Lumpy Keboko,” “Keboko” being the Arabic word for hippopotamus’.⁴⁹ These remarks, written in 1873, demonstrate the extent to which racial scientific theory had a formal influence on thinking outside the worlds of science and academia. For an officer like Sullivan who was firmly committed to ideas of anti-slavery, scientific racism and abolitionism were by no means incompatible.

It is no surprise that naval officers, given their upper-middle and middle-class backgrounds and occupation, were familiar with much of the scholarly and popular material produced about Africa by Europeans during this period. As with travel writing at this time, officers not only wrote about their own observations, but also drew on the themes, thoughts, and images of others to corroborate their own ideas. They quoted other naval authors that had written about Africa. They cited the work of cultural ‘experts’ like Richard Burton, the scientific writings of Darwin, and the imagined worlds of writers like Rider Haggard. All of these provided a whole host of established conventions with

⁴⁷ De Groot, ‘The construction of language’, p. 95.

⁴⁸ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 189.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

which to describe and imagine what was by now an accepted view of Africa. Captain Colomb, for example, referenced the work of Richard Burton on numerous occasions within his published account of the anti-slavery patrols. Describing with obvious distaste a group of freed slaves recently rescued by HMS *Dryad*, Colomb wrote:

Burton mentions the colour of the Swahili or Coast tribes of Zanzibar is brown, not black. I may note the same thing of these Central African slaves whom I have seen. The appearance and texture of their skin is quite different from that of the jetty Nubians whom one sees in Egypt. The colour is brown, and the skin, instead of being moist and glossy like that of a typical negro, is dry and scaly. The skin of the elephant, viewed through a diminishing glass, would closely resemble that of the Central African as I have seen him.⁵⁰

Colomb included a number of images of Africans within his publication that were cited directly from Captain Sullivan's *Dhow Chasing*. Sullivan himself referenced Lieutenant Barnard's previous 1849 publication, *A Three Year Cruise in the Mozambique Channel*, in order to support his own observations. Quoting Barnard directly, Sullivan agreed with his fellow officer that the 'half-caste negroes' in the East African Portuguese territories were 'little raised above the brute creation'.⁵¹ Miscegenation was abhorred as it was seen to threaten ideas of European racial purity and superiority.⁵² Sullivan went on, these 'half-castes . . . were a species of human nature that goes far to confirm the truth of the Darwinian theory'.⁵³ Midshipman Dannreuther, writing to his mother in 1888, helped situate his description of the Masai by stating 'they are a war like tribe who slay the first

⁵⁰ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 275.

⁵¹ Frederick Barnard, *A Three Year Cruise in the Mozambique Channel* (London: R.Bentley, 1848) quoted in Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 113.

⁵² Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 140.

⁵³ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 47.

person they meet which you will read about in Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain'.⁵⁴ By using these influential and popular accounts as reference points, naval officers sought to give their own accounts greater credence, and offer their own contribution to the 'expertly'-gathered body of European knowledge.

As described above, an ethnic group often encountered and looked on favourably by the naval crews were the Oromo from modern-day Ethiopia and parts of Kenya (called the Galla by Europeans in the nineteenth century).⁵⁵ Oromo people were seen to possess less typically African physical characteristics. Seen as biologically closer to Europeans, they were frequently labelled as one of the most civilised tribes of East Africa. It was for these reasons that the famous explorers Samuel Baker and Harry Johnston described the Oromo as 'surely one of the world's handsome races'.⁵⁶ The perception that Oromo were more civilised led to them being treated favourably when they were on board ship. Captain Sullivan described how Oromo freed slave women were 'the best-looking ladies' and as such 'received more attention than any of the others'. Extra food was given to them from the messes, 'the sight of which made the other ebony ladies eye them evidently with envy, hatred and malice'.⁵⁷ Writing over fifteen years later in 1889, Commander George King-Hall wrote of the Oromo that 'I was very much struck with the marked intelligence on their faces; so superior to the Swahilis and South Africans'.⁵⁸ The idea that lighter skin tone and higher intelligence was naturally linked was reiterated without question.

Describing the typical tribesmen of Eastern Africa, Richard Burton summed up how their lack of moral control was visible in their favourite occupations of singing, dancing,

⁵⁴ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Funzi Island, 4 March 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

⁵⁵ Galla is now viewed as a pejorative term.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 133.

⁵⁷ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 175.

⁵⁸ Diaries of Admiral George King-Hall, kept onboard HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 8 May 1889, Royal Naval Museum (hereafter RNM) 1995.150/1-2 [transcript available online: www.kinghallconnections.com/10-pe.html, accessed 30 August 2008]. (Hereafter King-Hall, RNM 1995.150/1-2). The diaries span two separate commissions, in the first he was ranked lieutenant, and later became Commander.

eating, fighting and love-making.⁵⁹ The archetypal savage stereotype was most readily recycled when encountering Africans in some of the more remote locations visited on anti-slavery patrols. It was outside the towns and cities that the most uncivilised groups of Africans might be observed. This type of African was nearly always depicted as dangerous, which formed a distinct contrast to the portrayal of the passive, enslaved African. Landing at Pemba Bay, William Cope Devereux described how his small crew was ‘immediately surrounded by a crowd of dirty natives, clad only with a little bit of cloth around their loins. They are all armed with spears, bows and arrows, from the all but suckling infant to the full-grown warrior’. He went on: ‘I could not help thinking that we were at the mercy of the savage wretches who obeyed no laws, either human or divine’.⁶⁰ Visiting a small island near Zanzibar in 1887, Dannreuther wrote ‘Its [sic] just like any other native village only it is a little bigger they were having some barbarous feast or something beating tom toms and going through all sorts of sword dances’.⁶¹ The idea that isolated communities were closer to savagery was a real fear of the naval crews. Dannreuther told his mother that the detached boat crews were ordered never to land at ‘uncivilised places’ without being armed.⁶²

The same officer’s observations made during a visit to the Andaman Islands offer a striking example of the recycling of the black savage and animalistic discourse, and are worth quoting at length:

The natives who live in the forest live on roots and game that they kill with their arrows. We had two on board. They are about 4 ft 6 high & as black as pitch & much blacker. They wear no clothes but have one large leaf tied round their loins in front by a piece of twisted grass. Their hair is jet black & looks very thin. It is quite long & is tied up in a bundle on top

⁵⁹ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 137.

⁶⁰ Devereux, *A Cruise*, pp. 75-6.

⁶¹ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 3 December 1887, NMM, DAN/73.

⁶² *Ibid.*

of the head. The whites of their eye is [sic] the only thing about them not coal black. Even their lips are black as their skin. There are very few tame ones. No one can speak their language. They have got hold of the idea that if they don't kill you you will kill them so accordingly whenever they see anybody black or white that does not belong to them they creep up & shoot their arrows at him, hundreds of convicts have been killed that way. They won't leave the forest so it is difficult to catch them to tame them. They are just like animals who require nothing that requires money or stealing.⁶³

Since the establishment of a penal colony in 1858, the Andaman Islands had been the subject of intense scrutiny by European ethnographers. Largely isolated from outside influences, the Andamanese became scientific 'evidence' for anthropological communities. They were central to socio-cultural and evolutionary debates of the period.⁶⁴ Scientific communities labelled them 'the lowest state of any human society of which we have any certain knowledge'.⁶⁵ The degree to which Dannreuther's observations of the Andamanese recycled these popularly-held views is striking. Most Britons would only ever view the inhabitants of such remote places through representations in popular culture. A series of scale models of Andamanese figures, for example, featured as part of a prominent display in the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition in South Kensington.⁶⁶ (Dannreuther himself lived in South Kensington, and it is conceivable that he may have been among the five and a half million visitors who attended the exhibition). Widely accepted racial ideologies, rather than being challenged, were reinforced by the visits of men like Dannreuther to these remote corners of empire. Moreover, in letters and

⁶³ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Trincomalee, 27 August 1889, NMM, DAN/73.

⁶⁴ Claire Wintle, 'Model Subjects: Representations of the Andaman Islands at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886', *History Workshop Journal*, 67:1 (2009), pp. 194-207, p. 194.

⁶⁵ Edward Burnett Tylor, 'Wild Men and Beast-Children' *Anthropological Review*, (1863), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 196.

⁶⁶ Wintle, 'Model Subjects', pp. 194-207.

through others forms of representation, officers transmitted back to Britain a set of duplicated stereotypes which were further reinforced when consumed by their readers or viewers.

Amongst the largely derogatory representations of Africans, naval officers were able to find some admirable traits. In particular, reflecting the preoccupation with 'manliness', martial prowess, and the popular fascination for warmongering, naval officers perceived supposed 'warlike' tribes favourably.⁶⁷ This fitted the accepted ideology of 'martial races' – the idea that some male groups were biologically predisposed to be superior fighters.⁶⁸ The Somalis were described by Sir Bartle Frere as 'an energetic, passionate, wild and uncultivated people, but with many good qualities'.⁶⁹ For Sullivan, the 'warlike propensities' of the Somalis were corroborated by their behaviour aboard ship, being 'the only tribe that almost *required* animal food on board'.⁷⁰ Dannreuther wrote excitedly about having to suppress a coastal uprising of the 'war like' Masai which was threatening the safety of a British missionary station.⁷¹ Smith-Dorrien included in his journal a photograph of the 'Fuzzies' he encountered at Suakin (fig. 3.10). This was the term used by the British military for the Hadendoa tribe from Sudan, Egypt and parts of Eritrea. The Hadendoa had fought on the side of Mahdist rebels, which British forces were trying to suppress in a series of battles in the Anglo-Sudanese war between 1883 and 1885. Although British soldiers had been on the receiving end, they had admired the military skills of this tribe. Rudyard Kipling famously eulogised them in his poem 'Fuzzy Wuzzy (Soudan Expeditionary Force)' as part of the collection *Barrack Room Ballads* published in 1892. The narrator of the poem, a British soldier, voiced his respect for the enemy, stating 'So 'ere's

⁶⁷ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 145.

⁶⁸ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The military, race and masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 1.

⁶⁹ Sir Bartle Frere, *Eastern Africa as a Field for Missionary Labour* (London: John Murray, 1874), p. 12. In the nineteenth century, Somali was applied to people occupying the coast from the Red Sea Mouth to Lamu in present-day Kenya.

⁷⁰ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 175.

⁷¹ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Funzi Island, 4 March 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

to you Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan; / You're a poor benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;'.⁷² These lines clearly encapsulate the classic mixture of racial prejudice and paternalism that was a prevalent trait of British thinking in this period.



Fig. 3.10: 'Fuzzies, Suakin'. Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien.⁷³

African women

The anti-slavery patrols were unique in bringing naval men into close physical contact with large groups of African women for extended periods of time on board ship. As was true of racial discourses, views of sexuality and gender were as much about comparing the foreign other to the idealised self. Sander Gilman has argued that 'sexuality is the most salient marker of otherness and therefore figures in any racist ideology'.⁷⁴ Victorian attitudes to sexuality were as much a matter of class as they were race. Middle-class Victorian Britons had a clear idea of the 'right' social order. Males as heads of the family

⁷² Published in Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) also available in Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Rudyard Kipling, War Stories and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 68-9.

⁷³ NMM, SMD/6.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and imperial power: race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 46.

were meant to be the economic providers, and women were to be located in the domestic sphere in the employment of child-rearing and housekeeping. Within this notion of the correct familial structure, women were expected to possess such characteristics as virtuousness and submissiveness.⁷⁵ Generally, of course, when Britons arrived in foreign lands, they found indigenous social and sexual patterns to be vastly different to their own.⁷⁶ Disapproval of these arrangements and behaviours became one of the main hallmarks of European criticism of indigenous peoples. Such rebukes were, however, not always without envy.⁷⁷

In opposition to the apparently tight sexual morals of middle-class Britons, many foreign groups, as well as lower-class Britons, were perceived to possess a lack of sexual restraint. This was seen to reflect the primitivism of both groups and was a key marker of otherness in terms of race and class. Describing the sexual behaviour of a group of African girls and naval ratings on board ship, Lieutenant Devereux wrote, 'Our blue-jackets are forever fondling them, calling them all Topsy. The little creatures appear to take to the horny tars most affectionately, showing more precocity and fun than one could expect'.⁷⁸ The apparent display of sexual incontinence of both the Africans and working-class ratings confirmed to Devereux the expected characteristics and paralleled otherness of both groups. Both were enduring stereotypes. The popular image of 'Jack Tar' as a sexual menace, especially when ashore, had a long history dating back to the eighteenth century.⁷⁹ In line with the late-nineteenth century growth of moral Puritanism and the hardening of racial attitudes, claims of working-class and indigenous sexual promiscuity were frequently used as a way of endorsing calls for social reform both in Britain and

⁷⁵ Catherine Hall, 'Going a-Trolloping: Imperial man travels in the empire' in Midgely (ed.), *Gender and imperialism*, pp. 180-199, pp. 191-5.

⁷⁶ See for example *ibid.* for Hall's comments on Anthony Trollope's reactions to the different family and sexual arrangements he encountered whilst travelling in the empire.

⁷⁷ Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007), p. 144; Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 134.

⁷⁸ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 121.

⁷⁹ Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 1-3; Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, p. 32.

throughout the empire. Fears about the number of 'gutter urchins' in British cities reflected this thinking, and activities such as prostitution, concubinage and sexual exploitation came under increasing attack by missionaries, abolitionists and moral reformers. In the colonies, in particular, this was an attempt to police miscegenation.⁸⁰

In the European mind the lack of modesty of Africans – their nudity – was another marker of their supposed uncontrolled sexual appetite.⁸¹ This extreme difference was an object of both desire and repulsion. Foreign women were often seen as savage, yet simultaneously exotic and erotic.⁸² The way in which naval men responded to African women clearly encompass both discourses of the savage and the exotic/erotic. Ronald Hyam has argued that in the late-nineteenth century, the empire, more than ever, presented itself 'as an unrivalled field for the maximisation of sexual opportunity and the pursuit of sexual variation'. The authorities of the military services presumed that sailors and soldiers would naturally seek out prostitutes as they travelled throughout the empire. Hyam suggests that the brothels located in many Indian Ocean ports provided young British men with opportunities to fulfil sexual experiences that they could not, or would not, at home.⁸³ Whether sexual interactions ever took place between naval men and African women whilst they were on board ship is impossible to know. An inherent methodological problem of trying to interpret Victorian attitudes to sexuality is that 'respectable' Britons knew the 'boundaries which regulated sexual behaviour'. They knew that sex was not to be talked about publicly.⁸⁴ Christine Bolt argues that Victorian travellers very possibly wrote with a view which would please the women they left behind.⁸⁵ That well-bred naval officers

⁸⁰ Desmond and More, *Darwin's Sacred Cause*, pp. 368-70; Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality: Antiquity to Sexual Revolution* (London: Equinox, 2004), pp. 132-3.

⁸¹ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 136.

⁸² For an excellent discussion of this discourse see De Groot, 'The Construction of Language'. See also Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Saqi, 2008), pp. 113-20.

⁸³ Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 211-12.

⁸⁴ Levine, *The British Empire*, p. 144.

⁸⁵ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 135.

would divulge their inner-most sexual thoughts to their mothers, sisters, wives, or indeed any reader, is of course most unlikely. It does seem to be the case, however, that this intense and often prolonged confrontation with African women heightened naval men's awareness of their own sexual values and preferences. These thoughts are at least recoverable from the evidence.

The African women that naval men looked on most favourably were those that conformed to western standards of beauty and behaviour. The Oromo, with their light skin and sharp bone-structure, were generally seen as the most attractive. Naval officer William Creswell spoke favourably of Oromo women in his retrospective account.⁸⁶ Sullivan described them as 'positively graceful in form and movement'. In line with the naval tradition of nicknaming, Africans were commonly assigned new identities by the naval crew. The names bestowed on Africans reflected a full range of attitudes: from paternalistic petting, to perceived humorous caricature, to overtly insulting. On board HMS *Daphne* the naval crew assigned Oromo women fittingly British names, perhaps as a way of establishing respectability for desirable women. They were called: Peggy, Susan, Sally, Sophy and Mary. Sullivan believed Peggy to be 'a fine, good-looking woman'.⁸⁷ African women that were deemed attractive were also often represented through typically exotic Orientalist representations. Colomb for example described one Oromo girl as 'tall, slight, and by comparison not ill-formed or favoured, who wore some shreds of spangled veil about her head. She was quite the lady negress', watching her, 'was somewhat pitiful as it brought us all down to her level in her weaknesses', he wrote.⁸⁸ Writing in 1892, Reverend John Dougherty, chaplain of HMS *Garnet*, described three slave women who: 'were far above the average run both in style and dress. They were not intended as clove pickers, but to grace some Harem. They were received and treated with great kindness on board; and they

⁸⁶ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 185.

⁸⁷ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, pp. 174-6.

⁸⁸ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 273.

showed their appreciation of the same, by their swaggering walk on the Quarterdeck'.⁸⁹

Both examples invoked two of the most commonly seductive subjects of orientalist paintings and literature – the veiled woman and the harem. By the late-nineteenth century the Orient as a symbol of desired, exotic otherness abounded in both high and popular Western art and literature. In particular the Orient was seen to be a place of lascivious sensuality and sexuality. By associating African women with the Orientalist label – a link that was easily made in the context of the Arab slave trade – they were placed within a 'universalised image of exotic femininity' that would be familiar to all Western audiences.⁹⁰

By far the most prominent setting in which the Oriental motif was invoked by naval writers as a way of symbolising exotic sexual otherness was the Zanzibar slave market. Prior to its closure in 1873, the slave market was a common focus for European visitors. It was here, Colomb wrote, that the naval officer could observe 'the source of the black stream he is eternally plotting how to dam up'.⁹¹ Underneath this high-minded rhetoric, however, the slave market also provided a particularly good opportunity for some voyeuristic inspection of women's bodies. Again, slave market scenes were one of the most recurring images within Orientalist material throughout the nineteenth century. Like the popular harem scenes, the central subjects were generally nude, or semi-nude, pale-skinned women. Dominated by male slave traders or buyers, such representations portrayed the idea of the eroticism of the East as 'mysterious and tinged with hints of violence'.⁹² De Groot describes how women in Orientalist images of this kind were displayed as much for the benefit of the

⁸⁹ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station; or The Cruise of HMS "Garnet" 1887-90* (Malta: Muscat Printing Office, 1892), p. 28.

⁹⁰ De Groot, 'The Construction of Language', p. 118. Orientalism is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

⁹¹ Colomb, *Slave Catching* p. 390. For the slave market as a metaphor for the deviance of the Orient see chapter 4, pp. 144-6.

⁹² Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 114.

prospective slave buyers in the picture, as they were for the viewer. Such paintings gave the viewer 'permission to indulge in an appreciation of this female sexuality'.⁹³

Naval authors Colomb and Devereux consciously employed the same voyeuristic discourse of exotic femininity to represent African women in the Zanzibar slave market. Their voyeurism was thinly veiled under disapproving descriptions of the lewd behaviour of Arab slave traders. In 1869, Devereux wrote, 'Soon an Arab approaches, and, cattle-dealer like, pokes the girls in the ribs, feels their joints, examines their mouths, fingers their teeth (I wish they would bite him), trots them up and down to see their pace, then, after haggling about their price, takes one and leaves the other'.⁹⁴ Describing a second visit to the slave market, Colomb stated: 'I was the more anxious to see it again, because some of the officers had described their seeing gross indecencies towards the women practised by intending buyers, and as I had not a sign of anything of the kind, I was anxious to verify it'. Sauntering between groups of women and girls he provided his readers with enticing descriptions of the most attractive groups present. One group of 'valuable' slaves wore 'dark veils thrown back from their foreheads, and were crowned, not unpicturesquely, with glittering spangles entwined in the folds of the veil'.⁹⁵ Another naval author, writing anonymously in the *Chambers Journal* in 1870, lured his reader with a similar scene: 'But there is one corner of the slave-market which deserves a little attention. This is an out-of-the-way nook, set apart . . . for the exclusive disposal of the "fairest of the fair"'.⁹⁶ Leaving the most shocking and intimate details to the end, Colomb closed his description of the slave market stating 'I did not see in the open market, that revolting examination of the muscle of women for sale, which we know must go on. Such examinations were nominally private. The women being taken aside for the purpose'.⁹⁷ As was typical of Orientalist

⁹³ De Groot, 'The Construction of Language', p. 115.

⁹⁴ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 104.

⁹⁵ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 394-5.

⁹⁶ Anonymous, 'The Slave Trade as it now is', *Chambers Journal*, 47 (1870), pp. 81-85.

⁹⁷ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 401-2.

material, all these representations which encouraged the reader to speculate on what was hidden away were of course intended to invite discovery.

If naval men found those African women with lighter skin more attractive, then the savagery of others was removed by costuming them and veiling them in typically exotic Oriental costumes. A striking example of the lightening of skin colour can be seen in figure 3.11. Here to the left and in the centre of a line of obviously African males, are two women and a child with noticeably light skin and European hairstyles. The intention of the artist is difficult to interpret. To what extent the classical female beauty in the centre is intended to look provocatively demure or victimised is hard to say. Certainly there was a conscious decision to lighten the skin of the woman in order to draw attention to her semi-naked figure. In these narratives and images, the Arab slave trade was intentionally feminised and represented as sexually charged. Equally striking is the way in which the manufacturers of these representations incorporated popular tropes of Oriental fantasy in order to add appeal to a Western, presumably male, audience. The message within these set of representations was quite different to the recurrent emphasis on the supplicant African as explored above. As will be expanded in chapter 8, the centrality of children, as well as the infantilisation of Africans within these representations, was often used to appeal to specifically female audiences. In this way representations of Africans were consciously created in order to target different gendered audiences in Britain.



Fig. 3.11: 'Band of captives driven into slavery', anonymous, late nineteenth century.⁹⁸

In contrast to ideas of exotic otherness, women that were seen to fit more closely the typical African savage stereotype were almost universally described in derogatory terms. Traditional body adornment and scarification were a common point of fascination and criticism. Devereux, described the 'breasts and faces tattooed and cut' of a group of 'worn-out women' for sale in the Zanzibar slave market.⁹⁹ Colomb employed his usual racist and ironic tone when he stated 'I doubt whether a face over which a curry-comb has apparently been drawn, could exactly be considered beautiful in our view'.¹⁰⁰ Describing the heavy tattooing and jewellery of the Monginda tribe, Sullivan stated 'anything more repulsive than some of the females of this tribe is impossible to conceive'. In contrast to

⁹⁸ NMM, ZBA2764.

⁹⁹ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 392.

the feminine, British names given to Oromo women, these individuals were named 'Lumpy Keboko' (Hippopotamus) and 'The Toad'.¹⁰¹ These descriptions were supported by engravings. Figure 3.12 shows a woman from the Monginda tribe depicted as grotesque, androgynous and creature-like, whereas in figure 3.13 a group of Oromo women are portrayed with greater femininity and sympathy. Dannreuther described the apparent lack of femininity of a Zanzibari girl by telling his mother that: 'A Zanzibar girl couldn't grow long hair if she tried. Their hair is like the horse hair [illegible word] & curls like sheeps [sic.] wool just after it has been shawn'.¹⁰² On another occasion he summed up his evident distaste as he observed a group of black, Zanzibari women, by stating aggressively how 'the whole place smells of nigger'.¹⁰³ Dannreuther's response characterised what the average Victorian disliked about Africans in general. The inability of these women to conform to standard European ideas of beauty placed them beyond female, into another species altogether.

¹⁰¹ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, pp. 177-9.

¹⁰² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, At Sea, 20 August 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Zanzibar, 10 November 1887, NMM, DAN/73.

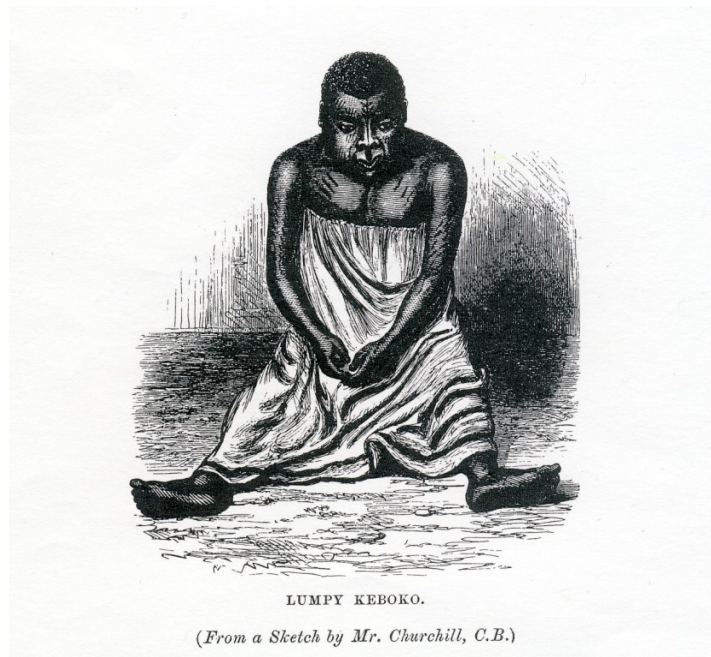


Fig. 3.12: 'Lumpy Keboko', from Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing* (1873), p. 178.



Fig. 3.13: 'Group of Galla women liberated by HMS *Daphne*', from Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing* (1873), p. 175.

African naval crew members

Relations between British and African crew members both paralleled and were distinct from the way in which Africans as a collective were generally perceived. The Royal Navy had employed Africans on board ship from at least the eighteenth century. Men of the Kru, an ethnic group with a distinct seafaring tradition living mainly along the West African coast of present-day Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, were regularly employed by the navy.¹⁰⁴ Known collectively to Europeans as Krumen, some were employed on the East Indies anti-slavery squadron, where they were widely considered to be good and able workers.¹⁰⁵ Krumen had traditionally been seen by Britons as 'outstanding seafarers, paragons of manliness, and devotees to imperial rule'.¹⁰⁶ Colomb gave a typically backhanded racist compliment when he stated that the Krumen on board HMS *Dryad* were 'if not as bright as white men – still bright'.¹⁰⁷ The squadron also regularly contracted the labour of Africans working in various maritime related roles around the ports of the western Indian Ocean. Known as Seedies, these men were employed on board as supernumeraries. As was true of Krumen and other non-whites employed in the Royal Navy, Seedies undertook the toughest manual jobs.¹⁰⁸ They mainly worked as stokers, coal-trimmers, or carried out 'sun-exposed' work.¹⁰⁹ Janet Ewald has traced the origin of the term Sidi or Seedy to the Arabic 'Sayyid' which in 1500 denoted a maritime elite living in Western India originally descended from African slave-soldiers. Having acquired a variety of meanings, by the nineteenth century Seedy was used by Europeans to refer to all Africans

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of British perceptions of Krumen in the mid-nineteenth century see Robert Burroughs, "'[T]he true sailors of Western Africa": Kru seafaring identity in British travellers' accounts of the 1830s and 1840s', *Journal for Maritime Research*, [www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk, accessed 15 June 2010].

¹⁰⁵ Rear Admiral Cockburn to The Secretary of the Admiralty, Aden, 2 May 1871, TNA, ADM 1/6190.

¹⁰⁶ Burroughs, 'The true sailors of Western Africa'.

¹⁰⁷ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 267.

¹⁰⁸ Burroughs, 'The true sailors of Western Africa'.

¹⁰⁹ Rear Admiral Cockburn to The Secretary of the Admiralty, Aden, 2 May 1871, TNA, ADM 1/6190.

working in ports and shipping around the Indian Ocean region. An increase in the number of Africans working in this kind of maritime-related employment grew concurrently with the burgeoning Indian Ocean economy over the course of the nineteenth century. Ewald describes Seedies as a kind of 'drifting sea proletariat'.¹¹⁰

In 1870, the Admiralty ordered the replacement of Krumen with Seedies on the ships of the East Indies squadron. Writing in response to this order, the commander of the squadron, Rear Admiral Cockburn stated that whilst Seedies could be easily obtained, they were in his opinion a 'decidedly inferior as a race to the Kroomen' and as such he considered eight Kroomen equivalent to twelve Seedies.¹¹¹ The derogatory view of Seedies seems to have endured. In reference to a shortage of men in the engine room of HMS *Seagull* in 1882, Commander Matthew Byles contacted the senior officer of the station stating, '15-seedies are borne in lieu of the stokers short, but being only Africans for the first time on board ship, they are next to useless, and it is found necessary to employ white men in addition'.¹¹² Intriguingly the racial prejudice against African stokers was depicted in a caricature produced by Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien (fig. 3.14).

¹¹⁰ Janet Ewald, "'No Objection to a Wandering Unsettled Life:": Bondsmen and Freedmen in the Ports and at Sea of the Indian Ocean World, c. 1500-1900' (paper presented at Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean and Arab Worlds: Global Connections and Disconnections, Yale University, 2008), [www.yale.edu/glc/indian-ocean/ewald.pdf, accessed 5 November 2009].

¹¹¹ Rear Admiral Cockburn to The Secretary of the Admiralty, Aden, 2 May 1871, TNA, ADM 1/6190.

¹¹² Commander M. Byles to Captain Percy Luxmore, Zanzibar, 9 February 1882, TNA, ADM 1/6622.



Fig. 3.14: 'Gurth the Swineherd: A Study from Ivanhoe',
Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien¹¹³

¹¹³ NMM, SMD/6.

In this caricature Smith-Dorrien alluded to an encounter between the chief engineer on board HMS *Eclipse* and one of the 'black' stokers. The chief engineer, a Mr Ashworth, was depicted as 'Gurth the Swineherd' from Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), and is portrayed carrying a white swine under one arm, whilst kicking a black swine. The image was annotated with the following explanation: 'The subject of this picture was called Gurth the Swineherd because he [the chief engineer] sometimes spoke of the stokers as swine – one day he kicked a black stoker in the Engine Room and the black stoker ran him in on the Quarterdeck – Picture depicts this scene in an allegorical sense and under his arm is supposed to represent the friendly white stoker who brought him his morning cocoa'.¹¹⁴

This image may however have been more than a straightforward reference to racial and class prejudices and tensions that evidently existed on board ship. The allusion to *Ivanhoe* is revealing as well. Set in England a century after the Norman Conquest, *Ivanhoe* was an explicit exploration of national identities and what Scott termed 'hostile races' in conflict – of the Anglo-Saxons and Normans and also of the Jews following their persecution in the Crusades. *Ivanhoe* was written during the period of rising nationalism which followed the French Revolution. It has been viewed as an attempt by Scott to highlight the mixed racial origins of the English and expose the limits of ideas of English nationhood.¹¹⁵ It is not implausible that Smith-Dorrien was making an allusion to some of the themes explored by Scott in *Ivanhoe*. Of further interest is the fact that the character Gurth the Swineherd, son of the Anglo-Saxon mythic hero *Beowulf*, was himself a slave (or serf), as represented in the caricature by a collar around the chief engineer's neck. Was this perhaps a comment on the 'enslavement' of naval officers on board the anti-slavery ships? As chapter 5 argues, 'liberty' was not always a clearly-defined outcome of the anti-slavery patrols. Not only did the enslaved not always understand that the naval patrols

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Michael Ragussis, 'Writing Nationalist History: England, the Conversion of the Jews, and *Ivanhoe*', *Journal of English Literary History*, 60:1 (1993), pp. 181-215.

represented 'freedom', but for naval officers the responsibility and conditions of the patrols at times appeared to exist as a form of 'enslavement'.

Africans and men of African descent also regularly worked in subservient positions as cabin boys, servants and cooks on board the naval anti-slavery ships. Midshipman Dannreuther noted that amongst those he called 'black' men serving in the crew of HMS *Garnet* in 1889 were cooks, servants and stewards. The junior officers' cook was from Bermuda, their servant from Zanzibar, and their steward was 'a Goa Portuguese'.¹¹⁶ Sometimes slaves that had been freed by the anti-slavery squadron became part of the naval crew. Padre Petro Kilekwa, who was freed by HMS *Osprey* in the mid-1880s recorded in his autobiography being employed on the same ship alongside 'the other black men who were working as side boys [presumably seedies]' where it was their job to clean and paint the ship. Later he and his freed slave companion were transferred to the flagship of the anti-slavery squadron HMS *Bacchante* and employed as 'punkah boys' in the Admiral's and Captain's cabin.¹¹⁷ Africans also worked on board the anti-slavery ships as interpreters. Dannreuther recorded the ethnic origin of two interpreters working on board HMS *Garnet* between 1887 and 1890 as being from Zanzibar and the Comoros Islands.¹¹⁸

The unusual nature of duties on the anti-slavery patrols brought British and African naval crew members into particularly close contact. For much of the campaign the tactic used to patrol for slave dhows involved dispatching ship's boats for periods of up to six weeks at a time.¹¹⁹ The boats were manned by a crew of around six to eight men, which always included an interpreter and seedie, and were generally commanded by a junior officer.¹²⁰ A handful of contemporary and retrospective accounts written by the young

¹¹⁶ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Trincomalee, 27 August 1889, NMM, DAN/73.

¹¹⁷ Petro Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest: The Autobiography of Padre Petro Kilekwa*, translated from *Chinyanja* by K.H. Nixon Smith (London: Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1937), pp. 18-22.

¹¹⁸ Captain Tristan Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising off Zanzibar and Pemba, 1887-1890-1892', *Naval Review*, 19 (1931), pp. 45-68, p. 55.

¹¹⁹ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 36.

¹²⁰ P. J. Stopford., 'A Boat-Cruising Experience', *Chambers Journal*, 94 (1917), pp. 301-303, p. 301.

commanding officers provide an insight into the relations on board.¹²¹ What is clear is that the success rate of seizing slave dhows was largely dependent on the interpreters and the seedies, who as the native speakers were the primary means by which information of local shipping could be gathered. As Chapter 5 discusses, the importance attached to winning prize money for each vessel seized meant that the role of the Africans within these small crews was highly valued. In addition, the Africans' knowledge of the many inlets and creeks around which the patrols were based in some respects placed them in a superior position to that of the young officer.

In the boat patrols, the African crew members were elevated, in the eyes of the British men, to something like equals. This was particularly true of seedies who otherwise worked as menial labourers on board ship. Describing one such patrol, Dannreuther noted that alongside himself and the coxswain, the interpreter and seedie were always armed with a cutlass and revolver, and the rest of the men with rifles and sword bayonets.¹²² His incidental references to the interpreters with whom he worked closely indicate that the young British officer viewed them more as contemporaries than as individuals markedly different to himself.¹²³ On returning from one boat patrol, Dannreuther was pleased to have learnt a number of Swahili words, presumably by those Africans with whom he had been living alongside for three weeks.¹²⁴ Dannreuther's prejudices towards Africans, or at least of African crew members, do appear to have been rethought during his commission. Writing during his first month stationed at Zanzibar, he described how the ship had taken on board eight seedies. He wrote disparagingly that 'they did look so stupid dressed up in uniform'.¹²⁵ Gradually however, as he began to work more closely with the indigenous

¹²¹ These include J. A. Challice, 'In pursuit of Slavers', *The Dark Blue*, 4 (1872), pp. 303-307; Creswell, *Close to the Wind*; Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', also the letters of Dannreuther, NMM DAN/73; Stopford 'A Boat-Cruising Experience'.

¹²² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 14 April 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1887, 3 May 1888, NMM, DAN/73; Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 55.

¹²⁴ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 23 May 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 November 1887, NMM, DAN/73.

interpreters and seedies, and a relationship of reliance became apparent, his initial prejudices were somewhat lessened. The setting of the smaller group allowed a greater level of personal interaction, from which greater sympathy for specific Africans appears to have emerged. This seems to have been maintained when the boat crews later returned to the ship. In this specific case Dannreuther's racial prejudices were more bending than in other situations. It is characteristic, however, of the extent to which racial thinking was engrained that the positive impression he gained of some Africans did not alter his views of Africans as a whole.

The perceived alignment of interests of the British and African crew members in the context of the boat patrols to some extent elided the traditional racial distinctions. Rather than mirroring the imbalanced power relationship that underpinned the image of the supplicant freed slave, or of the officer class being served by African servants, this relationship was instead based more on similarities and shared experiences. Significantly, the mutually dependent partnership between the junior officer commanders and their African crew members not only partially eclipsed racial stereotypes but also dissolved fundamental class boundaries. In the context of the boat patrols, interpreters and seedies – members of the 'drifting sea proletariat' – were temporarily placed on an equal footing with upper-middle class British officers. These examples illustrate David Cannadine's assertion that 'empire was about collaboration and consensus as well as about conflict and coercion'.¹²⁶

Read in this way, it is interesting that African interpreters and seedies were amongst those to receive medals from the Royal Humane Society for their work on the anti-slavery patrols. Established in 1774, the Society grants awards to honour bravery in saving human lives. On the anti-slavery patrols these were generally earned during bungled

¹²⁶ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), introduction, p. xvi.

seizures, where crewmembers dived into the sea to rescue drowning slaves.¹²⁷ Africans were listed alongside their British crewmembers for these awards in the pages of the *Navy List*.¹²⁸ Cannadine's discussion of the British Honours system is of interest here. He argues that the system which was open to all races across the empire served to promote and encourage a coherent, imperial hierarchy to which all could participate equally, and be united in their service of the empire.¹²⁹ Royal Humane Society medals did not of course fall into the formal British Honours system; however, they were still a public acknowledgement of outstanding service. Chapter 5 will show how officers' preoccupation with manliness was importantly reinforced by competition and public reward. That officers attached an amount of significance to these honours, whether awarded to black or white crew members, is evident in some of their accounts.¹³⁰ Where British officers perceived in Africans those highly favoured qualities of gallantry and masculinity their racial prejudices were somewhat lessened. In this context, fellow African crew members were respected by British officers. William Creswell stated: 'The native interpreters were, for the most part, a fine, courageous lot'.¹³¹ He described one interpreter in the following terms: "'Jack Ropeyarn", a small, sturdy, active, laughing native interpreter, pure inky black, had a distinguished history and was the proud possessor of a Royal Humane Society medal, gallantly earned'.¹³² However, whilst Creswell might have appreciated 'Jack's' gallantry, this was still expressed through a racialised caricature. The ambivalence of nicknaming, and the jocular and patronising tone used by Creswell to describe the interpreter undermined the idea of

¹²⁷ See for example Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, August 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹²⁸ For a list of all Royal Humane Society medals awarded between 1835 and 1876 see the *Navy List*, 1876, part 2, September-December, pp. 458-62, this includes a number of Krumen and some Seedies.

¹²⁹ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp. 84-9.

¹³⁰ See for example Tristan Dannreuther to Master Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 26 November 1887 and August 1888, NMM, DAN/73; Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 26; Stopford, 'A Boat Cruising Experience', pp. 301-3.

¹³¹ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 184.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 'Jack Ropeyarn', is listed for his award under this name as Seedie, in the *Navy List*, 1876, part 2, September-December, p. 462.

African inclusion into the British navy, an interpretation which could apply at a wider level to the inclusion of Africans into the empire as a whole.

Respect for some African crew members appears to have been an aberration to the more generally unsympathetic attitudes of naval officers towards Africans. That officers frequently replicated the aggressively racist attitudes of British society at large is not especially surprising. However, what is perhaps more surprising is that they were also the largest group to witness the cruelties Africans endured as a result of the slave trade, and yet only occasionally did their experiences of the anti-slavery patrols alter their views of Africans. Where sympathy for enslaved Africans did exist it was generally invoked through the enduring image of African victimisation. When combined with accepted ideas of a biologically-based racial hierarchy, the idea of the dependent African served to emphasise black inferiority and promote white superiority. Smith-Dorrien's 'Polly Comoro', Cotten's drowning slave boy, Colomb's 'lady negress' and Dannreuther's Andaman savages, are all examples of different strains of the imagined African which dominated Victorian culture. Only very occasionally did reality intervene to disrupt these duplicated stereotypes. In the following chapter we will see how Arabs were represented by naval officers through a significantly different set of racial and cultural stereotypes than Africans, but which also functioned to elevate Britons.

CHAPTER 4

Arabs imagined and represented: enslaver and pirate

The navy's suppression of the Arab slave trade was not the first time that Britain had come into contact with the power and politics of Islam. The fall of Tangier in the late-seventeenth century and the threat of Barbary corsairs from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century were both significant episodes in which British imperial anxieties were raised by the threat of Islam.¹ The threat of the corsairs had 'converted the sea from an emblem of commerce, freedom, power and proud British identity, into a source of menace and potential slavery'. The sea was a long-held symbol of British identity. Britain's empire was predominantly a maritime one, and as such, it depended on naval power for its defence and extension.² In the period of high imperialism, sea-power and the navy became imbued with new cultural values. The popularisation of social Darwinism paralleled the rise of navalism, and the command of the sea became linked to ideas of races and nations in a struggle for survival. The sea did not simply provide access to wealth and power, but in the age of navalism in which 'great powers had to be naval powers', the link between the sea and national identity was explicit.³ The sea was not therefore simply a space of maritime rivalry, but was a stage on which cultures and nations were contested. It was a platform on which imperial identity was shaped. The navy's anti-slavery campaign was in part about restoring freedom and peace to the sea. It was in this light that it was significant that Arab slave traders, as this chapter highlights, were frequently described as 'pirates'. That piracy, like slave trading (as opposed to slavery), were seen as maritime crimes by the British was significant. Seen in this light, the anti-slavery patrols as a symbol of maritime law and order were a contest of Western versus Eastern cultural values; of Christianity versus Islam, and

¹ Colley, *Captives*. See introduction, p. 9.

² Colley, *Captives*, p. 47.

³ Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 211.

of modernity versus ancient regimes. By projecting naval might and keeping the sea lanes free of all 'pirates', Britain could ensure its status as a world power.⁴

Although Europeans, in the form of French and Portuguese subjects, were still actively slave trading in the western Indian Ocean region, Britain chose to target its anti-slavery campaign against the Islamic or Arab slave trade. Like Africans, Arab peoples were perceived by British officers in terms of otherness. They too were viewed in opposition to Britons but in distinctly different ways to Africans. The practice of representing the Islamic East in relation to Western identities had a history dating back to the Middle Ages.⁵ By the late-nineteenth century a pervasive and well-established view of the Eastern Islamic world existed in the British popular imagination. This was based on a series of persistent and often negative stereotypes. This chapter will explore how representations of this imagined Orient were appropriated in the context of the anti-slavery patrols to represent Arab peoples and the Arab slave trade.

To take Michael Curtis' definition as outlined in his 2009 study of Orientalism, the term the Orient as used in this chapter refers to the area now usually called the Middle East or the Near East, 'Oriental' refers to the peoples and cultures of those countries.⁶ This chapter is specifically concerned with the Islamic regions of the Middle East and East Africa. As chapter 1 argued, the 'Arabs' involved in the East African slave trade included those who were of pure Arab descent and originated from the Middle East (mainly the Persian Gulf region and Arabia), as well as a large proportion of Swahili East Africans who came from modern-day Kenya and Tanzania but had adopted Islam and Arab dress.⁷ This chapter demonstrates that Royal Naval perceptions of the East African slave trade were monolithic and did not take into account these cultural and ethnic complexities. 'Arab' was applied as

⁴ Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, pp. 211-12.

⁵ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 2; P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The great map of mankind: British perceptions of the world in the age of enlightenment* (London: Dent, 1982), pp. 3-25.

⁶ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 2.

⁷ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 28.

a catch-all term for all groups that followed Islam, regardless of ethnicity. As was the case in official and popular discourse, Royal Naval officers referred to the slave trade using various terms including Arab, Islamic and Mohammeden. All these labels explicitly linked the slave trade to Islam. British missionaries and evangelists were central in propounding the idea that the Islamic-dominated slave trade was responsible for what Livingstone had famously called ‘the open sore of the world’.⁸ In his 1890 publication *The New World of Central Africa*, the evangelist and author Henry Grattan Guinness described the Arab presence in Africa in the following terms:

The Arabs in Africa have ever been true to the prophetic description of their race. They are Ishmael’s seed, and their hand is against every man and every man’s hand against them! . . . Their contempt of lower races, and their unprincipled greed of gain; the slavery which their customs demand and their faith allows; their partial civilization and possession of firearms and the helpless, unarmed condition of most of the native races – all these together have made them what they undoubtedly are, Africa’s worst woe!⁹

Islam was denounced as a religion which sanctioned slavery and promoted the slave trade. This confirmed the widely held view of Islam as an essentially ‘unprogressive’ religion.¹⁰ As the above quote demonstrates, British criticism of the Arab slave trade was also racial. According to accepted racial hierarchies, Arabs were placed above the weaker African race. But where racial observations of Africans often prioritised biological characteristics, criticisms of Arabs tended to focus more on the cultural, religious and

⁸ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 113. Livingstone wrote these words in a letter to the *New York Herald* on 1 May 1872, they were later inscribed on a commemorative stone in Westminster Abbey. Quoted in Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2002), p. 230.

⁹ Henry Grattan Guinness, *The New World of Central Africa: With a History of the First Christian Mission on the Congo*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), p. 117.

¹⁰ Hallett, ‘Changing European attitudes’, p. 483.

political aspects of their societies. Arabs were seen to have taken advantage of their racial superiority to exploit Africans, rather than help them 'progress'. Given the mixed ethnicity of the vast majority of slave traders however, this argument was not only deeply simplistic but also fundamentally erroneous. This narrative was employed to distinguish between Arab and British peoples in the context of the anti-slavery campaign. Both groups were viewed as superior to Africans, but where Islamic Arabs used their advantage to enslave Africans, morally superior Britons gave Africans the gift of freedom and 'civilisation'. If Arab people were 'Africa's worst woe' as Guinness proclaimed, then Britain as the lover of liberty was conversely celebrated as Africa's salvation. This message, which was constantly reaffirmed and patriotically celebrated, served to justify the navy's anti-slavery campaign.

One of the defining ways in which Britons sought to understand the East African slave trade was by comparison with the transatlantic trade. To late-Victorian Britons, the horrors of this economically motivated slave trade were well-known. The Arab slave trade was, however, understood to be something quite different to the intense plantation slavery of the Atlantic world. Rather than being understood in terms of economic dynamics, Middle Eastern slavery was regarded racially, as an inherent element of the Arab character and Islamic culture. The exportation of enslaved women and boys to harems in Arabia and the Ottoman Empire helped confirm popular Western perceptions of the immoral sexual customs which supposedly structured Islamic life. A report commissioned in 1882 to investigate the slave trade on the Red Sea's western shore provides evidence of such beliefs. Senior naval officers argued that the engrained nature of the slave trade within the Eastern character was the main reason why slave-trade suppression would prove difficult in the region. Commander Stopford stated, 'to stop the demand is to alter the Oriental character, which has endured for ages despite western

advances, and will probably endure for ages to come'.¹¹ Captain Malcolm described the 'ancient customs' which drove demand for slaves. He stated 'as long as there are harems, so long there will be eunuchs, and nothing can stop this while polygamy exists'.¹² As described above, polygamy and slavery were seen as part of a collection of 'typical' indigenous cultural practices singled out by Britons as evidence of the existence of 'heathenism' in various parts of the empire.

As Matthew Hopper has argued, Middle Eastern slavery was understood as an historical element of Islamic civilisation. It was seen to have remained unchanged since the eighth century to the nineteenth century. The idea that it had existed long before Europeans had arrived in the region was emphasised. The economic fluctuations of the region and the rise in slave demand as a result of the growth in the overall Indian Ocean world economy were not viewed as part of the problem. This formed a stark contrast to the way the transatlantic slave system was understood. The latter was regarded as a product of economics rather than ethnicity or religion; it was never for example described as the 'European' or 'Christian' slave trade.¹³ In contrast the labels 'Arab slave trade' or 'Islamic slavery' continually reinforced the perception of a religiously sanctioned slave trade, and an ethnic group which naturally required slavery because of their indolent character. Resting upon the dominant ideas of 'progress' and liberty, as outlined in chapter 2, the on-going presence of slavery in the Eastern world was viewed as one of the main hallmarks which distinguished the 'civilised' West from the 'backward' East. Islamic slavery was viewed as a barrier to progress.¹⁴

¹¹ Enclosures 1 and 2 of 'Report on the Strategic Value of certain Harbours and the Legitimate Commerce and Slave Trade on the Western Shore of the Red Sea', Rear Admiral and Commander in Chief W. M. Gore-Jones to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Trincomalee, 8 April 1882, TNA, ADM 1/6622.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Matthew Hopper, 'The African Presence in Arabia: Slavery, the World Economy and the African Diaspora in Eastern Arabia, 1840-1940', (PhD thesis, University of California, 2006), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ Midgely, 'Anti-slavery', pp. 172-4.

While the existing stock of representations of Middle Eastern slavery and the slave trade was small, naval officers were able to draw on a whole canon of representations of Islamic society that had become standard in British art and literature in both high and popular culture by the late nineteenth century. Since the 1980s, the nature and meaning of this body of representations created by mainly British and French artists, writers, and travellers has been widely debated by scholars from a range of disciplines. This field was pioneered by Edward Said in his study *Orientalism* (1978).¹⁵ Said's now canonical observation, that all Western representations of the Orient were (and remain) monolithic, ethnocentric and imperialist marked a pivotal historiographical shift. This argument has been both widely praised and criticised since its initial inception.¹⁶ Said argued that Western European aesthetic and intellectual representations of Oriental culture had created an essentialist distinction between East and West, which stressed the apparent material backwardness of the East, over the superior civilisation of the West.¹⁷ He saw representations in media, including art, literature, music, and theatre as portraying the Orient as exotic, and paying undue amounts of attention to the supposedly deviant aspects of Oriental culture. The negative presentation of Oriental life was interpreted as stemming from the Western desire to exercise political power over the East.¹⁸ It is not the purpose of this chapter to engage in that enormous debate. However, it is certainly impossible to deny that nineteenth-century Western representations of the Orient were rich in exotic and sensuous depictions, which often incorporated the theme of violence.¹⁹ Common themes included fantasies involving women depicted in harem or slavery

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

¹⁶ Historians that have critiqued Said include: Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*; John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); D. A. Washbrook, 'Orient and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire in Robin Winks (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 5* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 596-611.

¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, particularly pp. 113-123 and 226-255; Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 8.

¹⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁹ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 12.

scenes.²⁰ Whether or not the creators of these representations were 'active participants in an ideology of imperialism' is the point that has so often been debated.²¹ But it was against this background of popular and widely accepted stereotypes of Oriental culture that naval officers placed their own representations of the Arab slave trade.

Naval officers conformed to the popular British perception of the Oriental-Islamic world. Their readiness to believe any feature of the supposed exotic otherness of the East is clearly apparent in their representations. This resulted in a set of unchallenged stereotypes of Arab people and Arab slavery which were cemented in their transmission to Britain and reinforced as audiences consumed them. As will be illustrated below, a range of stereotypes of Arab peoples emerged out of the anti-slavery campaign which demonstrated a striking continuity across the period. What clearly stands out is that naval officers saw a stark contrast between their own culture and identity and that of Islamic culture. The concept of the exotic 'other' was a notable feature of their writings and graphical representations. Sometimes this otherness was portrayed positively, for example we will see how naval officers appreciatively consumed the sumptuous receptions given by the Sultan of Zanzibar. More often, naval officers were contemptuous of Islamic culture. Because British officers saw Arab society primarily through the lens of slavery, this provided a prime platform for highlighting the extreme difference between themselves and Arabs. As chapter 5 will highlight, the main themes which emerge from representations of British officers within the anti-slavery campaign were morality, Christianity, and the imposition of law and order. This formed a stark contrast to the representation of a society and religion which condoned slavery and was apparently characterised by immorality and lawlessness. The navy's campaign was one of the main encounters between British and Arab culture in the later-nineteenth century. Therefore the representations created by naval officers were an important source of information for

²⁰ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, pp. 24, 125, 130. See also De Groot, 'The Construction of Language'.

²¹ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 12.

the British public. The following sections explore the dominant representations of Arabs in the naval anti-slavery campaign.

An ancient civilisation

Zanzibar was the principal base of the anti-slavery squadron's activities throughout the campaign, and the majority of naval personnel were stationed there for substantial periods of time. It was there that many officers made their first observations of what they perceived to be an Eastern, rather than African city. Naval chaplain Reverend John Dougherty (HMS *Garnet*, 1887-1890) was immediately struck by the impressive architecture of Zanzibar's waterfront, consisting of the Sultan's palace and harem, a mosque and clock tower, and numerous palatial residences which he described were of 'a dazzling white colour'.²² An anonymous officer writing in the *Chambers Journal* in 1870 was similarly impressed. He wrote: 'Looking from the sea, Zanzibar, like most Mohammedan towns, had a very imposing appearance the principal large warehouses and dwelling houses being built along the sea-shore. The finest and noblest of these buildings is undoubtedly the palace of the sultan, with the blood-red flag of Mohammed waving proudly over the battlements'.²³ Both authors, however, described that behind this grandeur was an uncivilised city, full of poverty and vice. Dougherty wrote: 'these respectable buildings do but form a *facade* to the meaner habitations that compose the bulk of the town'. Its poor inhabitants which were mainly 'half starved slaves and beggars' lived in 'mud huts and dilapidated coral built houses' within a maze of 'narrow, tortuous and filthy lanes'.²⁴ In setting up this contrasting scene, the officers invoked the widely-held perception of Islamic populations ruled by despotic leaders, who through corruption and

²² Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 19.

²³ Anonymous, 'The slave trade as it now is', p. 82.

²⁴ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 19.

extravagance reduced their subjects to poverty. With no incentives to produce or own anything beyond their most basic needs, populations subject to despotic rule were seen to live an indolent and backward existence.²⁵ Walter Kingon who served on board HMS *Thetis* in the mid 1870s recorded in his journal the same contrasting view of the city. From the sea Zanzibar looked 'pretty well', but 'when you land for the first time you are sadly mistaken in fact disgusted at the sights represented in your view'.²⁶ Dougherty quoted the words of the evangelist Henry Drummond who in his 1888 publication *Tropical Africa* described Zanzibar as 'Oriental in its appearance, Mohammedan in its religion, Arabian in its morals, the cesspool of wickedness is a fit capital for a dark continent'.²⁷ As the start and end point for many East African explorers, Zanzibar was styled the 'entrance to the dark continent'. Its great immorality came from its being the entrepôt of the Arab slave trade. Drummond described the island as 'the sewer at its mouth' from where 'the heart disease of Africa flowed'.²⁸ For these naval officers the dirt, poverty and slavery which they observed in Zanzibar were all the evidence they needed to convince themselves of the regressive nature of Islamic society.

For the same officer who wrote in the *Chambers Journal* in 1870, the contrast between East and West was absolute. His sense that Zanzibar was a place of alien otherness was described literally. He wrote: 'everything is as foreign, strange, and different from anything European as if it were a city in one of the planets'.²⁹ The fascination with the exotic and supposedly ancient nature of Islamic culture was encapsulated in his description of the craft shops in Zanzibar. At these one could observe 'the smith working at his trade, with tools the most outlandish, to the gold-smelter or

²⁵ Marshall and Williams, *The great map*, p. 16.

²⁶ Journals kept by Master-at-Arms Walter Kingon on board HMS *Thetis* during anti-slavery patrols, 1874-77, entry dated 26 May 1873, RNM, 2008.11(1).

²⁷ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 19; Henry Drummond, *Tropical Africa*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888), p. 5.

²⁸ Drummond, *Tropical Africa*, p. 76.

²⁹ Anonymous, 'The slave trade as it now is', p. 82.

sword manufacturer, [it] gives you to understand that you are in the midst of a people primitive as the days of the Pharaohs'.³⁰ The apparent backwardness of Eastern societies was a frequent observation made by Western travellers to the Orient. Oriental society was seen to be stagnant and lagging behind Europe in terms of 'modern' institutions and economic development.³¹ The racial theorist Robert Knox wrote in 1850 that 'the Oriental races have made no progress since the time of Alexander the Great'.³² Returning to the quote of Henry Grattan Guinness who spoke of the Arabs in Africa as 'true to the prophetic description of their race', by the late-nineteenth century the idea of Islamic backwardness also rested upon biological assumptions of racial hierarchies.

One of the main criticisms of Edward Said's work is that not all Western comment on Oriental society can be interpreted as part of the desire for colonial and imperialist control by the West over Eastern societies.³³ As officials of the state, it does not necessarily follow that naval officers would have supported Britain's imperial mission. But as demonstrated in chapter 2, British officers were bred in a cultural climate which propounded the advantages of empire and encouraged unquestioned belief in racial superiority. The records employed in this thesis demonstrate that as a group, naval officers of this period can in fact clearly be described as imperialist. Many of the commentaries made by naval men of Oriental society mirror Said's claim that representations of the Orient sought to denigrate in order to assert European superiority, although it should be stressed that this was not always a conscious act.³⁴ It was in this light that naval officers were convinced of the benefits of technological developments taking place within the region as a result of Britain's growing imperial presence. Unlike Zanzibar, Reverend Dougherty saw Bombay to have benefitted from a history of colonial

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, p. 70.

³² Quoted in Hallett, 'Changing European attitudes', p. 483.

³³ See for example Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, pp.1-18.

³⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 5-7.

projects. He wrote: 'What a contrast to Zanzibar! . . . splendid and imposing architecturally; . . . full of various types of oriental life and character; alive with the affairs of Government, Religion, Commerce, Pleasure; . . . All this wealth and greatness of not more than two centuries growth!'. Bombay a city 'born and reared under British maternity' was to Dougherty a new city, full of industry and progress. He contrasted Bombay's busy population to the 'listless mob' of Arabs living in Zanzibar.³⁵

At the colonial port of Colombo (in present-day Sri Lanka) Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther observed the beneficial introduction of Western engineering techniques. He described the city's roads as 'the best I had seen, they are red and hard as a billiard table and five minutes after it rains they are as dry as a bone'.³⁶ At Mombasa in 1890 he described the recent progress made as a result of the Imperial British East Africa Company consolidating its presence in the region. He stated the port was 'quite different to what it used to be'. (He had first visited Mombasa in 1887). Ingeniously designed, galvanized iron houses had been built, and the harbour was full of sailing liners. He also described with approval that there was now a telegraph station. With pride he naively commented, 'The Company's flag is a British Blue Ensign with a white crown and white sun in the sky. It looks pretty'.³⁷ Other officers also observed what they perceived as the benefits of imperial expansion. Such commentaries were underpinned by unquestioned belief in the superiority of European economic and cultural systems, and were frequently accompanied by total contempt for Arab culture. Walter Kingon, who had spoken so derisively about Zanzibar, arriving at Bombay at the end of his commission wrote, 'The change from Zanzibar is everywhere striking to us who have been so long debarred from civilisation'.³⁸ Kingon's view was very much representative. It summed up the sense that those cities within the western Indian Ocean region that had received the benefits of British rule had

³⁵ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, pp. 71, 75.

³⁶ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Colombo, 29 May 1889, NMM, DAN/73.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Lamu, 9 February 1890, Zanzibar, 22 February, NMM, DAN/73.

³⁸ Journal of Walter Kingon, entry dated 8 October 1877, RNM, 2008.11(1).

been raised to a standard that they would otherwise not have reached. 'Anglicisation and modernisation were considered one in the same'.³⁹ When contrasted to Bombay, the Arab city of Zanzibar appeared to naval officers to symbolise the uncivilised and backwards nature of Islamic culture.

Oriental despotism and exoticism

Another key theme in the discourse of Islamic backwardness was the perception that all Oriental societies were ruled by despotic leaders who governed by a system of absolute and arbitrary power. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries European travellers saw the Ottoman Empire as the prototype of Oriental despotism. By the eighteenth century the idea of Oriental societies as 'despotic' was firmly engrained and carried a derogatory meaning. It was contrasted to Western systems of governance which instead had democracy, individual rights, balance and division of power, and limits to authority. Peoples living under Eastern systems were seen to live in a slavish condition, as opposed to those in the West, whose systems, imperfect as they might be, allowed its peoples relative freedom.⁴⁰ British observations of Oriental societies had a long history of commenting on Eastern rulers. Naval officers' observations of Arab culture reflected this preoccupation. The successive Sultans of Zanzibar were key figures in Britain's anti-slavery negotiations in the region. In the 1870s, the British consul in Zanzibar, Sir John Kirk, was in daily negotiations with Sultan Barghash (who ruled between 1870 and 1888) over slave trade issues. It was well-known in Britain that the Sultan derived much of his wealth and power from the slave trade. The 1871 Select Committee estimated the Sultan earned between £5,000 and £20,000 annually in revenue from the slave-trade.⁴¹ Furthermore

³⁹ Robinson-Dunn, *The harem, slavery*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, pp. 4-5, 67.

⁴¹ *PP (1871)*, p. xvii; Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 82.

clove production, the mainstay of Zanzibar's coastal economy, was based on slave labour. Without the anti-slavery campaign, the respective Sultans of Zanzibar would probably have remained relatively unknown to the British public. As it was, coverage of the anti-slavery campaign frequently revolved around Britain's diplomatic negotiations with the Sultan. His dominions were described as 'the head-quarters of the slave trade', and estimates of his annual revenue were quoted publicly.⁴²

⁴² *John Bull*, 15 January 1876, p. 38.

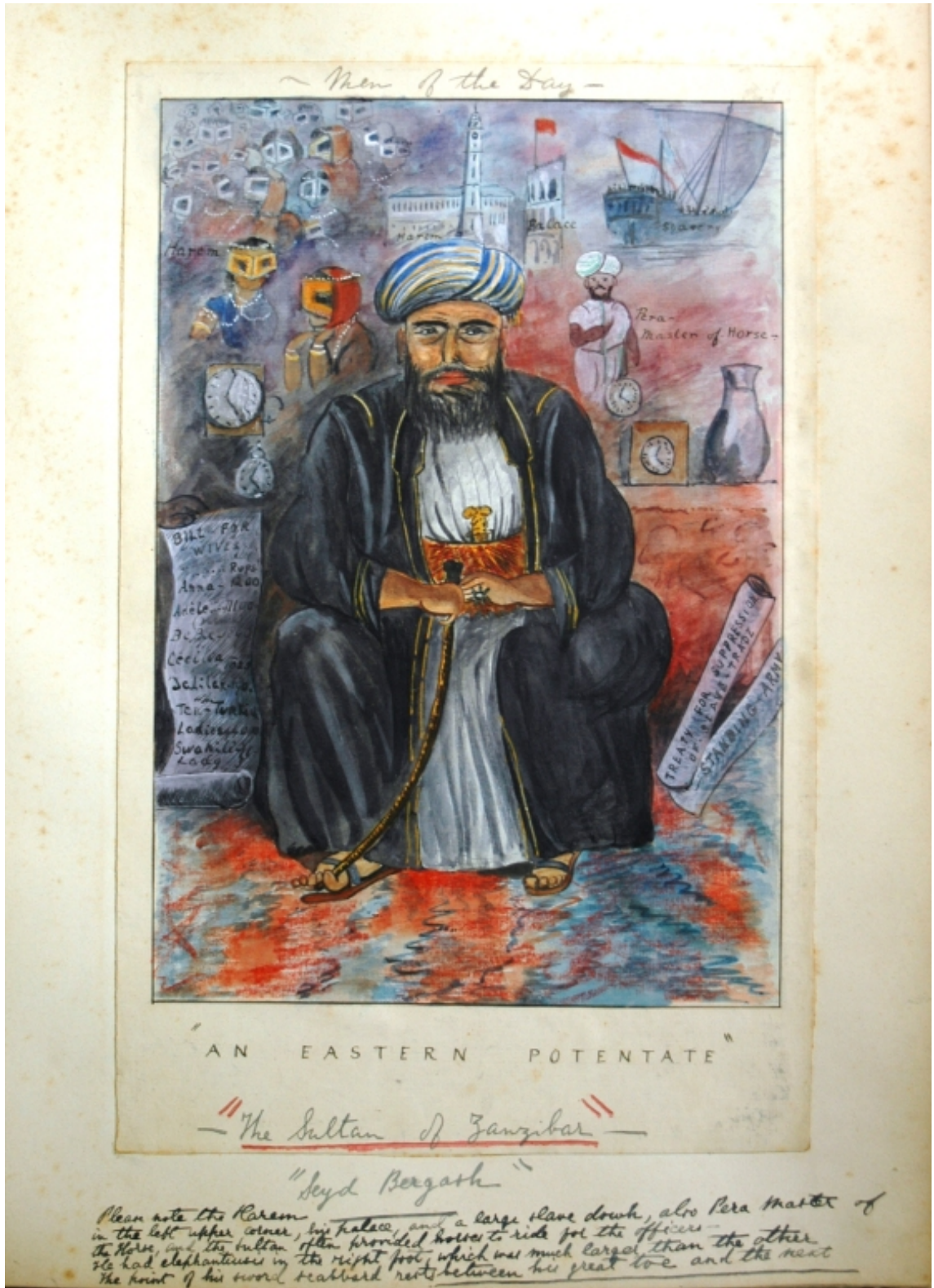


Fig. 4.1: 'An Eastern Potentate – The Sultan of Zanzibar, Seyd Bargash', Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien.⁴³

⁴³ NMM, SMD/6.



Fig. 4.2: 'The Sultan of Zanzibar, now under British Protection', *ILN*, 15 November 1890, p. 615.



Fig. 4.3: 'Said Bargash, Sultan of Zanzibar', illustration from J. W. Buel's *Heroes of the Dark Continent* (1890).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ NMM, ZBA2771.

A caricature produced by Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien of the Sultan of Zanzibar provides a fascinating visual representation of 'exotic otherness' as seen through the eyes of this particular naval officer (fig. 4.1). In his discussion of Orientalism in art, John MacKenzie states that 'caricatural depiction is direct, crude and filled with certainties'.⁴⁵ Smith-Dorrien's image clearly fits this description. Entitled 'An Eastern Potentate', the caricature incorporated the full range of Oriental stereotypes including despotism, slavery and eroticism. It clearly reflected the pervasive image of the Orient which existed in the British popular imagination during the nineteenth century. During this period the Orient was 'reduced to a literary cliché'.⁴⁶ Western travellers to the East were heavily influenced by popular depictions of the Orient in literature and art, to the point that the boundaries between 'observed and imagined reality' became ever more blurred. By the 1880s a series of stock Oriental motifs existed, which when invoked immediately located the viewer or reader in the East.⁴⁷

Smith-Dorrien's caricature invoked the full gambit of Eastern motifs. It reflected the popularity of romanticised images of the supposed typical Oriental despot and also speaks of the fascination with Oriental dress and objects.⁴⁸ As figures 4.2 and 4.3 show, the caricature was derivative of other images of the respective Sultans of Zanzibar (and indeed other Eastern rulers). Oriental societies were often characterised and criticised by British commentators for their treatment of women. Polygamy, harems, and the enslavement and seclusion of women were some of the most frequently invoked subjects given as evidence of the irretrievable otherness and backwardness of Islamic society.⁴⁹ Writing in 1870, one naval officer stated ironically: 'the number of ladies in his [the Arab's]

⁴⁵ MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, p. xvii.

⁴⁶ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ De Groot, 'The Construction of Language', pp. 101, 110.

⁴⁸ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 122.

⁴⁹ De Groot, 'The Construction of Language', p. 104.

harem is the criterion of his rank, just as the number of horses or hounds may be of a “fine old English gentleman,” he takes care to possess himself of as many as he can decently maintain’.⁵⁰ The claim that the Orient was an erotic space in which Islamic men were preoccupied with sexual gratification and treated women like animals was a widely-held perception, and one which helped to reinforce an opposite view of the civilised treatment of women by Western men.⁵¹ The demand for female slaves was frequently singled out as a marker of the ‘Oriental’ nature of the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean. We might again refer to Captain Malcolm’s statement in 1882 that ‘as long as there are harems’, eunuchs and polygamy, the slave trade would endure.⁵² These themes were encapsulated by Smith-Dorrien through the symbols of the veiled women of the harem in the top left corner, and the Sultan’s ‘Bill for Wives’ to his left. In this male-centred world, the themes of possession and domination were clearly emphasised in the caricature through both the Sultan’s imposing presence and through the phallic shape of the dagger beneath his sash. The same symbol of masculinity was employed by Frederick Lewis in his famous Oriental painting *The Hhareem* (1849). In this the bearded, turbaned owner is portrayed seated amongst his harem, his dominance and masculinity emphasised by the large dagger at his waist.⁵³

The fully laden slave dhow flying the red Arabic flag in the top right of the caricature appears to call into question the Sultan’s observation of the ‘Treaty for Suppression of Slave Trade’ located to his right hand side. The other scroll entitled ‘Standing Army’ was a further comment on despotism. The power of the Oriental ruler was maintained by the standing army (often comprising of slaves), who were not loyal to the state, but to the ruler himself. Again the Janissaries of the Ottoman Sultan’s standing

⁵⁰ Anonymous, ‘The slave trade as it now is’, p. 84.

⁵¹ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 128.

⁵² See footnote 11 of this chapter, TNA, ADM 1/6622.

⁵³ De Groot, ‘The Construction of Language’, p. 115.

army were seen to be the archetypal example of this.⁵⁴ Smith-Dorrien detailed the richness and opulence of the clothing of both the women of the harem, and the Sultan. In his 1873 account, Captain Philip Colomb confirmed to his reader the superior nature of Arab dress. He wrote, 'Picturesque as the long sweeping robes and lightly twisted turban appear in a picture, they are still more so in real life, and even in this apparently small matter the gentlemanliness of the race come out'.⁵⁵ The use of deep reds and blues in this image further emphasised the sense of exoticness that characterised Orientalist paintings during this period. As a humorous naval commentary on the Sultan – and of Oriental culture in general – this image moulded all the familiar visual tropes of Orientalism. As Rana Kabbani notes, 'The Orientalist painters depicted an opulent East from imported trinkets which served as props . . . They recreated in their studios the cave of Ali Baba they had read about as children'.⁵⁶ Also fitting this description was Smith-Dorrien's depiction of Arab chiefs meeting on board HMS *Condor* (fig. 4.4). The image depicted a midnight palava of Osman Digna's rebel chiefs during the battle of Tamai in 1884. The rebels are plotting to turn their leader over to British forces. The Eastern 'props' that Kabbani describes are a central element of this image. The typically 'Eastern' colours are especially rich and the stars glitter like Oriental jewels. The sense that the viewer was provided with a secret window on to an intimate Oriental scene, another common motif of Orientalist art, was clearly invoked here. Like Smith-Dorrien's 'Eastern Potentate', the sense of the exotic otherness of the Eastern world, the 'myth of the Orient', was in every sense captured.

⁵⁴ Marshall and Williams, *The great map*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 179.

⁵⁶ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 123.



Fig. 4.4: 'A midnight palava with rebel chiefs from Tamai on board HMS Condor', Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien.⁵⁷



Fig. 4.5: 'A reception at the Sultan's Palace', *ILN*, 9 March 1889, p. 307.

⁵⁷ NMM, SMD/6.

The officers of the naval squadron were frequently entertained by the Sultan of Zanzibar. He laid on sumptuous banquets and provided horses so the officers might make excursions to his palaces, or go on hunting jaunts and picnics.⁵⁸ These occasions featured prominently in the records of naval officers. On the one hand they clearly offered great relief from the monotony of endlessly patrolling for slave dhows. But on the other hand they also made an obvious impression on the officers, who were both simultaneously impressed and intrigued by these occasions. Again their accounts relied on all the established Oriental tropes that typified romantic British travel writing of the period. The opulent interiors of the Sultan's court were described in detail, as were the clothes worn by the Sultan and his courtiers. The Sultan's domestic arrangements were commented upon. Tristan Dannreuther told his mother, evidently in response to her question: 'I don't know how many wives he has got as I have never seen them together'.⁵⁹ The rituals surrounding these events and the exotic nature of the food was romantically described. Lieutenant George King-Hall recorded such an example: 'The steps of the Palace were manned by guards and Arab Sheiks, and the stairs also. At the top the Admiral introduced us to His Highness and then we all went and sat down. Englishmen on the left in one long row and Arab Sheiks on the right, about 30. Coffee went round in dainty gold cups, then iced sherbet, which you just tasted, and finally Attar of Roses, a most powerful essence, which the Chamberlain saturated your handkerchief with'.⁶⁰ Naval chaplain Charles Todd described that in the Sultan's palace 'every room had magnificent Turkey carpets, mirrors cover the walls and all sorts of handsome weapons are hung up'. The decadence of the Sultan's receptions captivated Todd as well. Writing to his mother he described: 'The whole scene was very picturesque. The Arabs with their flowing robes splendid sashes and bright

⁵⁸ Many such episodes were described in the letters of Tristan Dannreuther, NMM, DAN/73.

⁵⁹ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 20 August 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

⁶⁰ King-Hall, on board HMS *Euryalus*, entry dated 5 September 1885, RNM 1995.150/1-2.

coloured turbans Hindoos in white and Banyans in bright colours Parsees and negroes mingling with the naval uniforms'. He detailed each stage of the proceedings, describing also the 'goblet[s] of sherbet flavoured with rose . . . followed by coffee in little gold cups with precious stones the spoons were also of gold'.⁶¹ One such reception was depicted in the *ILN* in 1889 (fig. 4.5). Naval officers eagerly consumed, both literally and metaphorically, the exotic goods on offer. They described them in terms that invoked the popular imagined Orient. They related their observations in ways which confirmed what their letter readers would have imagined a Sultan's palace to look like, and in this way relied on the pervasive stereotypes of the Orient to make the unfamiliar familiar.

The Sultan's receptions were also well received by officers because of their exclusivity, and the fact that they served to reinforce important class distinctions. Crucially only the officers attended such events, and similarly only highest-class citizens of the Zanzibar population were present as guests. Writing in his diary after one such reception, Lieutenant King-Hall wrote: 'The Sultan is a regular Eastern despot, but is certainly more enlightened than most Eastern monarchs'. As a strict non-conformist and teetotaler, King-Hall found the receptions in the Sultan's palace offered respite from the 'uncivilised' behaviour, particularly drunkenness, which he struggled with on board ship. King-Hall found more refined characteristics in the 'native Princes and Parsees' than the lower-class Europeans.⁶² To temperance advocates like King-Hall, alcohol abstention was one of the redeeming aspects of the Islamic faith. David Livingstone and Bartle Frere both argued that Islam had brought some elements of progress to Africa. Frere believed Islam tended 'to raise its converts in the social as well as moral scale'.⁶³ The CMS however, eager to undermine Islamic successes in gaining African converts, claimed that Arab missionaries did not even uphold the basic tenets of Islam. An article printed in the *Church Missionary*

⁶¹ Charles Todd to Mrs Todd, Seychelles, 11 September 1881, London Guildhall Library Archives (hereafter LGL), MS.17845.

⁶² King-Hall, on board HMS *Euryalus*, entries dated 5, 12, 14 September 1885, RNM, 1995.150/1-2.

⁶³ Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 17.

Intelligencier (CMI) in 1887 claimed that Islamic regions of Africa were rife with drunkenness, sexual proclivity and general immorality. The society argued that the Arab slave trade and Islamic missionary activity could not righteously co-exist within Africa.⁶⁴

Another element of Islamic doctrine which appeared backward and opposed to Protestant ideals was the idea of fatalism. As Robin Hallett writes, Islamic fatalism was ‘an attitude of mind that was deeply antipathetic to the ebullient, all-conquering individualists of the West’.⁶⁵ A discourse emerged amongst fervently Protestant anti-slavery writers likening Islam to Catholicism. The CMS argued that both the Oriental and the Graeco-Roman worlds were paralleled, as both had been built on slavery.⁶⁶ An interesting example of this argument can be seen in a diatribe given by naval officer Phillip Colomb in his 1873 account. Colomb came from a militantly Protestant background. He had familial links to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. His grandfather, Abraham Bradley-King was first baronet of Corrad in County Fermanagh, twice lord mayor of Dublin (1812-13, 1820-1) and grand master of the Orange Order – he had been strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation.⁶⁷ Colomb’s account was published two years after the Anglican population of Ireland had been dealt the brutal blow of the disestablishment of the state-supported Church of Ireland by Gladstone’s government. Colomb’s hostile attitude was a reflection of the fear of the loss of a Protestant identity in Ulster as a result of disestablishment. At a more general level, the officer’s condemnation of Islamic culture was representative of the more conservative-minded attitude outraged by the Liberal government’s response to the question of Irish Home Rule.⁶⁸ In describing the Arab character, Colomb, who generally used extreme caricature to represent foreign others, focused on the common Arabic expression of ‘Inshallah’, (which he translated as ‘Please God’). He argued the attitude behind this term

⁶⁴ *Church Missionary Intelligencier*, (hereafter CMI), November 1887, pp. 649-66.

⁶⁵ Hallett, ‘Changing European attitudes’, p. 484.

⁶⁶ CMI, November 1887, pp. 649-66.

⁶⁷ Laughton, ‘Colomb, Philip Howard’, ODNB.

⁶⁸ David Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the decline of the Empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 80-90.

'in the mouth of a true Arab, is human passiveness under Divine action'. He went on: 'The prevailing tenet of the Arab, as I saw him – apart from dogmatic formula – is certainly a childlike faith in the unlimited goodness of God'. From this critique of Islam he made a sweeping link to the Irish-Catholic population, whose 'weakness' and 'poverty' were also he claimed the result of being governed by divine fatalism. Colomb stated: 'It soothes the weakness of the Arab, and the Irishman, to make indolence a virtue: and it is easier to square our religion to our life than to square our life to our religion'. The co-existence of the 'man' and 'his religion' were viewed as evidence of the 'semi-civilised' state of both races. Justifying his argument on the grounds of biological attributes, he described the Arab as 'a small-boned lightly knit creature', and wrote that the Irish peasant 'rarely has that solid burly look which belongs to his English prototype'. 'It is inevitable that both races should be indolent', he stated.⁶⁹ This tirade demonstrates the way in which specific, local domestic antagonisms in Britain were carried over into the context of empire, and how such fears were intensified by the mood of racial arrogance which dominated the period.

A piratical and lawless trade

The slave trade was also seen as evidence of the inherently violent and lawless aspects of the Arab character. Slave traders were viewed as the lowest class of Arab citizen. In response to a question by the 1871 Select Committee if dhow captains were 'superior men', Colomb stated 'No, quite the reverse; in the small dhows they are the ordinary low class Arab'.⁷⁰ The positive characteristics that naval officers could appreciate in high-class Arabs were not seen to exist in all Arabs. One of the most ubiquitous representations of the anti-slavery campaign, which appeared frequently in the popular illustrated newspapers in Britain, was the image of piratical-looking Arab slave traders on

⁶⁹ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 168-72.

⁷⁰ *PP 1871 (420)*, p. 83.

board dhows. Arab dhow crews were invariably depicted carrying out acts of extreme violence, be that attacking a British anti-slavery patrol vessel, throwing African slaves overboard in order to escape seizure by the navy, or even murdering their own crew members (see figs. 4.6-4.8). In his published account of the anti-slavery patrols, William Cope Devereux referred to a case in which an Arab crew, under chase by a naval cruiser, cut the throats of 240 slaves and threw them overboard in order to save the dhow, whose value outweighed that of the slaves.⁷¹ One anonymous officer of HMS *Vulture* described in a newspaper article a case of an Arab crew who upon discovering small pox amongst its slave cargo threw up to forty infected individuals overboard.⁷² But the cruelty practised by Arabs, and the nature of the slave trade carried on board dhows, was not seen to be the result of any organised or specialised crime (in contrast, for example, to the transatlantic slave trade). Instead it was represented as a kind of haphazard game of chance. Dhows were not designed for the purposes of slave trading but were ‘crazy old’ vessels, in which slaves and crew were seen to live in equally poor conditions.⁷³ Devereux stated that dhow crews ‘take whatever turn up first, slaves or merchandize’.⁷⁴ Colomb drew explicit attention to the same point. Contrasting the Atlantic and Arab slave trades, he argued that Arabs lacked the ‘forethought’ to specialise in a slave trade. He wrote, ‘If the slaves transported across the Atlantic suffered horrors, they were deliberately inflicted on him by the avarice and cruelty of the European or American trader. If the slave crossing the Indian Ocean suffers, it is from his master’s want of forethought, and his master may suffer with him’.⁷⁵

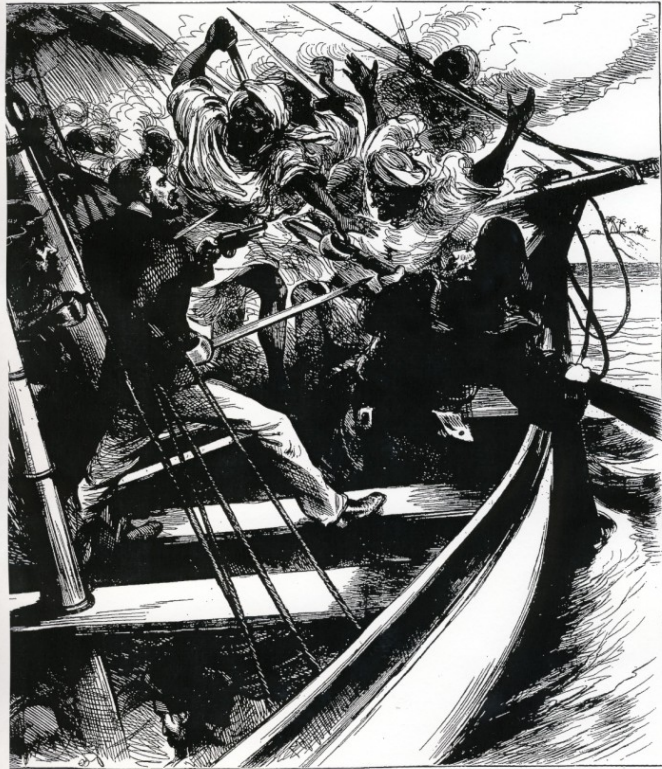
⁷¹ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 71.

⁷² Anonymous newspaper article, probably written by Lieutenant Cecil Molyneux Gilbert Cooper of HMS *Vulture*, dating to between 1872 and 74, NMM, BGY/G/5.

⁷³ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 41, 70.

⁷⁴ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 43.



COMMANDER FEGEN'S HEROIC CAPTURE OF A SLAVE DHOW OFF ZANZIBAR.

Fig. 4.6: 'British bluejackets after slaves: Commander Fegen's Heroic Capture of a slave dhow off Zanzibar', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 10 December 1887, p. 377.



ARAB SLAVE-TRADERS THROWING SLAVES OVERBOARD TO AVOID CAPTURE.
FROM A SKETCH BY J. BELL.

Fig. 4.7: 'Arab slave traders throwing slaves overboard to avoid capture', *ILN*, 4 May 1889, p. 570.

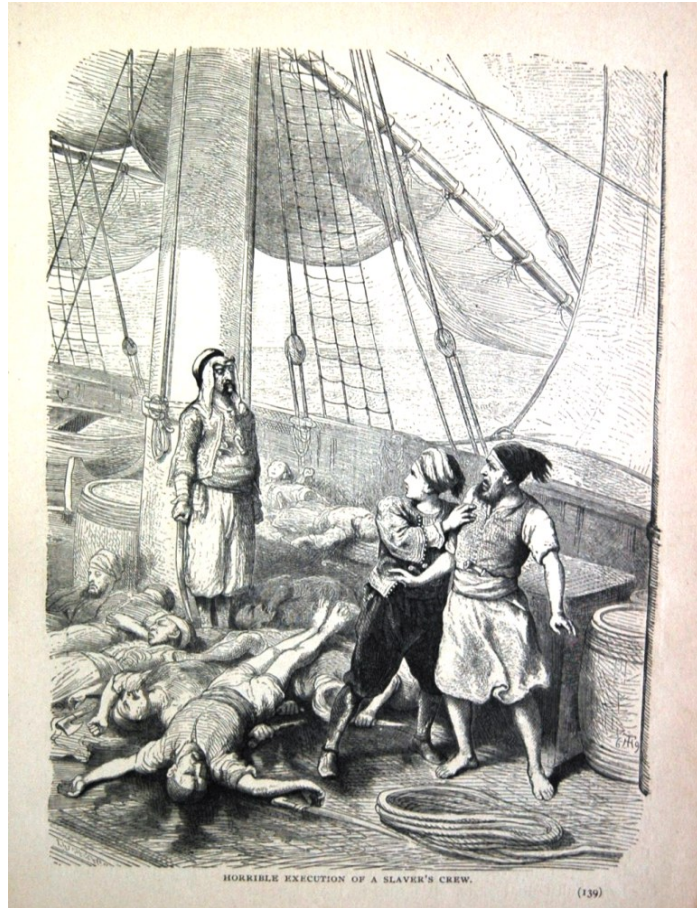


Fig. 4.8: 'Horrible execution of a slaver's crew', illustration from J. W. Buel, *Heroes of the Dark Continent* (1890).⁷⁶

The idea that the Arab slave trade was indiscriminate and haphazard was a reflection of the wider perception of the Indian Ocean as a space characterised by lawlessness. One of the most enduring representations that had dominated European accounts of the region from at least the sixteenth century was piracy. As previously discussed, the campaign against the Arab slave trade was not the first time that Britain had come into contact with Islamic forces. One of the most prominent narratives linking Islam to piracy was the Barbary corsairs. European representations usually depicted the corsairs as cruel and fanatical Muslims.⁷⁷ Barbary corsairing provoked a particular imperial anxiety different to that caused by the privateers employed by Britain's other European enemies.

⁷⁶ NMM, ZBA2774.

⁷⁷ Angus Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), p. 78.

Unlike the economic threat of the latter, the taking of slaves by Barbary corsairs was deemed to be 'the negation of what England and ultimately Britain and its empire were traditionally about': that 'Britons would never be slaves'. Furthermore they invoked the particular fear of bringing Britain into sharp confrontation with Islam.⁷⁸ Given the significance of corsairing in the imperial narrative, it is surprising that the archives consulted have not revealed any appropriation of representations of Barbary in the context of the anti-slavery patrols.

In the early-nineteenth century Britain's shipping in the Indian Ocean was subject to sustained threat as a result of Quwasim pirates operating in the Persian Gulf region. The Quwasim was a confederation of tribes whose main port was Ra's al-Khayma, located to the north of Muscat in the region of the Trucial Coast (now part of the United Arab Emirates). In the early-nineteenth century the group was rival to Oman (with whom Britain's alliance was strengthening), and their attacks were proving a serious threat to British shipping in and out of India. The British claimed the Quwasim was hindering Gulf trade. Ships of the East Indies Squadron and the Bombay Marine were deployed as part of an anti-piracy campaign against the Quwasim. This turbulent region was known in Britain as 'the Pirate Coast', and was described as being inhabited by 'piratical tribes'.⁷⁹ In 1892, George Curzon, later Viceroy of India, described the situation in the early century as anarchical. He wrote: 'Arab corsairs desolated its shores and swept its water with piratical flotillas; slave-hunting flourished; and security either of trade or dominion there was none'.⁸⁰ In 1820 a general treaty was signed between Britain and the Arab groups of the Persian Gulf. The primary emphasis was on banning piracy and piratical wars; it also made clear the association between slave-trading and piracy, stating, 'the carrying of slaves . . . is

⁷⁸ Colley, *Captives*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, pp. 198-9.

⁸⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 199.

plunder and piracy: and the friendly Arab shall do nothing of this nature'.⁸¹ However, as previously discussed, a sustained policy of slave-trade suppression was not actively pursued by the Bombay Marine. The main interest was the safeguarding of trade and the greater preservation of maritime peace. After the defeat of the Quwasim pirates in 1819, British interests in the Gulf remained dominant for the rest of the century.⁸²

Tropes of Indian Ocean piracy and lawlessness were easily incorporated into the rhetoric of naval slave-trade suppression and existed in both official and unofficial writings.⁸³ The association between piracy and slave-trading was a thread that can be traced back to the transatlantic suppression campaign. The seizure of infamous 'piratical slave ships' by the Royal Navy formed the focus of many popular accounts and depictions of transatlantic suppression. The idea of Arab slave traders acting outside international law was summed up by Colomb when he stated that the instructions supplied to Royal Naval officers for boarding slave vessels in the Indian Ocean were worthless. Colomb described that the instructions, which were initially based on the transatlantic campaign, related to 'the boarding and examination of large ships – ships which may belong to powerful European states, able and ready to resent interference – and are hardly at all applicable to the crazy old Arab dhow often guiltless of name, paper, books or flag'.⁸⁴ The concept of legality framed the debate surrounding one of the principal obstructions to naval suppression: the use of the French flag by Arab slave traders. Following the official outlawing of the Zanzibar slave trade by the 1873 Frere Treaty, the use of the French flag by Arab slave traders to avoid search dramatically increased. Continually wary of French movements in the western Indian Ocean region, British policy dictated a diplomatic approach when dealing with issues surrounding French involvement in the slave trade. If a suspected slave vessel was flying the French flag, officers were permitted to board to verify

⁸¹ Graham, *Great Britain in The Indian Ocean*, ch. 6.

⁸² Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 199.

⁸³ Blyth, 'Britain, the Royal Navy and the Suppression of the Slave Trades', p. 82.

⁸⁴ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 70.

nationality only, and any enquiry or search beyond that was not permitted.⁸⁵ In relation to this issue the French claimed, using resonantly modern rhetoric, that they were 'neutral' to Britain's 'war with the slave traders'. The French consul in Zanzibar argued that if Arabs were to abuse the French flag by taking on board slaves, this was not the fault of the French, but a product of the Arab 'innate propensity to slave trading'.⁸⁶ The same racial rhetoric, of slavery as an inherent element of Islamic culture, was therefore used as a way of disclaiming any moral or legal responsibility on the part of the French.

Since the beginning of the rule of Sultan Majid (1856-1870), the Royal Navy had come to the annual assistance of Zanzibar to provide protection against the seasonal monsoon influx of traders travelling from Arabia.⁸⁷ The export of slaves out of Zanzibar to Arabia was seen to be exclusively the work of 'Northern Arabs'. Lieutenant Devereux stated, 'these northern dhows ply between Muscat, Persian Gulf and Zanzibar. They are the acknowledged pirates of the coast'.⁸⁸ Speaking before the 1871 Select Committee, Rear Admiral Charles Hillyar described the Northern Arabs as 'a very wild, lawless race'.⁸⁹ To the same committee Sir Bartle Frere explicitly linked the northern slave traders to the early-nineteenth-century pirates of the Persian Gulf. He stated: 'There can be no doubt that a great many of the people, and the vessels, and the firms who are now engaged in slaving, are the sons and grandsons of those who used to devote themselves to piracy. I have no doubt, if the slave trade was stopped, you would find these same people devote themselves with equal energy to what we should call legitimate commerce'.⁹⁰ Certainly it was true that the slave-trade had long been carried out by northern Arab monsoon traders who came from the Persian Gulf and Arabia.

⁸⁵ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 133.

⁸⁶ Commodore Heath to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Trincomalee, 20 May 1870, 'Report on discussion of the slave trade with Commodore Gisholme', TNA, FO 84/1328.

⁸⁷ Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, (New York: New Amsterdam, 1987), p. 204.

⁸⁸ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 71.

⁸⁹ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 79. Hillyar was Commander in Chief of the East Indies station between 1866 and 1867.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

The link between slave trading and piracy was an important element of British anti-slavery rhetoric. As Michael Pearson discusses, to define an individual or group as ‘pirates’ is an entirely subjective idea – it depends on the standpoint of those doing the labelling. The Quwasim was an example of a maritime competitor who were stigmatised as ‘pirates’ and thus became the ‘legitimate’ object of attack by the navy.⁹¹ The idea of ‘piratical’ slave traders was one of a number of rhetorical devices used by the British to justify the anti-slavery patrols. Pearson’s statement that ‘one person’s pirate is another’s legitimate trader, or even “freedom fighter”’, is particularly pertinent to a discussion in the following chapter, when we will see that Arab traders saw the navy’s practice of destroying supposedly ‘illegal’ slave dhows as piracy.⁹²

Chapter 3 highlighted that slave market scenes were a frequent representation of the East African slave trade. From the moment Europeans began to take interest in Zanzibar, the slave-market became the focus of anti-slavery condemnation. One of the earliest known photographs of the East African slave trade, taken in 1860 by Lt. Col. James Augustus Grant, was of the Zanzibar slave market.⁹³ Colomb told his readers that ‘the chief object of attraction to every Englishman in first reaching Zanzibar is undoubtedly the slave market’.⁹⁴ Alongside harems, slave-market scenes were one of the prevailing themes of Orientalist paintings. In fact, some of the most famous paintings of the genre depicted slave-markets. Edwin Long’s ‘The Babylonian Slave Market’ sold for a record price when it was exhibited for sale in London in 1875.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 126.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 127. See chapter 5 of this thesis, pp. 171-2.

⁹³ Stereoscopic view of the slave market, Zanzibar, 1860, Lt. Col. James Augustus Grant, NMM, ZBA2602.

⁹⁴ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 390.

⁹⁵ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 130.

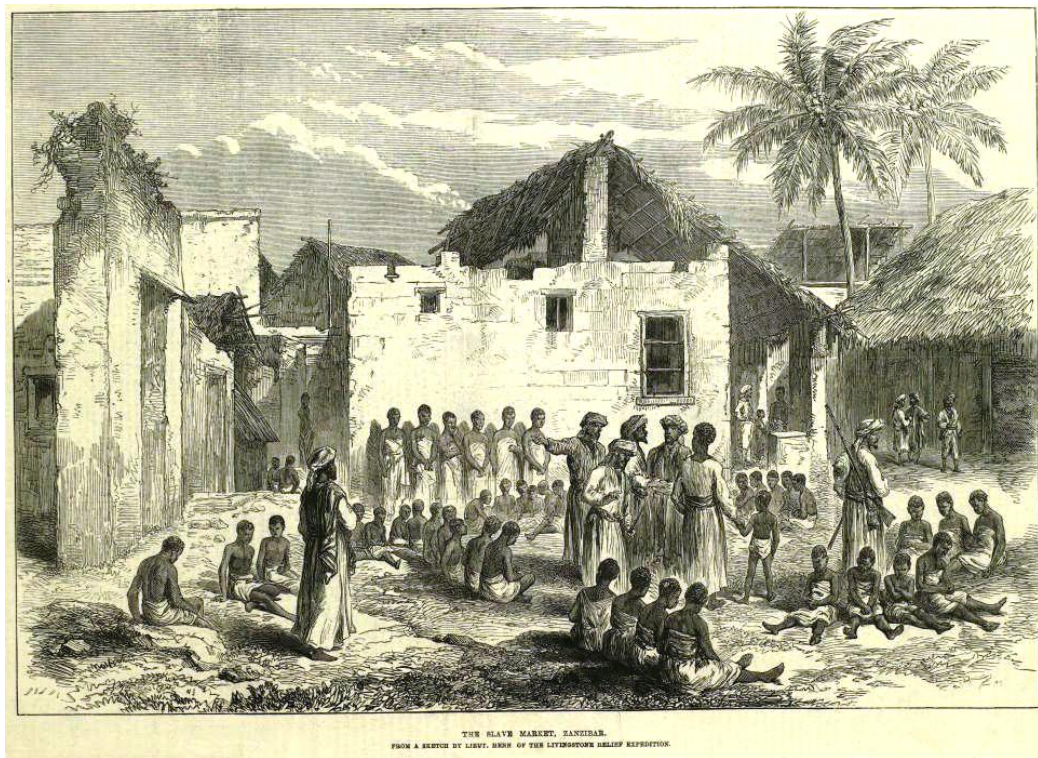


Fig. 4.9: 'The slave market, Zanzibar', *ILN*, 8 June 1872, p. 561.

Naval officers stationed in Zanzibar clearly appropriated this narrative. For them the Zanzibar slave market became a symbol of the Orient: it represented all that was archetypal and sordid about the Arab male character. In numerous accounts, the slave market was appropriated as a theatrical backdrop on which the caricatured Arab took centre stage. Lieutenant Devereux provides an apt example: 'This is a square piece of ground set apart for this inhuman traffic. We are just in time. The place is crowded; Arabs high, Arabs low, well dressed and badly dressed, armed to the teeth and unarmed, sauntering to and fro, as if enjoying a national pastime; a kind of fair, in which are displayed the most costly dresses and arms'.⁹⁶ It was in the slave market that naval observers were most able to confirm the villainy of Arab men as seen through their barbaric treatment of

⁹⁶ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 103.

women. As discussed in chapter 3, naval accounts of the Zanzibar slave market concentrated on describing the sales of women and children. Captain George Sullivan described in his 1873 account how Arab traders would examine and value enslaved women and children 'just as farmers examine and value cattle at an English fare or market'.⁹⁷ These representations were powerful propaganda for the anti-slavery campaign. Figure 4.9 shows an engraving of the Zanzibar slave market which was featured in the *ILN* in 1872. The accompanying text stated:

Zanzibar now possesses the only open slave market now existing in the world . . . The English stranger is looked upon here with anything but favour by these gentlemen, especially if his aspect is at all nautical . . . Apart from the other slaves, and standing up, are to be seen the choice female specimens. It is a revolting sight to watch the lascivious Arab wishing to add stock to his harem, handling and examining the objects of his purchase before closing a bargain.⁹⁸

The image was sketched after a hurricane which resulted in large scale destruction of the island. But the dilapidated state of the buildings surrounding the slave market helped to enhance the sense that this was a place from the past. It is even more symbolic therefore that one of the most enduring representations of the ostensible success of the anti-slavery campaign came with the building of Christchurch Cathedral by the UMCA on the site of the Zanzibar slave market. A contemporary illustration of the cathedral was accompanied by the following comment: 'Christchurch Cathedral on the site of the slave market, the high altar is in the spot where the whipping post stood'.⁹⁹ This building symbolised above all

⁹⁷ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 252.

⁹⁸ *ILN*, 8 June 1872, p. 561.

⁹⁹ 'The "slave-market" church at Mkunazini', NMM, ZBA2686.

other representations the apparent zenith of anti-slavery and Christian triumph over the archaic institutions allied to Islam.¹⁰⁰

One of the glaring paradoxes of British reactions to the Arab slave trade was that domestic slavery within the Islamic world was seen as benign. Accounts overwhelmingly focused on the horrors of the slave trade, but argued that once arrived in the Middle East, Islamic slavery was an essentially harmless practice. Henry Churchill, consul in Zanzibar between 1865 and 1871, told the 1871 Select Committee that slaves 'are very kindly treated, except on the transit between the coast of Africa and the coast of Arabia'.¹⁰¹ Despite the moral outrage at the Oriental customs that were seen to stimulate slavery, slaves were viewed as part of the extended Arab family, where they were seen to be generally well cared for. The tendency to use Atlantic slavery as the only model for comparison led contemporaries to minimise and misunderstand the nature of Middle Eastern slavery. Travelling to Arabia in 1886, the Austrian traveller Ludvig Stross for example remarked 'The condition of Slavery in the Orient have nothing in common with those which arose earlier in North America and Brazil. The slave is, for the Mohammedan, a member of the family and is almost without exception well treated. Mistreatments are rare and usually richly deserved'.¹⁰² Read in this light, some British observers argued that slaves benefitted from a security that even free labourers did not enjoy. Apologists for Islamic slavery were also evident amongst the naval anti-slavery crews. Colomb's published observations of slavery in Zanzibar for example incorporated many of these stereotypes: 'The owner of the town slave at least houses, feeds and clothes him; but more generally he allows him besides, all that he can make by his labour over about fourpence a day. In all cases, the Arab noble is the feudal chief of his dependents, and offers that the protection

¹⁰⁰ John McAleer, "'The slavery question in Eastern Africa": Representations of Indian Ocean slavery and its abolition in nineteenth-century Britain from the collection of the National Maritime Museum', *Journal for Maritime Research* [www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk, accessed 10 October 2008].

¹⁰¹ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 25.

¹⁰² Quoted in Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 83-4.

we understand by the term. I have been unable to discover that the free negro at Zanzibar is in any respect better off than the slave'.¹⁰³ The labour structures of the Islamic slave system were viewed as more fluid, having more in common with the (apparently less harsh) serfdom of feudal economies than the violence that characterised plantation slavery. In a review of Colomb's and Sullivan's published accounts, the CMS concurred with the officers stating that 'slavery in the East, under the Arab, does not in cruelty and abomination equal what slavery was in the West under the European and American'.¹⁰⁴ That Middle Eastern slavery included prospects for manumission, either by concubinage, by purchase by the slave or by the slave master, were other reasons given for its more benign nature.¹⁰⁵ Agricultural and plantation slaves were also seen to benefit from certain 'privileges'. Wages, potential for land ownership, and regulations regarding working conditions were rights, it was argued, that were above what many unskilled labourers in Europe might expect.¹⁰⁶ The lack of cruelty by Arab masters to their slaves was seen to be one of the main oddities of Arab slavery, a perception which led some to question whether such a relationship really constituted slavery.¹⁰⁷ That many fugitive slaves escaped to the ships of the anti-slavery squadron hoping for manumission indicates, on the contrary, their desire to challenge their enslaved status. Moreover, naval officers recorded testimonies of fugitive slaves having suffered violence at the hands of their masters, and it was this mistreatment that the enslaved gave as their reason for wanting to escape.¹⁰⁸ Scholarship produced over the last twenty years or so has demonstrated that the mechanics of the East

¹⁰³ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 374.

¹⁰⁴ *CMI*, June 1873, p. 185.

¹⁰⁵ Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, p. 8. Concubinage was a relatively common practice whereby males undertook secondary marriages with slaves, or concubines, the children of such marriages were born free.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Steere (ed.), *The East African Slave Trade, and the measures proposed for its extinction, as viewed by residents in Zanzibar. By Captain H. A. Fraser, The Right Rev. Bishop Tozer and James Christie, M.D.* (London: Harrison, 1871), pp. 39-58.

¹⁰⁷ For example Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 374.

¹⁰⁸ Testimonies of mistreatment were recorded in S.B. Miles to Granville, 12 January 1882, with attached statements from eight fugitives, quoted in Alpers and Hopper, 'Parler en son nom?', pp. 813-4.

African slave trade were far more complex than previous accounts presumed.¹⁰⁹ Although such work has importantly challenged the stereotype of the 'benign' nature of Middle Eastern slavery, it remains the case that the transatlantic model is still frequently viewed as the standard to which other forms of slavery are measured, and thus misunderstood.¹¹⁰

The deep-held hostility to Islam saw resurgence in the late-nineteenth century as a result of anti-slavery and missionary activity in East Africa. Others have elsewhere argued that Christian missionaries and evangelists played a key role in creating this discourse.¹¹¹ This chapter has shown that naval officers were also influential in contributing to this narrative. They too plied Britain with representations which condemned Islam, and highlighted the many supposedly negative aspects of Islamic religion and culture. By far the most prominent aspect of their critique was that Islam sanctioned and promoted the slave trade and slavery. But officers did not restrict their criticisms of Arab culture to slavery alone. They drew on established language codes and artistic conventions to create a version of Islamic culture which affirmed every aspect of the stereotype which existed in the British popular imagination. They confirmed popular expectations of the exotic other. They spoke of despotism, fatalism and backwardness; all of which was underpinned by dogmatic racial attitudes, and complete certainty in the imperial mission.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Edward Alpers, 'The Other Middle Passage: The African Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean' in Christopher, Pybus and Rediker (eds), *Many Middle Passages*, pp. 20-38.

¹¹⁰ See the discussion by Campbell, 'Slavery and the Trans-Indian Ocean World Slave Trade', pp. 286-7.

¹¹¹ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, pp. 112-20, Hallett, 'Changing European attitudes', pp. 483-4.

CHAPTER 5

British naval officers imagined and represented: hero, adventurer and hunter

The anti-slavery campaign combined many of the popular themes of late-Victorian culture, including imperialism, militarism, patriotism, and of course, the Royal Navy itself. John MacKenzie in particular has provided insightful work on the centrality of imperial propaganda in British popular culture during the final decades of the nineteenth century.¹ The mass market of media and mass production of popular entertainment materials supported the transmission of imperial propaganda not just within Britain, but across the empire. Importantly it was not simply the expansion of the media and other forms of popular literature which occurred, but a qualitative change took place in which a distinctly 'modern' media emerged in the form of mass-circulating, cheap papers, illustrated magazines, comics and affordable novels.² Technological developments underpinned these changes. In the Indian Ocean the development of the electric telegraph and the opening of the Suez Canal allowed information to be exchanged at a much quicker rate than was previously possible.³ News from far-flung places was suddenly more immediate. The cultural implications of these developments, which were touched upon in chapter 1, will be expanded here. This chapter will argue that naval officers were profoundly influenced by the cultural background of popular imperialism in terms of how they imagined their role on anti-slavery patrols. Whilst posted in the western Indian Ocean, they accessed and

¹ John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); *Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). See also Martin Green, *Dreams of adventure, deeds of empire* (London: Routledge, 1980). For an alternative to this argument see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

² The expansion of the media will be explored in detail in chapter 8.

³ See Alex Nalback "'The Software of Empire": Telegraphic News Agencies and Imperial Publicity, 1865-1914' in Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Imperial Co-Histories. National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), pp. 68-94.

absorbed coverage of the anti-slavery campaign as it appeared in the British media. Sometimes they even commented on this reportage in their letters back to Britain. The circular transmission of knowledge between Britain and empire and its role in shaping cultural identities is a central theme of this chapter.

It is argued that more than most imperial settings, slave-trade suppression provided a prime platform for linking to a variety of popular imperial themes and the values which they espoused. Martin Green's *Dreams of adventure, deeds of empire* emphasised how the empire penetrated deep into the British imagination, providing a romanticised framework for how Britons viewed themselves and their place in the world.⁴ The aptness of Green's title as a way of thinking about how naval officers imagined and represented themselves on the anti-slavery patrols will be highlighted. Furthermore, as Admiral William Creswell recalled in his memoirs, the anti-slavery campaign was one of the only sustained periods of active naval service during the late-nineteenth century.⁵ The campaign therefore offered one of the few opportunities where heroic status could be achieved at this time.

Naval officers working on the patrols were seen to possess all the physical and moral characteristics that were central to the culture of muscular Christianity and popular militarism. They were represented as exemplifying attributes of patriotism, courage, enterprise, duty, leadership ability, comradeship, physical stamina, self-control, piety and morality. Integral to the last two was the inbuilt desire to extend Christian values and the rule of Western law. As outlined in chapter 2, these values had been instilled in officers from a young age. More widely, they reflected the core values of the upper-middle and middle-class sector of British society from which officers came. By its nature the navy's anti-slavery campaign was seen to be a humanitarian and Christian act. But the fact that the navy was suppressing the slave trade of a non-Christian enemy made the promotion of

⁴ Green, *Dreams of adventure*.

⁵ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 143.

Christian values all the more potent. As we will see, representations of the anti-slavery patrols typically employed a high moral tone. Also at the heart of these representations was the idea that the East African suppression campaign cemented Britain's position as world leader of the anti-slavery movement, and therefore bolstered national prestige. Seen in this light, naval officers were portrayed not only as ambassadors of empire, but as carrying out a mission of great national honour.

Another important context for this chapter was the late-nineteenth-century rise in popularity of juvenile literature and imperial adventure novels. Kathryn Castle's work has demonstrated that regions that were not part of the empire featured far less prominently in juvenile reading material of the period.⁶ Africa, on the other hand, was widely represented, and served as a prime arena for the construction of imperial narratives. The stereotype of the 'dark continent' became well established through such accounts.⁷ Encouraging the ethos of 'muscular Christianity' was again an important element of this material. Typical stories featured Britons traversing far-off lands subduing treacherous 'natives', or civilising 'heathens'. Popular themes included military exploits, missionary activity and big game hunting.⁸ The navy's anti-slavery campaign was easily assimilated into this popular genre, and as this chapter will demonstrate it was also a significant point of reference for naval officers' imaginings of themselves.

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated how representations of the anti-slavery patrols produced a number of enduring, and overwhelmingly negative, stereotypes of African and Arab peoples. However, because representations of the anti-slavery patrols relied on implying superiority of Britons over these other groups, these stereotypes can only be fully appreciated when juxtaposed against representations of Britons. What emerged from

⁶ Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through Children's Books and Magazines* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

⁷ See Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*. The 'dark continent' as a shorthand representation for Africa was propagated by Henry Morton Stanley in *Through the Dark Continent* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), which charted his famous journey across the Congo.

⁸ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 204.

representations of the anti-slavery campaign was also a standardised 'type' of British naval officer. In contrast to Africans and Arabs, of course, the archetypal Briton was highly glorified. The stereotypes of the lawless and effeminate Arab, and the dependent African, provided a platform for valorising the superiority of British naval officers. This chapter explores representations of officers which appeared in both popular culture and unofficial accounts created by officers themselves. These are purposefully explored not in separate sections, but are examined side by side in order to emphasise the overlapping and reciprocal nature of these representations in terms of how identities were shaped.

A heroic and moral campaign

At 10.00 p.m. on 15 October 1888, Myles Cooper, a twenty three year old lieutenant in command of the steam cutter of HMS *Griffon*, sighted a dhow sailing near Pemba, an island to the north of Zanzibar. Believing the dhow to be involved in the slave trade, Cooper gave the order for it to lower its sail. When the dhow gave no response, the lieutenant commanded his crew to fire a rocket at the vessel. Having deployed the rocket, but before the naval crew had time to reload their rifles, the Arab dhow returned fire. Cooper and two ratings were shot. Around fifteen minutes later the Arab crew ran their dhow aground and fled inland. Upon approaching the dhow, Cooper's suspicions were proved correct; eighty six enslaved Africans were found on board, three had been killed by gun fire. The naval crew quickly proceeded to tow the dhow back to HMS *Griffon* where the Africans were disembarked. Lieutenant Cooper had died, however, almost instantly.

Two days later, Cooper's death was commemorated with a hero's funeral, attended by all the British and foreign naval officers stationed at Zanzibar, the German and French Admirals, and the British Consul-General. *The Times* described his funeral as an 'imposing spectacle' and described his manner of death as evidence of 'gallantry and coolness on his

part'.⁹ In recompense for Cooper's death, a fine of 10,000 dollars was imposed on the Arab population of Pemba. Cooper's father, having been offered the money as compensation, asked for it to be spent on the ships of the East-Coast squadron, and hoped that a memorial to his son might also be created. The result was the 'Cooper Royal Naval Institute' at Zanzibar, which housed a recreation centre and grounds for use by British naval crews when stationed at the island.¹⁰ The British consul in Zanzibar wrote that the facility would 'serve to commemorate in a useful and suitable manner the gallant services performed by the officers and men of Her Majesty's Ships in the suppression of the slave trade on the East Coast of Africa'.¹¹

Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther, having attended Cooper's funeral took morbid relish in describing the story of the young lieutenant's heroic death to his mother in London.¹² Also present was naval chaplain Reverend John Anderson Dougherty, who presented a rousing tribute to Cooper in his 1892 published account of the anti-slavery patrols:

You, to whom this young man's memory is dear; bear in mind, he died as an Officers [sic] should, leading his men, with his face to the enemy, in the cause of humanity, in the suppression of this unholy traffic in flesh and blood. And this cause humanity is the cause of God. May we ever be found on His side! May we ever bear in mind, the day when we ourselves shall stand in the sunlight of God, a gleam with the gladness and victory of a well spent life!¹³

John MacKenzie's statement that 'the most potent hero is the dead hero' is fitting here.¹⁴

Cooper, like others who died or were severely injured on the anti-slavery patrols, were

⁹ *The Times*, 20 October 1888, p. 5.

¹⁰ Tristan Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 59.

¹¹ Colonel C. B. Euan-Smith to the Marquis of Salisbury, Zanzibar, 12 January 1889, TNA, FO 84/1975.

¹² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 14 October 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹³ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, pp. 47-8.

¹⁴ MacKenzie 'Heroic Myths of Empire', p. 112.

quickly elevated to hero status. Dougherty's description of Cooper's death, though replete with high-sounding rhetoric, reveals much about the expectations of what the ideal naval officer was meant to represent. As demonstrated in chapter 2, leadership and self-sacrificing service were an expected element of the officer's identity, and death, where it occurred in this way, became extremely useful for promoting a corporate image of the exemplar British officer. The memorialisation of Cooper in the Cooper Royal Naval Institute, not only commemorated 'the gallant services' of the anti-slavery squadron, but invited the emulation of all those who followed after.

Another similarly violent encounter had occurred one year before Cooper's death. On this occasion the crew of a pinnace from HMS *Turquoise*, having pursued a dhow on suspicion of slave-trading, was attacked by Arabs. The commander of the pinnace, Lieutenant Fegen, reportedly rushed forward in order to repel the Arabs boarding. He killed one with a gunshot, and another with his cutlass. Fegen received a deep cut on the arm. The ensuing fight was bloody, ten Arabs and one naval rating were killed, and four others sustained horrendous wounds. The dhow having got clear was immediately pursued by the naval crew. A running fight then followed in which the helmsman of the dhow was shot. The dhow being in shallow water capsized, and the four unwounded members of the crew saved fifty three enslaved Africans from the dhow (twelve had drowned). An extract of Fegen's account of the incident demonstrates that in a typically gentlemanly fashion, the lieutenant placed the actions of his crew above his own. He wrote, 'The conduct of my crew in action was most courageous and daring in spite of our inferiority of numbers, and the heavy fire poured into them. They drove the Arabs back with great gallantry'.¹⁵ Every member of the naval crew was promoted for his action.¹⁶

¹⁵ 'Copy of Lieutenant Fegen's report of the capture and engagement with a slave dhow', undated, RNM, 2007.67(4).

¹⁶ 'Dispatch from Captain Robert Woodward, Zanzibar', *London Gazette*, 11 August 1887. Though not discussed in this thesis, the prospect of promotion as a consequence of good service on the anti-slavery patrols was clearly a motivating factor for officers. See Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 143.

The British press revelled in such tales. This particular incident was reported in seventeen different newspapers between the months of June and December in 1887. Equally the range of newspapers that covered the incident – nationals, numerous regionals, sensationalist penny papers including the *Illustrated Police News* and the *Penny Illustrated Paper* reflects a wide range of middle and working class audiences.¹⁷ The reports were replete with patriotic language. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* for example carried the headline ‘Stirring Action with a Slaver: Brave British Tars’.¹⁸ The *Penny Illustrated Paper’s* article ‘Commander Fegen’s Heroism off Zanzibar’ is worth quoting at length:

We have during the past five-and-twenty years had the honour to record in the pages of *The Penny Illustrated Paper* numerous deeds of daring by our gallant Bluejackets and Redcoats. But no braver action has come under our notice than the intrepid feat which our Artist illustrates on our centre pages. This heroic action on the part of young Commander Frederick F. Fegen may well arrest attention, as a sample of what our Jack Tars even in these prosaic days can do when called upon to face the enemy of a barbarous slaver.¹⁹

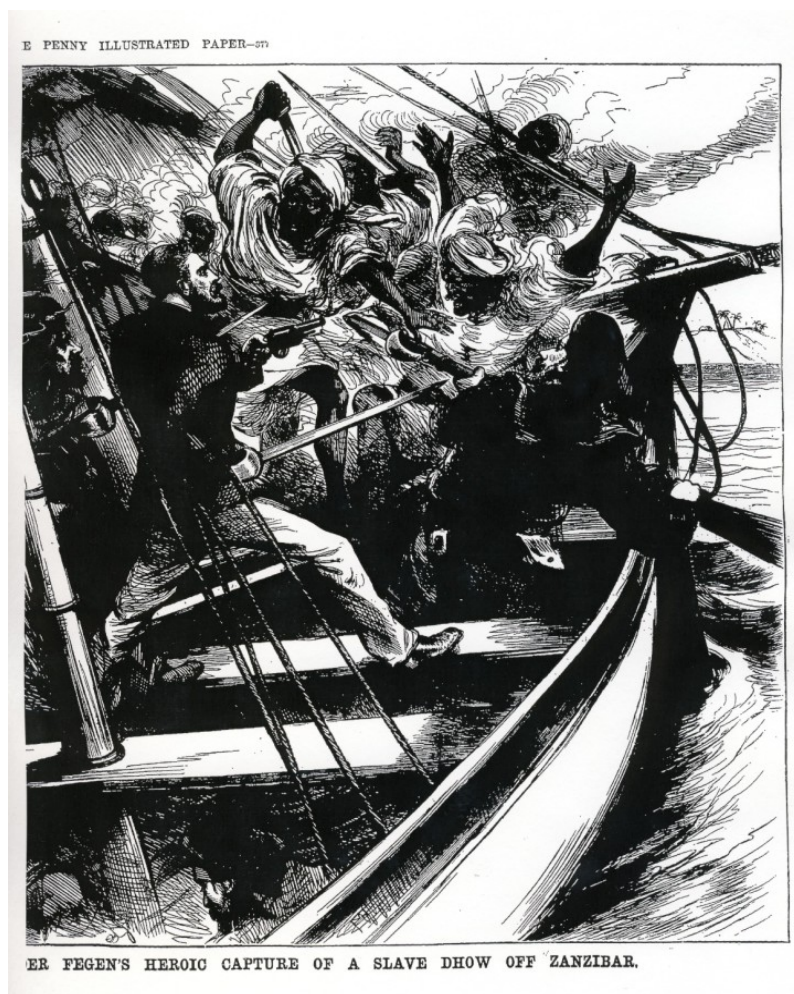
The examples of Fegen and Cooper provided prime material for sensationalist reporting of the anti-slavery patrols. Typically such representations contrasted the qualities of the ‘Brave British Tars’ against the inherently ‘barbarous’ Arab slave-traders. Stories were supported by crude engravings in which the gentlemanly British officer could be seen taking on a crowd of fierce, piratical-looking Arabs. Figure 5.1 shows the engraving which accompanied the *Penny Illustrated Paper’s* coverage, and provides a typical example of

¹⁷ Chapter 8 discusses the context and reception of these representations in greater detail.

¹⁸ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16 August 1887, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 10 December 1887, p. 374.

how suppression was portrayed amongst cheaper, more sensationalist papers.²⁰ In this image the Arab slave traders were depicted as an indistinguishable mass of frenzied attackers. Such newspapers commonly focused on portraying the supposed barriers which stood in the way of Britain's anti-slavery crusade. Attacks by Arab crews were represented as one of the greatest obstacles. Such episodes were interpreted as the determination of Arabs to violently carry on their 'ancient' slave trade. Seen in this light, the dominant theme of such representations was British endeavour in difficult and dangerous conditions. In this context it is worth again emphasising the importance of the sea as a space in which cultural contests were played out.



²⁰ This is expanded in chapter 8.

Fig. 5.1: 'British bluejackets after slaves: Commander Fegen's heroic capture of a slave dhow off Zanzibar', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 10 December 1887, p. 377.

On board ship, officers' messes were supplied with a wide range of popular newspapers. As such officers were continually exposed to the image of suppression as represented within the British media. Lieutenant Devereux made reference to reading the *ILN* whilst serving on anti-slavery patrols in 1869.²¹ Reflecting the growth in the press, twenty years later Midshipman Dannreuther recorded that the officers' mess took in numerous daily and weekly newspapers and several journals including *The Graphic*, *Admiralty and Horse Guards Gazette*, *Judy* (*London Serio-Comic Journal*), *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* and the *ILN*. The clerk of Dannreuther's ship was employed as an illustrator by both *The Graphic* and the *ILN*.²² Dannreuther regularly referred his family to these newspapers, ensuring they would not miss coverage of his ship's actions. One such article was featured on the front page of *The Graphic* on 20 October 1888 (fig. 5.2). The campaign received increased newspaper coverage around this time because of Lieutenant Copper's death described above. Developments in communication technology not only allowed officers to access a wealth of representations of the campaign, but as the example of Cooper's death and of Dannreuther's correspondence of the event demonstrate, they were able to do so as part of a rapid exchange of communications. Newsworthy episodes of the campaign were quickly reported in British newspapers, they were simultaneously accessed by officers posted in East Africa, and then commented upon in letters mailed back to Britain; the whole exchange taking place in a period of around eight weeks. The dialogue between Britain and empire was far more immediate than ever before. Over the course of the campaign as technology improved and

²¹ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 155.

²² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 24 March 1888, 1 March 1889, NMM, DAN/73. For the popularity of such journals within British popular culture, and for circulation figures, see chapter 8, pp. 260-75.

information was exchanged at a faster pace, popular culture played an increasingly important role in shaping officers' imaginings of the anti-slavery campaign.

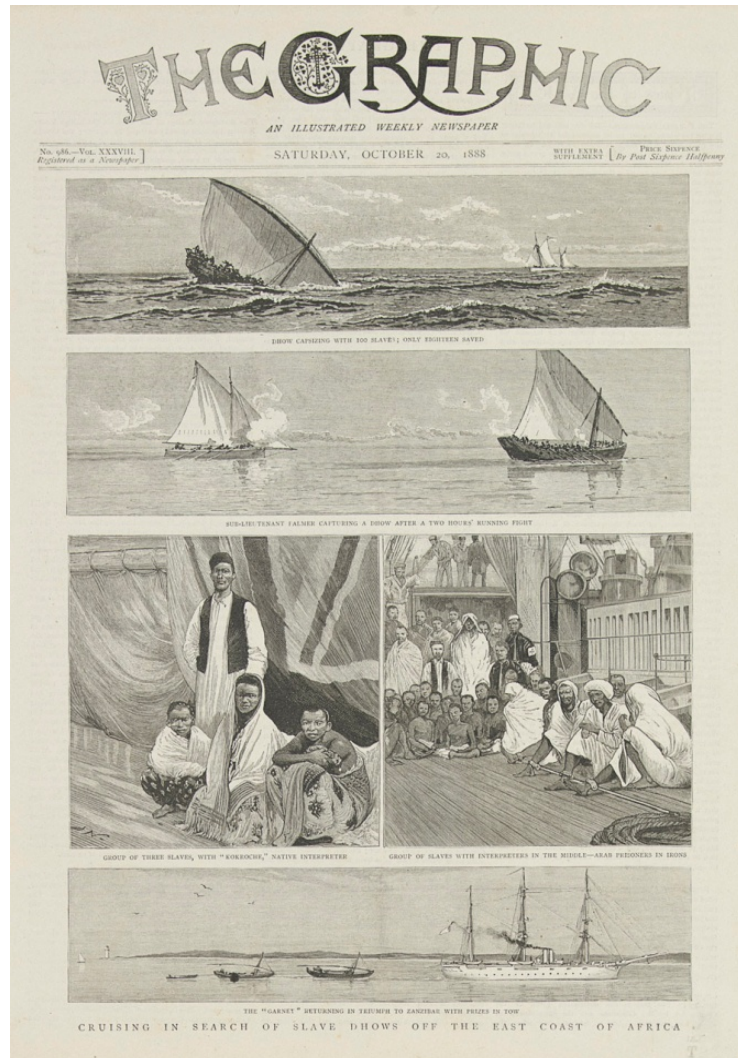


Fig. 5.2: 'Cruising in search of slave dhows off the East coast of Africa', *The Graphic*, 20 October 1888 (front cover).²³

The centrality of thinking about race and gender in representations of what Graham Dawson terms the imperial 'soldier hero' has been discussed by numerous historians.²⁴ The

²³ NMM, ZBA2590.

²⁴ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994). See also Green, *Dreams of adventure*; MacKenzie, 'Heroic Myths of Empire'; Streets, *Martial Races*.

exalted British military hero was a long-standing idea. Many military figures had and would achieve hero-status through their devotion to the nation. General James Wolfe and Admiral Horatio Nelson stand out as individuals whose myth-like status was elevated by dying during action. That a number of national heroes were Royal Naval officers was officially embraced within navalist sentiment. As W. Mark Hamilton writes of navalism, 'All the myths and realities of British sea power were marshalled in order to confront a nationalistic and imperial-minded world view'.²⁵ Young officer cadets were encouraged to emulate such heroes. An official recruiting pamphlet from 1911, though slightly beyond the period of this study, nevertheless encapsulated the values of the late-Victorian period. It stated: 'the British Navy knows the value of the fighting spirit, the dash, the nerve, the ambition, and the alertness of youth and early manhood. England has not forgotten that Nelson won Trafalgar at the age of 47, and that Wellington won Waterloo at the age of 46'.²⁶

In the late-nineteenth century the dominant discourse of British racial superiority came to influence how the idealised British military hero was imagined. As outlined in chapter 2, as a superior racial 'type' the supposed inborn characteristics of the British, which included courage, loyalty and physical strength, predisposed them to being a superior fighting force. As Heather Streets writes in her examination of martial race ideology, 'the language of race functioned . . . as an inspirational tool – an emotive device designed to demonstrate that Britons "had the right stuff" to take on their rivals and enemies'.²⁷ This thinking was, however, as much a matter of gender and class as it was race. The British military officer was represented as ideally masculine. Amongst the forced, homo-social environment of the navy (and army), officers were expected to uphold

²⁵ W. Mark Hamilton, 'The "New Navalism"' and the British Navy League, 1935-1914', *Mariner's Mirror*, 64 (1978), pp. 37-44, p. 37.

²⁶ Fremantle, E., R., *How to Become a Naval Officer*, (London: Gieve, Matthews and Seagrove Ltd., 1911), p. 68.

²⁷ Streets, *Martial Races*, p. 10.

rigorous codes of masculinity.²⁸ From the moment boys began naval officer training at the age of thirteen, they were disciplined to display masculine values appropriate to their class, and to disassociate themselves from supposedly feminine tendencies such as cowardliness and the inability to endure physical hardship.

Returning to the end of term sermon given at *Britannia* in 1879, the preacher told the cadets: 'There is, or should be, a Spartan simplicity and plainness in all your surroundings here . . . You have to learn [that] . . . to endure hardness as a good measure of discomfort is sometimes wholesome and necessary'.²⁹ These values formed part of specifically *naval* form of masculinity which was viewed as superior to that of land-based men. Such thinking was based on long-held naval tradition. By the end of the eighteenth century, naval men had a clear sense of their own 'naval' identity which they purposefully constructed to set themselves apart from 'inferior' landsmen. This identity was also projected in eighteenth-century public representations of the navy.³⁰ Writing in his 1869 publication *Words of Advice to Young Naval Officers*, Captain Inglefield wrote that the ideal officer, 'bears with patience, and even cheerfulness, peril, privation, and hardships, at which the luxurious landsman would shudder with dismay'.³¹ This was one of the defining ways naval officers imagined slave-trade suppression. The accounts written by the junior officers in command of the detached-boat patrols in particular highlight this thinking. Describing his first experience of a three-week long-open, boat patrol, Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther relayed the awkward sleeping arrangements, and how the small crew would cope in bad weather. But, he stated, 'Tisn't a bit uncomfortable unless you stick fast like old women'.³² Enduring privations was viewed as character-building. Reminiscing, William Creswell, who served on anti-slavery patrols in the late 1870s, wrote that to use ship's

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Dalton, *Sermons*, p. 179.

³⁰ Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, p. 9.

³¹ Inglefield, *Words of Advice*, p. 16.

³² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 18 July 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

boats for patrolling in open seas, 'provisioned, manned and armed; and loaded down to within less than a foot of the freeboard would be regarded as something more than a fair Lloyd's risk, but this was completely disregarded'.³³ Young officers not only expected to cope with danger and hardships, they embraced them. This was how their gendered identity had been shaped during cadet training, and this was how they continued to define their own masculine self-image.

As the example of the coverage of Lieutenant Fegen's encounter demonstrates, representations of the navy's anti-slavery campaign fitted within the wider discourse of popular militarism. However, they were also distinct from portrayals of the colonial war soldier. The anti-slavery patrols were represented as a particularly unique kind of posting, very different to normal military service. This is what Tristan Dannreuther meant when he retrospectively described his service on the patrols as 'far more exciting than many experienced in the Great War'.³⁴ As stated in chapter 2, this was not simply about national and imperial defence, but about the paternalistic protection of a supposedly weaker race. That the naval anti-slavery campaign was portrayed as a moral 'war' was vital. This gave rise to a different set of representations which as well as emphasising Britain's military strength crucially emphasised an unquestioned devotion to the principles of Christianity, humanity and universal morality. It was in this light that Reverend Dougherty's description of Lieutenant Cooper dying 'in the cause of humanity, in the suppression of this *unholy* traffic in flesh and blood' was so pertinent.³⁵ The anti-slavery patrols were represented as a humanitarian and Christian mission. This made them morally superior than imperial defence. In this way they provided prime material for representing not only Britain's military capabilities, but also the nation's moral virtues.

³³ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 145.

³⁴ Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 45.

³⁵ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, pp. 47-8, my emphasis.

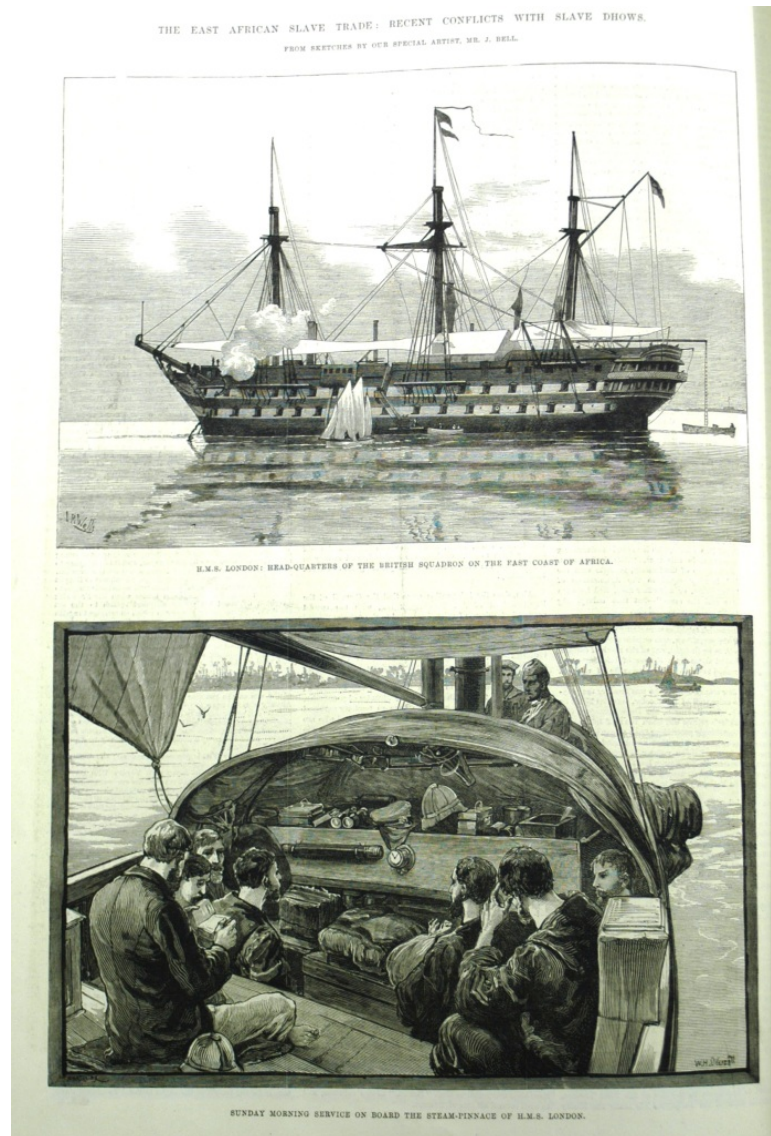


Fig. 5.3: 'The East African slave trade: recent conflicts with slave dhows', *ILN*, 17 December 1881, p. 584.

A visual example of this can be seen in figure 5.3 which shows a page from the *ILN* from December 1881. Under the heading 'The East African slave trade: recent conflicts with slave dhows', the top image shows HMS *London*, the imposing stationary 'headquarters' of the anti-slavery patrols at Zanzibar, and the bottom image depicts 'Sunday morning service on board the steam-pinnace of HMS *London*'. The juxtaposition of both engravings and the accompanying text was central to how this representation was meant to be interpreted. The message underpinning the bottom image which depicted a pious British anti-slavery

crew observing Sunday morning service was obvious; above all it sought to emphasise that the anti-slavery campaign was as much a demonstration of moral force as it was of military force. By the mid-nineteenth century the practice of observing religious service on board ship was a compulsory aspect of naval life. This formed a stark contrast to eighteenth-century shipboard practices, and to public representations of the navy, which gave little outward appearance of religion.³⁶ In the eighteenth century the prevailing image of naval men depicted them as immoral, drunken and licentious. In the nineteenth century this portrayal became increasingly 'incompatible with the rhetoric of the civilising mission'.³⁷ Richard Blake also argues that religious observance was not an outwardly prominent part of eighteenth-century naval life, but that Evangelical officers had significant influence in achieving lasting religious reforms and values which were to become 'an unmistakable element' of the Victorian navy.³⁸ In keeping with the values of the Victorian period, a more pious and philanthropic portrayal of the navy emerged.³⁹ As figure 5.3 and many of the representations discussed in this thesis demonstrate, representations of the anti-slavery patrols played a crucial role in re-shaping the more positive public image of the navy which emerged in the Victorian period.

The meaning of this representation was also reinforced by its timing. One of the recent slave dhow 'conflicts' to which the title referred, and which was reported in the same issue, was the death of Captain Charles Brownrigg. Brownrigg had lost his life when his patrol boat was boarded and attacked by an Arab dhow crew. He was the most senior naval officer to die during the campaign. Romanticised accounts of the encounter were widely reported in the British press. *The Times* described how Brownrigg had fought for

³⁶ Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, pp. 28-9, 118-121.

³⁷ Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 10.

³⁸ Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, 1775-1815: Blue Lights and Psalm Singers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), particularly pp. 286-93. During the eighteenth century, independently of Evangelical officers, lower-deck sailors with Methodist convictions also formed their own private gatherings.

³⁹ Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 10.

twenty minutes 'like a lion'. He died, the paper wrote, 'not only as an Englishman, but as the bravest of Englishmen'.⁴⁰ Again this example demonstrates how the rhetoric of heroism was often wedded to a discourse of national identity. Individuals such as Brownrigg, Cooper and Fegen stood out as *the* ideal British naval officer. They had sacrificed themselves not just for duty, but for a high moral cause. The deaths of officers were, in this regard, profoundly useful for emphasising the apparent opposite character traits of aggressive, immoral and crucially non-Christian Arab slave traders. Furthermore, they were vital in promoting a belief that all officers possessed an exalted masculinity that would lead them unquestionably to sacrifice themselves in the name of duty. In such scenarios, naval officers were represented as exemplars of British racial and masculine capabilities.

Extension of Western law and order

Another important narrative was slave-trade suppression as an extension of Western law and order. Since their outset, Britain's efforts to extend abolition of the slave trade internationally had depended on a complex network of bilateral anti-slavery treaties which designated the slave trade of various powers illegal.⁴¹ The late 1860s and early 1870s saw new developments in international law based on Christianity, liberalism and the idea of the progress of 'civilisation'. William Mulligan, for example, has outlined how the British response to the political debate of 1875-76 over the legal position of fugitive slaves seeking asylum on board the anti-slavery ships took place in this context. Mulligan argues that liberal humanitarians sought to expand British jurisdiction into non-European states in order to promote British values and human rights. Law, he writes, was central to the

⁴⁰ *The Times*, 4 January 1882, p. 9.

⁴¹ Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, p. 16.

'English moral imagination and this extended to the international sphere'.⁴² Beyond the particulars of debates about fugitive slaves, this was an important discourse at a more general level. Chapter 4 showed that Arab slave traders were commonly represented through the widely accepted Oriental tropes of lawlessness, piracy, despotism and violence. Together with the existence of slavery, all were given as evidence that the 'Eastern' world was at a less developed stage of social evolution than the West. By contrast, the spreading of British democratic ideas and European law was a central tenet of the civilising mission.



Fig. 5.4: 'The blockade on the East Coast of Africa: overhauling the papers of a suspicious dhow', *ILN*, 9 September 1889, p. 176.

⁴² William Mulligan, 'The Fugitive Slave Circulars, 1875-76', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37:2 (2009), pp. 183-205, p. 193.



Fig. 5.5: 'The East African slave trade: rescued female slaves and children questioned aboard a British ship of war', *ILN*, 23 February 1889, p. 228.⁴³



Fig. 5.6: 'The East African slave trade: examination of captured slaves in the British Consul-General's court at Zanzibar', *ILN*, 17 December 1881, p. 581.⁴⁴

⁴³ NMM, ZBA2567.

⁴⁴ NMM, ZBA2578.

Figures 5.4-5.6 provide visual examples of this narrative as reported within the pages of the *ILN* during the 1880s. Suppression was represented here as a legal process. Although these three images did not appear together, they demonstrate how the anti-slavery patrols were neatly packaged as a series of legal stages from search (fig. 5.4), to rescue and evidence gathering, (fig. 5.5), to trial and liberation (fig 5.6). The naval officer is depicted in various roles within the process of law enforcement, from policeman, to administrator, to witness. A large proportion of time for the anti-slavery crews was spent inspecting the papers of passing vessels, and examining the nature of their cargo. Taking statements from individuals on board seized vessels was also a central part of the job. These would be used as evidence, and verified in the Vice Admiralty Court as shown in figure 5.6. Although some naval officers working on the anti-slavery patrols spoke Swahili, the crews were almost entirely dependent on local interpreters.⁴⁵ This point was clearly belied in representations such as that shown in figure 5.5, which depicted the naval officer in full linguistic command of the scene. The interpreter is probably the figure pushed to the very far right edge of the image.

Figure 5.6 depicts slaves being examined by the British vice consul. This would have typically taken place after a slave dhow had been seized, and the enslaved Africans had been landed at a Vice Admiralty Court (after 1869 Zanzibar became the main court in the region). It was here that slave traders were tried and enslaved Africans, if proved to have been traded in contravention of established anti-slave-trade treaties, were awarded a freedom 'ticket'. This formally declared their change in status from enslaved to free persons. The issuing of freedom papers to be carried by newly freed Africans reflected British consular concerns that the safety of freed slaves could not be guaranteed in states

⁴⁵ Creswell, *Close to the wind*, pp. 143, 153. Creswell described how one lieutenant on the anti-slavery patrols was so proficient in Swahili that 'in his examination of the dhow captain [he] did not really require the native interpreter'. However, this appeared to be exceptional, and in numerous other accounts the role of the interpreter, though never explicitly stated by naval officers, appears to have been indispensable.

which sanctioned slavery.⁴⁶ Emancipation as a legal status was not formalised until decreed by the court. The bureaucratic trappings of the Vice Admiralty Court as shown in figure 5.6, the European-style office, the bound volume of presumably slave-trade instructions and treaties, the maps on the walls, are all symbolic of the extension of Western law and order.

Figures 5.4 and 5.5 demonstrate that in the same way that images of Africans and Arabs relied on constant reinforcement of visually recognisable 'types', so the same was true of how British officers were depicted. Both engravings were reproduced from sketches by the same *ILN* artist, a Mr J. Bell. Given the striking similarity of the central character, it is likely that these engravings depicted the same officer on two separate occasions.

Nevertheless, across a range of similar representations, it is clear that little effort was made by artists to depict actual physical likenesses of British crew members. There was very little variety in facial features for example. The individual was less important. Instead the priority was on depicting a larger corporate image of the navy, in which uniform, weaponry, and a dominating physical presence served to distinguish between the naval crew and either Africans or Arabs. Importantly, the only distinguishing factor between British crew members was that which reinforced the distinction between officers and ratings. Quintin Colville's examination of the role of uniform in shaping class and gender-related identities within the navy is relevant here. Though studying the slightly later Edwardian period, Colville has demonstrated that uniform not only reinforced the respective upper-middle and working-class categories of officer and rating, but also represented these different social classes as 'different incarnations of masculinity with differing abilities'.⁴⁷ In this way uniform not only served to symbolise a British identity, but also reinforced the different power relations within this collective identity. As a whole, however, when juxtaposed against foreign others, Colville's statement that uniform 'reflected the cultural status of the

⁴⁶ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 134.

⁴⁷ Colville, 'Jack Tar', p. 82.

navy, and its global profile as a cornerstone of imperial power' is highly relevant to the way in which suppression was represented in these and other images.⁴⁸

The maintenance of law and order was certainly not, however, always assumed to be achievable only by pacific means. Public displays of force as a means of bringing order and inflicting retribution for breaking slave trade treaties was also an essential and largely acceptable aspect of how the squadron carried out its duties. One of the most demonstrable acts of this nature was the destruction of dhows seized by the navy under suspicion of slave trading (fig. 5.7). According to the 1869 Admiralty instructions, naval crews were ordered not to destroy seized dhows but to tow them to the port of adjudication for tonnage measurement. This formed the basis for calculating the amount of prize money to be awarded to the capturing crew. In fact, naval crews frequently exploited a clause in the instructions which allowed vessels designated 'unseaworthy' to be broken up. The common destruction of dhows, many of which were probably engaged in legitimate trade, and the practice of supplying exaggerated tonnage measurements, was a recurring point of conflict between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty.⁴⁹ It also gave rise to the paradoxical situation of Arab traders questioning the legality of the navy's actions. In a private letter in 1870, Henry Rothery, legal advisor to the Treasury on slave-trade matters, stated that, 'Commander Oldfield himself has told me that the natives regarded our cruizers simply as Pirates'.⁵⁰ The destruction of property without trial meant that the navy was itself acting in contravention of international law. In his discussion of the impact of slave-trade suppression on Zanzibar's maritime economy, Erik Gilbert describes the naval patrols as 'a campaign of semi-legal piracy against dhows in East African waters'.⁵¹ The above point demonstrates an interesting reversal of the rhetoric used by the British

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, pp. 82-3.

⁵⁰ H. C. Rothery to G.K. Stepney, 19 June 1870, TNA, FO 84/1328.

⁵¹ Erik Gilbert, *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar*. (Oxford: James Currey, 2004), p. 62.

against Arab traders. It also emphasises, as discussed in chapter 4, the subjective nature of the term 'pirate'.



Fig. 5.7: 'Burning a condemned dhow at Funzi, Pemba Island', *ILN*, 31 December 1881, p. 649.

From 1868 the use of Hale's rockets, first employed in the Abyssinian campaign, became standard-issue on the anti-slavery patrols.⁵² A newspaper article written by an officer of the anti-slavery squadron in the early 1870s described their use: 'Few who have ever seen the war rocket fired, forget the sensation they experience when hearing it for the first time, and evidently the shriek and the flame and the smoke of it disconcerted them all not a little, and checked all further resistance'.⁵³ Sub-lieutenant George Gordon, who also served in the early 1870s, described the deployment of rockets on a coastal village, whose inhabitants were believed to have been responsible for the death of a fellow officer. Gordon described how the crew shelled the village with the pinnace's gun and deployed a number of 'war rockets' which set the place on fire. The crew then landed and destroyed all crops and the 'hedge' which surrounded the village, and filled up the well. He closed his

⁵² Hopper, 'The African Presence in Arabia', p. 286.

⁵³ Newspaper article, 'Capture of a slave dhow or the Vulture and Its Prey', probably written by Lieutenant Cecil Molyneux Gilbert Cooper of HMS *Vulture* in the early 1870s, NMM, BGY/G/5.

account of this event by stating: 'One has to be severe in dealing with these natives, for leniency makes them think we are afraid of them, and leads to more trouble'.⁵⁴ Matthew Hopper suggests that the logic behind the use of such weapons was to maximise shock value with a minimum loss of life. This conveyed a looming threat of force – an ideology which in fact underpinned the very notion of 'gunboat diplomacy' in the Victorian navy.⁵⁵ William Creswell's interpretation of naval operations during this period was particularly benign. He wrote: 'Power was exercised through protection rather than possession, through the moral influence of the Fleet, opening up the world to free trade and suppressing the slave traffic'.⁵⁶ The combination of the constant threat of force as a supposedly *moral* weapon, and the very public display of military might, were central to the way slave-trade suppression was implemented and imagined.

Imperial adventure fiction

It has already been shown that accounts of suppression should be understood in the cultural context of popular imperialism, and that real-life stories of the anti-slavery patrols provided prime material for exemplifying idealised 'British' character traits. Juvenile literature, and particularly that which was aimed at boys, was 'replete with militarism and patriotism, in which violence and high spirits became legitimated as part of the moral force of a superior race'. As such it acted not only as recruitment propaganda for the military, but to nationalistic and patriotic ideals in general.⁵⁷ Slave-trade suppression provided all the necessary ingredients for tales of adventure, action and heroism. It is unsurprising therefore to find that the anti-slavery patrols were adopted by writers as a popular setting for imperial adventure stories, and as chapter 8 shows, were also used for naval

⁵⁴ Gordon, NMM, FIE/43.

⁵⁵ Hopper, 'The African Presence in Arabia', p. 289.

⁵⁶ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, preface.

⁵⁷ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 199, 208.

recruitment. That chapter will focus in greater detail on the nature of representations of suppression in popular culture, and also the make-up of the audiences that consumed this material. This section will concentrate on how the genre of juvenile adventure fiction influenced how naval officers themselves imagined suppression.

The extent to which the established models of imperial fiction and adventure were interwoven into the imaginings of naval officers is striking. Real and imagined experiences were constantly merged. And the sense that officers were both living their experiences and simultaneously narrating them, to themselves and a wider audience, through these established popular tropes, is clearly evident. This is most prominent amongst the accounts of junior officers. Such thinking was not only at the core of popular culture but was also officially encouraged by the naval authorities. The popularity of the adventure story amongst young boys was keenly exploited within naval recruiting propaganda of the period. Again referring to the 1911 pamphlet 'How to become a naval officer', Admiral Fremantle wrote fancifully, but not altogether unfoundedly, how the cadet will look into the future 'with the glamoured vision of youth, fired by that vague, buoyant desire to achieve, and weaving romance, with himself as the central figure, into that noble calling which destiny is leading him'. Potential cadets were invited to emulate the traditions 'so glowingly set in Marryat's books'.⁵⁸ Similarly the pamphlet stated: 'There is a natural glamour about the sea life as viewed through boyish eyes, which appeal with wonderful fascination to the youthful fancy. Particularly, indeed is this the case with the Royal Navy. For here the imagination may roam, not only over all the familiar fields of ocean romance: there is the additional stirring sense of what Othello calls the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war"'.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Captain Frederick Marryat was an extremely popular adventure novelist who served in the navy between 1806 and 1830. His novel *Mr Midshipman Easy* (1836) initiated the genre of the adventure novel. Marryat's name became shorthand for stories of naval adventure. David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*, p. 229, footnote 3.

⁵⁹ Fremantle, *How to become a naval officer*, pp. 55-6, 54, 26.

The many letters written by Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther to his family in London whilst stationed on anti-slavery patrols between 1887 and 1890 provide a striking example of how young officer cadets clearly absorbed such ideas. His letters crudely echoed the style of popular adventure writers such as Captain Marryat and Rider Haggard. And there is a strong sense that Dannreuther imagined himself and his naval colleagues at the centre of their own imperial adventure. Throughout his letters he typically employed a heightened narrative style, and clearly aimed to entertain his readers. The prospect of chase and violence in particular loomed large in his imagination. One of Dannreuther's many descriptions of a slave dhow chase, written to his mother, provides a representative example of his style and tone:

Now I'll tell you what happened. About a day or two after the ship left the boats the Olga with Palmer (whom you know) in charge at 3am saw a dhow some way off. It was almost a dead calm. The Olga got out her sweeps and pulled towards the dhow. When 5 or 6 hundred from the dhow Palmer fired 2 blank charges over her bow to make her heave to. The dhow took no notice Palmer then fired 5 balls into the dhows sail. The Arabs thinking they were firing at them and making bad shots opened fire on us and got their sweeps out and gave way. Palmer then began open fire on them with rifle and the Gardner Gun. This went on till 6 am when the Arabs jumped overboard and made for land. The cutter which had been attracted by the firing then came up. Palmer sent the cutter to pick up the Arabs in the water which they did finding 3 Arabs and 2 Swahilis. When Palmer boarded he found 4 Arabs lying dead and one slave. One of the Arabs, the helmsman had 4 bullets through his skull. The captain of the dhow was another who had the top of his brain box off and his brains on deck and the 2 others together with the two

taken alive were the very 4 that belonged to the dhow that was not condemned as per last letter. These 4 were then buried. There were also 5 Arabs onboard alive, one of which had a rifle in his hand which was red hot from firing . . . The Arabs were handed over to the Sultan's guard who will imprison them for life. None of our crew were [sic] wounded although the bullets were wizzing [sic] round them at the rate of knots.⁶⁰

Dannreuther delighted in providing his family with all the dramatic and gory details of the action. In this example he sets the stage – ‘it was a dead calm’, for the action to take place, and the tale culminates with the British crew typically emerging unscathed from this dangerous adventure. Such descriptions mirrored exactly, in tone, narrative style and content, the juvenile literature of the period. As MacKenzie writes, the blending of ‘violence, boisterousness, and cruelty’ was a staple of juvenile literature.⁶¹

Chapter 4 demonstrated how a lack of clear boundaries between observed reality and imaginatively constructed versions of the Orient characterised naval officer's representations of the Arab world. The same trait is particularly evident in Dannreuther's letters. In fact, a common subject of his letters was the novels and newspapers that he had recently read. These help locate more specifically the context of his imaginings. Among the titles he referred to were: Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*, *The Red Rover* by James Fenimore Cooper, *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *Never too Late to Mend* and *The Cloister and The Hearth* both by Charles Reade.⁶² All were typical examples of popular Victorian juvenile fiction. Rider Haggard in particular stands out as a writer who is often seen to characterise the genre of high imperial fiction. A number of his novels were set in Africa and typified the representation of ‘the dark continent’ waiting to be discovered, civilised and colonised by the superior white male

⁶⁰ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 24 March 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

⁶¹ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 204.

⁶² Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 20 August 1888, 12 December 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

adventurer. Historians and literary scholars have argued that the immense popularity of Haggard's novels encouraged some boys into imperial service, and certainly played a role in helping to propagate a popularised imperial world-view.⁶³

For Dannreuther, the imagined worlds of writers like Haggard provided a context for his imaginings. Describing the ship's latest orders in March 1888, he informed his mother 'the reason that we have him going to Pangani bay is because the Masai [sic] (a war like tribe who slay the first person they meet which you will read about in Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain) are coming down close to the English Mission house'.⁶⁴

William Creswell wrote in his retrospective account of suppression that he believed one of his contemporaries on the anti-slavery patrols to have been the inspiration for Captain Good, the Royal Navy hero of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. The officer in question, Lieutenant O' Neil, went on to serve as British consul in Mozambique, where his assistant, according to Creswell, was the cousin of Rider Haggard.⁶⁵

Victoria Manthorpe's study of the Haggard family has convincingly traced the origins of Captain Good to Rider Haggard's elder brother, John George Haggard, who served in the Royal Navy until the age of thirty two. John Haggard was, however, a near contemporary of Creswell, entering cadet training at *Britannia* one year ahead of him in 1864. After leaving the navy, Haggard was appointed to serve as British Consul in Lamu, north of Zanzibar. This post was one of four new East-African British consular appointments created by the Foreign Office in 1883, for which Royal Navy officers were specifically recruited. Haggard's objectives were concerned with securing trade routes into East Africa, suppressing the slave trade, and increasing British income from customs. His many descriptive letters home written whilst in the navy, as consul in Lamu, and later

⁶³ See for example Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, pp. 28-9; Wendy R. Katz, *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A critical study of British imperial fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 1; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 208. Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) sold 30,000 copies in its first year of publication.

⁶⁴ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 4 March 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

⁶⁵ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 153.

Madagascar, provided much inspiring material for Rider Haggard's novels. His expeditions inland from Lamu had the 'business' objectives of negotiating with local chiefs over commercial treaties, while also providing extensive opportunities to shoot, hunt and collect natural specimens. Within the framework of imperial military service, his letters told of adventures into the dark interior of the country which offered all the necessary components of the imperial novel.⁶⁶

Imperial fiction was an important touchstone for officers posted in East Africa. It offered a reference point, and provided the basis for understanding what and who they encountered. Chapters 3 and 4 showed how officers commonly turned to popular stereotypes as a way of understanding African and Arab peoples. The propensity for relying on these kinds of pre-constructed descriptors suggests an inability (or unwillingness) on the part of officers to engage with cultures and experiences beyond the bounds of their constricted imaginations. Whilst this was without a doubt a product of their cultural and class background, naval-officer training specifically sought to suppress imagination, enquiry, creativity and sensitivity. The curriculum focused on the acquisition of facts which were tested by examination rather than enquiry. And subjects thought to encourage imagination were marginalised or ignored.⁶⁷ Parents of potential cadets were warned by the director of naval education: 'The boy of sensitive, poetic spirit, the ruminating young philosopher, the scholar whose whole heart is in his book, are types that have a real use in the world, but their proper place is not the Navy'.⁶⁸ Naval officers were disciplined to follow orders, rather than to question. The records examined in this thesis demonstrate that the values and attitudes that were moulded at the early stage of

⁶⁶ Victoria Manthorpe, *Children of the Empire: The Victorian Haggards* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1996), pp. 46, 119-29, 143.

⁶⁷ Dickenson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 208.

⁶⁸ *The Entry and Training of Naval Cadets*, prepared by the director of Naval Education (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1914), p. 12.

the officer's lives were generally reinforced, rather than reassessed, during their posting on the anti-slavery patrols.

Hunting and masculine identity

Hunting played a significant role in popular culture in the late nineteenth century. It was an extremely popular topic of juvenile fiction and information books. As MacKenzie has observed, hunting linked to many of the key concerns of the period. Invoking the love of the chase, adventure, and violence, hunting clearly lent itself as a theme of juvenile literature. Hunting was portrayed as a supremely manly activity. As the 'antipode of effeminate sentimentality' it represented prime training for war, and promoted the full spectrum of masculine characteristics that boys were encouraged to emulate during this period.⁶⁹ In his exploration of African landscape representation within the context of empire, John McAleer highlights that hunting, as the chosen leisure activity for elite military and colonial servicemen, offered opportunities for excitement, bloodlust and command of weaponry, all to be pursued at will across the colonial landscape. Here the officer could practise and master the art of sportsmanship, a long-held pursuit of the British aristocracy. He might also hunt under the guise of collecting and classifying for the purposes of natural history. As a predominantly male pursuit, hunting offered men symbolic command of the natural world, and thus served to reinforce masculine identity.⁷⁰ In the late-nineteenth century, as European weapons technology developed and indigenous cultures were

⁶⁹ John M. MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 46.

⁷⁰ John McAleer, *Representing Africa: Landscape, Exploration and Empire in Southern Africa, 1780–1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 187-92.

excluded access to hunting, the separation of leisure from subsistence became a cultural marker of 'white dominance'.⁷¹

Given the masculine and racial overtones of hunting, and the idea of the chase, it is no surprise that it appeared as a dominant trope in accounts of slave-trade suppression. The two most famous accounts, both written by naval officers – Philip Colomb's *Slave Catching In The Indian Ocean: a record of naval experiences* and George Sullivan's *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa* (both published in 1873) – were explicit allusions to hunting. Beyond their titles both accounts were filled with hunting references and metaphors. Colomb bemoaned the difficulties of intercepting slave dhows stating 'of course slave capturing, like any other sport, is uncertain'.⁷² Sullivan, as illustrated in chapter 3, categorised freed African slaves as if they were natural history specimens. The use of language relating to hunting is situated within the same racist discourse. In both unofficial and official accounts, anti-slavery crews were represented as 'slave-catchers' and the enslaved, like animals, were nearly always referred to as being 'captured'. The parliamentary returns from the anti-slavery squadron were, for example, entitled 'Return of vessels captured for being engaged in and equipped for the slave trade'. Columns were various headed: 'Number of slaves captured' and 'Name of capturing ship'.⁷³

To some extent naval officers imagined their role as one of hunter-preservationist. Like 'scientific' hunters they were there for altruistic reasons, to protect an otherwise dying breed for the good of mankind. In *Missionary Travels*, David Livingstone had recorded the changing ecological picture of the African landscape. Places had been named after animals that were now only found hundreds of miles away.⁷⁴ His explorations had

⁷¹ William Beinart and Lotte Hughes (eds), *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 68.

⁷² Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 83.

⁷³ See for example *PP 1870* (411), 'Return of vessels, 1864-69'.

⁷⁴ McAleer, *Representing Africa*, p. 188.

also led him to observe the depopulation of Central Africa as a result of inter-tribal wars and the slave trade.⁷⁵ Humans and animals were seen to be disappearing from the African landscape as a consequence of hunters. Describing in his own words what Livingstone had seen, Sub-lieutenant George Gordon wrote: 'the Arab slave hunter has been working his dreadful trade. Now the slave hunter has to go further back, to get his game'.⁷⁶ To Philip Colomb the remaining population of East Africa was 'at the mercy of the Arab or negro sportsman . . . [they] sell themselves, are shot down, netted, decoyed, speared, bought or kidnapped, without the intervention of any game laws of regulation for the preservation of the breed'.⁷⁷

The ambiguity of the hunter-preservationist, who must kill to classify or conserve, was similarly evident in suppression.⁷⁸ For the naval crews, 'hunting' slave dhows primarily existed as an opportunity for sport. The incentive of winning prize money for 'captured' dhows and slaves made the association between the popular trope of hunting and the anti-slavery patrols even more explicit. Prize money stands out as one of the chief motivations for naval crews working on the anti-slavery patrols. It was awarded through the Vice Admiralty Courts for dhows found guilty of contravening anti-slave trade treaties. The crew of the ship which had made the dhow seizure was awarded prize money, which was distributed in shares according to rank. All members of the ship's crew were awarded a portion regardless of whether they had been part of the detached-boat crew. Prize money was awarded at £5.10s per slave freed and £1.10s per ton of the condemned vessel, or if found without slaves on board, £4 per ton. This meant that even empty vessels suspected of having carried slaves could be potentially rewarding. Prize vessels seized with dead slaves on board were awarded at £2.10s per head.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Livingstone, *Narrative*, p. 151.

⁷⁶ Gordon, NMM, FIE/43, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p.23.

⁷⁸ MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, p. 43.

⁷⁹ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp. 81-4.

The prospect of winning prize money was of course not a new concept to naval crews. Richard Hill has traced the long history of the naval prize system. During periods such as the Napoleonic wars, prize was an 'integral component' of warfare and the 'principal incentive' for naval recruitment.⁸⁰ During the nineteenth century the concept of 'head money' was transferred to the anti-slavery patrols, with crews awarded money per ton of the condemned vessel and per slave.⁸¹ Of course, the principal and significant difference was that a system which had been traditionally used as a tool of war was now, in the context of the anti-slavery patrols, being used to drive a peacetime campaign. For the men serving on anti-slavery patrols, the prize money system did not offer the wealth maximising opportunities of the Napoleonic wars. This was especially true of the East African patrols, as slave cargoes and the vessels used to transport them were generally much smaller than transatlantic slave ships. However, prize money was a familiar system, and one that remained an overwhelming source of motivation.

Prize money was valued by all crew members, across rank and age. In letters, diaries and memoirs, prize money was totted up and recorded. For those of higher rank, the annual earnings were not altogether insignificant. Commander George King-Hall, a man continually troubled by debt, reflected on Christmas Day in 1888: 'I anticipated heavy expenses, instead of which they have been the reverse. I have made Prize Money and through God's blessing been able to provide for the girls for perhaps two years'.⁸² (Here he referred to his sisters, for whom he was financially responsible). To those further down the ranks, prize money was of no less incentive. Over his three years commission on anti-slavery patrols, Tristan Dannreuther earned £19 in prize money – a considerable

⁸⁰ Richard Hill, *The Prizes of War: The Naval Prize System In the Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815* (Guildford: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1998), p. 9.

⁸¹ For the origins and mechanics of the prize money system on the anti-slavery patrols see Beachey, *The Slave Trade*, p. 82.

⁸² King-Hall, on board HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 25 December 1888, RNM, 1995.150/1-2.

supplement to his annual salary of £31.⁸³ Dannreuther's many excited descriptions of chases and seizures were always appended by a calculation of their worth in terms of prize money, and a running total was updated over the course of his letters.⁸⁴

Prize money was, however, more than an economic incentive mechanism. The competitive and sporting edge that prize money encouraged set it within a cultural context that carried all the positive behavioural attributes of the public school ethos. Describing how the boat crew under his command had let a slave dhow escape, William Creswell wrote: "This chap's a duffer, Matthews or O'Neil would have got that dhow" would naturally be the ship comment. Here was my first really good chance and I had muffed it. Failure is hard to bear at twenty-four, particularly if it bears loss to others. Prize-money was not an absolute unconsidered trifle to the ship'.⁸⁵ Naval officer training explicitly aimed to foster a competitive spirit within the bounds of collective duty.⁸⁶ The sense of competition that existed between young contemporary officers was acute, and was heightened by the prospect of prize money. Dannreuther recorded feeling envy that HMS *Kingfisher*, a sister ship on the squadron, had beaten his ship to a prize.⁸⁷ In keeping with the culture of boyhood competition, the award of prize money was published publically under the name of each ship in the pages of the *Navy List* and the *London Gazette*. Being attached to the 'winning' ship was a source of pride. Writing to his brother at Eton, Dannreuther proudly announced, 'You will probably see me rated as a midshipman in the January Navy List . . . and probably in the same Navy List you will see some of our slave dhows among the list of prizes taken at the end of the books'.⁸⁸ Lieutenant Thomas Ramsbotham, who served in the

⁸³ Personal diary belonging to Tristan Dannreuther, 1889, NMM, DAN/4. See the *Navy List*, 1887, under 'Rates of Pay'.

⁸⁴ For example see Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 26 November 1887, 23 February 1888, 24 March 1888, 3 May 1888, 29 October 1888, ? September 1889 and 9 February 1890, NMM, DAN/73.

⁸⁵ Creswell, *Close To The Wind*, p. 155.

⁸⁶ Dickenson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 163-5.

⁸⁷ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 3 December 1887, NMM, DAN/73.

⁸⁸ Tristan Dannreuther to Sigmund Dannreuther, 27 November 1887, NMM, DAN/73.

1860s, secured pages from the *London Gazette* and other newspapers into his journal, and underlined the sentences which recorded how many prizes his ships had taken.⁸⁹ Here was public recognition of ability and accomplishment, which accorded directly with the way in which masculinity was fostered during the period.

For naval officers on leave, the East African landscape offered good opportunities for hunting. Livingstone had recorded that hunting had long been a major part of the indigenous economy around the region of the Zambezi Valley, where antelope, elephant, hippopotami and waterbuck were all commonly hunted.⁹⁰ In the late-nineteenth century, the long-standing ivory export trade out of East and Southern Africa peaked to meet the ever-growing demand of British and European consumers. During this period East Africa became the world's greatest source of ivory, a trade that was directly reliant on slave labour.⁹¹ Naval officers on anti-slavery patrols frequently made hunting excursions. Like 'slave-catching', these activities were represented as opportunities for sport and excitement, offering respite from the monotony of shipboard life. For Reverend Charles Todd, who regularly contributed under a *nom de plume* to the hunting journal *The Field*, anti-slavery patrols offered a prime opportunity for his favourite pursuit. Writing to his mother after his first boat patrol, he stated: 'It is very exciting work and I am very glad to see some of it, besides when boat cruising we go up some of the rivers and have great sport. I have shot a hippopotamus and two leopards'.⁹² For Todd, slave-trade suppression and hunting were easily assimilated both in practical terms and within his imagination. Like other officers, the excitement of the chase stood out as a motivating factor. Describing the same boat patrol he wrote, 'We took the bigger of the two prizes after an exciting chase,

⁸⁹ Private journals of Lieutenant Thomas Ramsbotham kept on board HMS *Highflyer* from December 1864 to January 1867, and HMS *Lyra* from January 1867 to April 1868, unpaginated, RNM, 1996.31/40.

⁹⁰ MacKenzie, *Empire and Nature*, p. 72.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-51. For the economic relationship between the ivory and slave trade see Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices*.

⁹² Charles Todd to Mrs Todd, Zanzibar, 12 August 1881, LGL, MS.17945.

we had a small cannon on the bow with which we carried away her rudder or she would have escaped'.⁹³ In keeping with hunting-culture, officers who viewed themselves as professional hunters kept game journals.⁹⁴ Much like the personal accounts of the anti-slavery boat patrols, these journals provided a narrative of hunting jaunts, and detailed their most-prized captures.



Fig. 5.8: 'The East African Slave Trade: Steam Pinnace of HMS *London* chasing a slave dhow', *ILN*, 17 December 1881, pp. 588-9.

As a central element of the Victorian hunting craze, the trophies collected from hunts were prized and shipped home; these were a symbol of hunting prowess and were a demonstration of masculine authority over the natural environment.⁹⁵ Sir Henry Keppel recorded a hunting trip whilst stationed on anti-slavery patrols in which he described claiming the head of a hippopotamus, which he had dissected by his African guides.⁹⁶ The

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ See for example The Hon. Sir Henry Keppel, Admiral of the Fleet, 1809-1904, Sporting journal kept on board HMS *Brisk* on anti-slavery patrols off Mozambique, unpaginated, NMM, HTN/11; Reverend Charles John Todd, Sporting & travel journal kept in Ceylon, South Africa, Mauritius and Canada, 1880-1884, LGL, MS.17946.

⁹⁵ MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, pp. 29-32.

⁹⁶ Keppel, NMM, HTN/11.

racial imbalance of hunting, which was represented as the preserve of Europeans and Americans, located indigenous people at the edge of such activities. Africans were depicted in supporting roles such as guides and porters, where they existed merely to support the gentlemanly activities of the white hunter.⁹⁷ This echoes the way in which indigenous interpreters were similarly located at the periphery of the anti-slavery patrols. For the 'naval slave-catcher', prize slave-dhows were the equivalent of the hunting trophy. Commander King-Hall recorded a thrilling chase in his diary: 'The Dhows [sic] crew had 400 yards start and off they went for the bush. Hibbert headed our men and we were most excited at seeing the chase. I fired a rifle to stop them getting ahead of fugitives . . . I sent another boat and brought a good fat Dhow alongside, containing 28 slaves'.⁹⁸ In this example the chase was successful – the 'fat' of the dhow included the slaves on board which would add to the value of prize money. On the subject of dhow destruction for prize money, the Vice Consul Henry Churchill told the 1871 Select Committee that the naval crews chased dhows 'with the eagerness of sportsmen'.⁹⁹ Like hunters in control of their horses (a representation which had its basis in classical antiquity), naval men were depicted as commanding absolute authority over their boats as they eagerly pursued their prey (fig. 5.8).¹⁰⁰

Of course, this representation was similarly rich in the same paradoxes that were implicit in the culture of hunting. The motivation of prize money resulted in the enslaved becoming objectified. Describing one chase Colomb stated: 'In our minds for the present, all questions of philanthropy, all sympathy with the misfortunes of the negro, all anger towards his oppressor, were merged in the single idea of the pursuit of game'.¹⁰¹

Lieutenant Devereux wrote how after finding a dhow empty of slaves [and thus less

⁹⁷ MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, p. 163.

⁹⁸ King-Hall, entry dated 17 August 1888, RNM, 1995.150/1-2.

⁹⁹ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ See McAleer, *Representing Africa*, p. 191.

¹⁰¹ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 236.

rewarding in terms of prize money], the crew was 'like a huge hawk, [and] away they go after another prey'.¹⁰² Referring to one bungled seizure in which 56 enslaved Africans had died, Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther stated simply, 'we shall get £2.10s half price for each dead slave which comes up to £140'.¹⁰³ The lives and freedoms of enslaved Africans were low down the list of priorities for naval officers. Enslaved Africans were similarly located at the periphery of action, and the mortality and injury rates of the enslaved was seen as a minor consideration compared to that of naval officers and men. Representations of suppression, like hunting, placed the white male at centre stage. The fact that both activities were depicted as morally elevating was an attempt to elide the racial and power imbalances inherent within the imperial mind. Read in this way the corporate public image of the naval officer that dominated representations of suppression in popular culture was profoundly useful in obscuring the realities of personal ambition, thirst for individual glory, and greed for prizes.

In his history of slave-trade suppression, Christopher Lloyd noted that 'prize money and patriotism were the chief incentives' for naval recruitment. He also noted that the 'excitements of the chase' was important, but did not expand on this further.¹⁰⁴ The above discussion has placed these incentive mechanisms within the social and cultural context of the British officer class in the late nineteenth century. By contextualising the accounts of naval officers within juvenile literature, popular newspapers and the culture of hunting and militarism, this chapter has shown how the established models of male heroism and adventure were central to the way in which naval officers imagined the anti-slavery patrols. Africans were generally peripheral to this narrative, and representations of Arabs provided a platform for valorising the supposedly superior and innate masculine, moral and Christian characteristics of British officers. Representations of the campaign within popular culture

¹⁰² Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 132.

¹⁰³ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 23 February 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 79.

importantly fed into how naval officers imagined themselves, and vice versa. Crucially, changes in communication technology, the emergence of a mass media, and the increasing amount of imperial representation within popular culture, provided the channels for this exchange to take place. Particularly in the later stages of the campaign, as communication technologies improved, naval officers became increasingly aware of their self-image within British popular culture, and this, perhaps more than the realities they encountered on anti-slavery patrols, played a fundamental role in shaping and re-shaping their identities. In this way, this chapter has stressed how the politics of representation was absolutely central to the social and culture background of the navy's anti-slavery campaign.

CHAPTER 6

The anti-slavery patrols, the civilising mission and liberation

In his 1865 account *Narrative of an expedition to the Zambezi*, David Livingstone praised the work previously carried out by the naval anti-slavery squadron on the West coast of Africa. He wrote that had it not been for the squadron 'Africa would still have been inaccessible to missionary labour'. He believed the same system of using external naval suppression, in addition to introducing missionary work and lawful trade to the interior, could also have improving effects in East Africa.¹ Reverend Edward Steere, a missionary of the UMCA with extensive experience of the East African slave trade, concurred with Livingstone. In a memorandum published in 1874, he recognised that 'external repression' of the slave trade was a necessary tool for missionary activity in East Africa. He argued that when Africans were freed by the navy they received only 'political freedom', and that the 'regeneration of the negro' would only be completed by missionaries working in the African interior.² The separation of anti-slavery activity into these two spheres of external naval suppression and internal missionary activity reflected the reality of how British anti-slavery policy evolved in East Africa.³ The idea of an 'anti-slavery police force' was one of the most common terms used by contemporaries and historians alike to describe the navy's suppression activities.⁴ As explored in the previous chapter, the campaign was commonly represented in terms of law enforcement. Reverend Steere argued that the two methods of anti-slavery work required 'very different men to carry them forward, and cannot both be

¹ Livingstone, *Narrative*, pp. 21-2.

² Quoted in Frere, *Eastern Africa*, pp. 38-40.

³ This will be explored in chapter 7.

⁴ See for example NMM, BGY/G/5, anonymous newspaper article probably written by Lieutenant Cecil Molyneux Gilbert Cooper of HMS *Vulture* in the early 1870s, in which the squadron was referred to as 'the police of the seas'. Both the West and East coast squadrons have commonly been described as an 'anti-slavery police force', or as 'policing' the slave trade. See for example, Lloyd, *Navy and the slave trade*, introduction, p. ix.

attempted by the same persons with any reasonable chance of success'.⁵ Naval officers clearly concurred with this remark. Underpinned by the predominant ideas of 'manliness', they identified themselves as military, or more specifically naval men, and therefore essentially different to missionary men. 'The naval mind', as Captain Philip Colomb termed it, was suited and trained to apply force.⁶ However this being said, the idea that officers imagined their work on the anti-slavery patrols as separate from the 'internal' expansion of imperial and missionary interests within East Africa underestimates the overlapping nature of these activities. This chapter will demonstrate that the navy's anti-slavery campaign, and the way officers imagined it, was located *within* the wider imperial and civilising mission, and not simply as an adjunct to it. They too saw themselves as spreading the supposed benefits of empire, which included the introduction of Christianity, through being part of the anti-slavery movement. Sometimes this was explicitly trumpeted, and formed part of a process of self-justification. At other times it was more implicit.

David Lambert has demonstrated that in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the 'histories of abolition and [geographical] exploration were concurrent and connected'; the outpouring of accounts on Africa at this time 'crossed the boundaries' between geography and ethnography, as well as economic and moral debates. The new emergence of 'fieldwork-conceptions of geography', (as opposed to the tradition of text-based 'armchair' geography), and the centrality of West Africa and the Caribbean as key sites in the British popular imagination, created an intimate link between the exploration of West Africa and debates about slavery.⁷ Developing this argument for the mid-nineteenth century in East Africa, the same association is apparent. As outlined in chapter 1, this period was a key phase in the European exploration of East and Central Africa. This activity

⁵ Quoted in Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 38.

⁶ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 403-5, 427. The attitudes of officers to missionaries will be explored in greater detail in chapter 7.

⁷ David Lambert, "'Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River": towards an historical geography of British geography and Atlantic slavery', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 35 (2009), pp. 44-65, pp. 64-5.

raised both official and popular British awareness of the East African slave trade. As highlighted, David Livingstone was a key figure in the history of British intervention in East Africa who linked anti-slavery, exploration, missionary activity and the promotion of commerce. Livingstone's Zambezi expeditions in the late 1850s and early 1860s marked a departure point after which the missionary movement in East Africa became closely associated with geographical and other secular work in the region. Roy Bridges has labelled this network of religious, secular and commercial activities that developed in East Africa as an 'unofficial empire' which incorporated the evangelical-humanitarian vision of Christian civilisation. It involved a range of individuals from the service class, including administrators, consuls, army and naval officers, who found common cause with missionaries and businessmen in promoting the idea of the 'potential' of East Africa. Bridges stresses the difficulty of using the word 'imperialism' as it implies 'the exercise of superior power to facilitate exploitation'. But noting the benign intention, nevertheless the 'unofficial imperialists' in East Africa in this period 'did believe that it was their task to reorder African religion, politics, society, and economy in ways decided by them and for a good as defined by them'.⁸

The first part of this chapter will highlight that naval officers were clearly 'unofficial imperialists'. They embraced this vision both by conscious activities and unconscious assumptions. Naval officers concurred with the widely held belief that Africans would not be truly free unless taught by a superior (preferably British) teacher to understand the freedom bestowed to them. In this way they believed that British imperial expansion within East Africa was a mutually beneficial arrangement which would offer 'trusteeship' to vulnerable Africans freed by the anti-slavery patrols. By its very nature the notion of a 'civilising' mission implies the superiority of the teacher over its pupil – an attitude that was reflected in the propensity to represent Africans as children. As previously discussed, this

⁸ Bridges, 'The Christian Vision', p. 46.

view marked a departure from the 'common humanity' vision of early British abolitionist thinking to one which was more overtly based on a collective sense of British moral and racial superiority. The second part of this chapter seeks to problematize the benign narrative of trusteeship by examining how freed African slaves experienced suppression. How, for example, did the experiences of Africans directly following rescue intersect with naval perceptions of freedom? This exploration reveals a series of tensions which highlight the qualified nature of freedom. The idea that freedom was not a normative state, but was to be shaped according to the high ideals of Britons was, of course, the central paradox of the anti-slavery campaign, and a point which has been explored by many historians of slavery across a wide range of geographical contexts.⁹

Naval officers and David Livingstone

Livingstone was a key figure in the imaginations of naval officers serving on the East African anti-slavery patrols, and their accounts attest to his deeply-rooted influence within the narrative of the campaign. The myth-making that followed Livingstone in life and death overwhelmingly depicted him as a supreme figure of empire. He was painted as a 'fervent anti-slaver' and a man 'concerned with the material and spiritual future of Africa'.¹⁰ These were the themes that naval men also alluded to when they cited Livingstone. He was as much a symbol of anti-slavery as he was of Britain's expanding imperial presence in the

⁹ See for example Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1992); Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, particularly chs. 3-4. The 'mighty experiment' of the 1840s in which the British government authorised the recruitment of free labour to replace slave labour in the West Indies following the 1833 Emancipation Act has been explored in terms of ideological conflicts over the meanings of freedom and free labour. See Johnson U. J. Asiegbu, 'The Dynamics of Freedom: A Study of Liberated African Emigration and British Antislavery Policy', *Journal of Black Studies*, 7:1 (1976), pp. 95-106; Beatriz G. Mamigonian, 'In the Name of Freedom: Slave Trade Abolition, the Law and the Brazilian Branch of the African Emigration Scheme (Brazil-British West Indies, 1830s-1850s)', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30:1 (2009), pp. 41-66.

¹⁰ MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone', p. 207.

East African region. The published accounts of the anti-slavery patrols written in the late 1860s and early 1870s by Colomb, Devereux and Sullivan clearly sought to capitalise on the popular hype surrounding Livingstone. Later in the early-twentieth century, the authors of a number of published and unpublished memoirs all drew heavily on this narrative to situate their own accounts.¹¹ The allusion to Livingstone was a conscious effort on the part of naval officers to locate their own experiences of the anti-slavery patrols within the wider history of empire. It was their way of staking a claim in one of the headline stories that continued to define Britain's self-constructed global image into the early-twentieth century. This shows how officers viewed suppression as more than a simple 'policing' of the slave trade. Rather, they saw their actions as part of the vision of 'unofficial imperialism'.

Writing in 1873, Captain Philip Colomb stated that it was 'Livingstone, Baker, Burton, Speke and Grant – and still more', who had 'familiarised the public mind' with the East African slave trade.¹² Colomb's list provided the names of some of the most eminent British explorers who within a period of approximately thirty years between 1840 and 1870 had largely completed the basic exploration of much of East Africa. Not only did the work of these explorers provide a great fund of knowledge about the region and a point of reference for Britons, but their exploits represented 'one of the epics of the age, a dramatic manifestation of European courage, initiative and resource'.¹³ Concern with masculine and national endeavour was an important element of the link between anti-slavery and geographical exploration. William Cope Devereux and George Lydiard Sullivan both prefaced their published accounts by outlining the history of Livingstone's explorations of Africa, and his subsequent call to arms against the slave trade. Sullivan regretted that the East African slave trade had gone so long unnoticed by the British public, but he could not 'suppress a feeling of pride that our determined efforts at its suppression . . . have at last

¹¹ See below, pp. 193-4.

¹² Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 22.

¹³ Hallett, 'Changing European Attitudes', p. 468.

had the effect of bringing the whole subject before the world'. He described the Royal Navy as an 'eyewitness to what was going on'. The navy was able to attest to Livingstone's accounts of the worsening nature of the slave trade.¹⁴ Written the same year that Livingstone died, these words reflected the belief that the naval anti-slavery campaign was both a continuation and a response to Livingstone's appeal to the outside world to intervene in the East African slave trade. The *Daily Telegraph* expressed just that view. Summing up national sentiment, it wrote in its obituary of Livingstone: 'The work of England for Africa must henceforth begin in earnest where Livingstone left off'.¹⁵ For many naval officers, this was exactly how they imagined their work on the anti-slavery patrols. This point is no better summed up than in the concluding lines of Sullivan's account, when he stated, 'Africa has to be civilised and Christianized, and eventually must be. When is the work to be commenced? Are we to postpone it for future generations to accomplish?'¹⁶

Sub-lieutenant George Gordon closed his retrospective account, written in 1932, with a page dedicated to Livingstone. His description focused on many of the typical themes:

Livingstone's work and life in Central Africa, his constant fight against the Slave Trade and its cruelties, that were depopulating thousands of square miles, and laying waste large tracts of the country, is all too well known for repetition here. His geographical discoveries filled up large blanks in the African map, adding much to our knowledge in that region.¹⁷

Frederick Burrows, who served in the late 1860s, and William Creswell, in the late 1870s, similarly framed their memories of suppression in Livingstone's image. Burrows entitled his memoirs: 'Interesting Stories of Fighting with the Slavers in the days when Livingstone was

¹⁴ Devereux, *A Cruise*, introduction; Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, pp. 60, 1.

¹⁵ Quoted in Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 294.

¹⁷ Gordon, NMM, FIE/43, p. 140.

grappling with the slave trade'. Burrows also recorded encountering Livingstone through his crew's involvement in the Zambezi expedition.¹⁸ Creswell stated: 'It was, I think, Livingstone's moving descriptions and bitter complaints of the ravages and murdering outrages of the Arab slave hunters that first brought our cruisers to this coast'.¹⁹ That Livingstone played a crucial role in reinvigorating the British anti-slavery cause is undeniable. However, Creswell's belief that Livingstone's work had been the singular cause of the campaign demonstrates the way in which myth and truth surrounding Livingstone became increasingly intertwined within the history of British anti-slavery in East Africa. It also shows that naval officers were active in shaping this narrative. For them the Livingstone story stood out as an outstanding page in Britain's national history, and one which through their own work on the anti-slavery patrols they had played a part in writing.

Naval officers and Christian missions

The link between the navy anti-slavery squadron and the missionary cause was, however, more than rhetorical. In fact it was not uncommon for the anti-slavery crews to visit mission stations. Ministers frequently provided religious services for naval crews when they called at mission stations, and sometimes they provided medical care to the squadron.²⁰ In the 1880s, in particular, many social events for the squadron centred on the coastal mission stations.²¹ It was here that naval men sometimes reacquainted themselves with some of the slaves they had rescued. This aspect of the squadron's activities has not been previously explored. As the next chapter shows, the Africans freed by the navy

¹⁸ Frederick Robert Burrows (1836-1920), memoirs of service in East Africa, NMM, MS79/091.

¹⁹ Creswell, *Close to the Wind*, p. 145.

²⁰ George Herbert Wilson, *The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, (London: UMCA, 1936), p. 27.

²¹ Several accounts used in this thesis mention such events. In particular the letters of Tristan Dannreuther, NMM, DAN/73; Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*; and the diaries of George King-Hall, RNM, 1995.150/1-2.

became central to missionary activities in the region, and to wider debates about civilising plans for Eastern and Central Africa. In fact the provision of care for freed slaves was one of the principal factors which attracted missions to East Africa during this period.²² Between 1863 and 1888, seven mission societies established themselves in the region.²³ The most prominent Anglican societies involved in the care of freed slaves were the evangelical CMS and the High Church UMCA. The CMS was the first society to work in East Africa. Following its work at Sierra Leone, it founded Freretown at Mombasa in 1875, which became the largest freed slave settlement in East Africa. The United Free Methodists also established freed slave settlements in the Mombasa region, and the UMCA established a number of missions around Zanzibar. The French Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers founded settlements at Bagamoyo, on the mainland coast opposite Zanzibar. The White Fathers (French Catholic), The LMS (Anglican, interdenominational), and the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (both Presbyterian) principally worked inland, and were therefore less centrally involved in the care of liberated Africans.²⁴ The range of different denominations working in East Africa mirrors how religious pluralism rather than Anglican precedence dominated in other parts of the empire, notably in the settler colonies of Canada, the Cape, Australia and New Zealand, and in Britain itself.²⁵ These various denominations espoused significantly divergent forms of Christianity and missionary ideology.²⁶ Chapter 7 will show that although disagreements existed over what form post-emancipation care for liberated Africans should take, the majority of naval officers believed unquestionably in the 'civilising' powers of Christianity, and that this should form the bedrock of their tutelage. This thinking should not necessarily be

²² Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 16.

²³ Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 510.

²⁴ For an overview of European missionary expansion within East Africa in this period see *ibid.*, ch. 9 and Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, particularly chs. 1-2. The attitudes of naval officers towards the different theological approaches of the missions they visited will be explored in chapter 7.

²⁵ Hilary M. Carey, 'Introduction: Empires of Religion' in Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion*, pp 1-21, p. 8; McLeod, 'Protestantism and British Identity', p. 59.

²⁶ See, for example, the collected essays in Carey, *Empires of Religion*.

interpreted as an especially pious outlook on the part of officers, but as part of an engrained world-view and a key aspect of British national identity.

Reverend John Dougherty, chaplain of HMS *Garnet* between 1887 and 1890, stated that the most pleasing part of an excursion to one of the UMCA missions near Zanzibar was the 'visit of the little redeemed slaves from the Mission at Mkunazini . . . Most of them were captured by our boats from slave traders'.²⁷ In 1889 Tristan Dannreuther described visiting some of 'our slave children who had been turned into Mission children after being freed by the consul general'.²⁸ The notion that these Africans had literally been transformed (or to use an evangelical phrase – reborn) through the dual moments of emancipation and conversion was one widely held by British missionaries and abolitionists.²⁹ In Dannreuther's case, however, these were not the words of a staunch evangelist, but they reflected the widely-held perception that Africans were characterised by what they lacked. Prior to coming into contact with their civilisers they were seen to be merely empty vessels, who would only begin to learn at the point of conversion.

A common focus of such visits entailed surveying the content of education provided to freed-slave children. Schooling was at the core of the civilising mission. It was seen as one of the most effective means of encouraging Africans (and other indigenous peoples around the globe) to adopt Britain's cultural values and abandon their own. A defining moment in the creation of this discourse had been the Orientalist-Anglicist debate in India in the early-nineteenth century. Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* in 1835 put into practice the notion that Anglicisation was the best way to civilise

²⁷ The UMCA's work in East Africa began with the attempts of Livingstone and his party to establish a mission at Nyasa (present-day Malawi). A combination of tribal hostilities and disease forced the abandonment of the mission, and relocation to Zanzibar in 1866. From this point onwards, the UMCA, like other missionary societies, became heavily involved in establishing freed slave settlements along the East African coast. The UMCA founded a number of schools and settlements around Zanzibar.

²⁸ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 8 November 1889, NMM, DAN/73.

²⁹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 344.

and educate Indians.³⁰ For naval officers visiting the missionary schools in East Africa during the 1880s, it was with unconditional approval that they witnessed the apparent transformation of freed slaves previously marked by their literal and metaphorical nakedness into ‘picturesquely dressed, intelligent looking children’.³¹ Particular emphasis was placed on describing the parallels between the missions and British schools. At the UMCA freed slave settlement of Mbweni, Zanzibar, Reverend John Dougherty delighted in the familiarity of the singing lesson he observed:

You will find no difference here from what you see at home in our public elementary schools. The Governess first practised the songs with calisthenics and they sang songs in Swahili our ears being familiar with the airs . . . Rose, a native girl, finished with an English song, “When there’s love at home”, and the chorus was taken up by us all. While this was going on, a well spread tea was being prepared in the garden by the senior girls.³²

Commander George King-Hall similarly approved of the CMS freed slave settlement of Rabai near Mombasa on the grounds of its ‘Englishness’. ‘I was pleased with Freretown’, he stated, ‘but Rabai quite charmed me, so like in some ways life in an English village’.³³ At Freretown, he observed girls and boys making their own clothes. And conforming to the notion that labour was a crucial element of the civilising process he, like others, particularly approved of the practical elements of the children’s education.

The pioneering work of missionaries in the teaching and translating of languages was emphasised through the children’s proficiency in English and Swahili. Chaplain of HMS *London*, Reverend J. S. Knight described in 1879 that of the pupils at Freretown, ‘Very few

³⁰ Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 41-4.

³¹ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 40

³² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³³ King-Hall, on board HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 15 May 1888, RNM 1995.150/1-2.

first boys' classes in English Sunday-school would surpass them in attention, reading, or answers to questions'.³⁴ Captain Brownrigg also observed a Sunday school class at Freretown in 1881, and recorded that he 'was much struck by the intelligent answers. The answers were not given parrot fashion. They seemed clearly to understand justification by faith'.³⁵ Brownrigg approved of other typically English elements of the settlement, including the cricket pitch, and was particularly impressed by the freed slaves' ability at the sport.³⁶

Sometimes the naval crews reciprocated the hospitality of the missions by receiving freed slave children on board their ships whilst visiting the mission stations. These occasions were typically described in a sentimentalised fashion, and were infused with a sense of Christian celebration. Describing a fete day at Kiungani, the UMCA Theological College and school near Zanzibar, Dougherty described how the house and grounds were decorated with flags of 'all nations from our ships'.³⁷ When the children visited HMS *Garnet* 'they attached themselves to their old friends, many of whom had assisted in rescuing them from slavery'. The sense of benign proprietorship that naval men appeared to feel towards the slaves they had rescued was a common theme. Dougherty went on to describe how the children also 'took tea on the lower deck with all the comforts of the messes could produce, sang "Grandfather's clock" and other songs in Swahili and left overjoyed with their holiday'.³⁸ Commander King-Hall recorded receiving a group of 150 children on board HMS *Penguin* during a visit to Freretown in 1888. They 'roamed delightedly all over the ship', and gathered on the Quarterdeck to dance some Swahili dances and sing hymns. It was, he stated, 'such a great pleasure seeing all these

³⁴ *CMI*, March 1880, pp. 167-69, "A Naval Chaplain at Mombasa", Reverend J. S. Knight to the Honourable Secretary of the CMS, HMS *London*, Zanzibar, November 1879'.

³⁵ *CMI*, June 1881, p. 375.

³⁶ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 179, footnote 51.

³⁷ Following the UMCA's relocation from Nyasa to Zanzibar, Kiungani was founded by Bishop Tozer of the UMCA in 1866. In 1871, Tozer purchased further lands near Kiungani and established the freed slave settlement at Mbweni.

³⁸ Dougherty, *The East Indies Station*, p. 41.

children enjoying themselves, and my heart was full at hearing them sing of *Isa* [Jesus] when I remembered they had all been rescued from slavery by our cruisers'.³⁹

If missionaries had the responsibility for converting Africans, then within this scenario the navy's role was to seize slaves from the grips of Arab slave traders and deliver them into the arms of Christian missionaries. In one sense this was a literal reality – from the early 1870s onwards as missions became one of the main destinations for freed slaves, especially children, it was often the naval ships that transported them. But the notion of the navy as both liberator and 'deliverer' was also metaphorical, and one which was imbued with Christian symbolism. A visit by the crew of HMS *Wild Swan* in 1881 was, for example, described in the following terms:

Let our prayers to that same Lord cease not until his Right hand
and His holy right arm shall have gotten Him the victory, not only
over the enemies of freedom, but over slavery itself and all its
horrors; until multitudes of its victims shall be able to rejoice in a
higher deliverance even than a freed slave settlement or a British
man-of-war can give them . . .⁴⁰

Bishop Royston described a visit to Frere Town in 1884 in the *CMI* in a similar fashion:

At eleven we had a special English service for the sake of the crew of the
Dragon, which had brought us, and which had no chaplain. It was a very
interesting occasion, and a congregation very typical of the work now
going on in God's good providence along the East African coast; – the
union of freed slaves and their deliverers in the blessed results of
Christian liberty.⁴¹

³⁹ King-Hall, on board HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 14 May 1888, RNM 1995.150/1-2.

⁴⁰ *CMI*, June 1881, p. 49.

⁴¹ *CMI*, January 1884, p. 25.

These passages demonstrate the interconnectedness of suppression and missionary work. Both were seen to be led by the same providential objective: namely the freeing of Africans from physical and spiritual enslavement, and the defeat of their enslavers.

For many liberated Africans, life in the missionary communities bought not only conversion to Christianity, but an adaption of other Western values and structures. Many, for example, were married and started families at the mission stations.⁴² Petro Kilekwa, a liberated African who wrote an autobiography, married a Yao woman who had also been rescued by the navy, and both became UMCA missionaries.⁴³ The idea of family and the sanctity of marriage were central to the missionary project. This was also a belief widely propounded by naval officers. Captain Sullivan approved that on returning to the Seychelles a few days after landing a group of freed slaves, they had divided the large hut in which they were temporarily living into smaller rooms, the smallest of which were occupied by married couples. He even felt it his duty to make a list of the married couples to ensure that the commissioner of the islands would register them in that way.⁴⁴ King-Hall was pleased to observe that the freed slaves at Freretown got 'engaged early and marry comparatively young'.⁴⁵ Accounts of visits to the mission stations by the more religiously-minded naval officers, which appeared in missionary journals, also emphasised the family unit as an essential element of any enlightened community. Their overwhelmingly sentimentalised descriptions focused on extolling the many examples of civilisation that had been nurtured within the freed slave settlements. Typical of such an account was Reverend Knight's observations of Freretown, published in the *CMI* in 1880:

We went over to the Mission-ground, and saw how it had been laid out and planted, with the people busy tilling their plots or building their houses - great contrasts to many of the small and filthy huts of the

⁴² Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 156.

⁴³ Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest*, ch. 5.

⁴⁴ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 195.

⁴⁵ King-Hall, on board HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 13 May 1888, RNM 1995.150/1-2.

Zanzibar people. We could but wish the supporters of the CMS had been able to see the happy look of one group – a young father and mother (rescued from slavery) busily engaged in clearing the ground near their house, while their little one lay on a tiny native bedstead under the shade of a tree nearby.⁴⁶

Such representations detailed, with overwhelming approval, the manner in which British value systems had been grafted onto the freed slave communities. In this idyllic domestic scene, the necessities of a civilised life, brought about as a result of industrious labour, were emphasised as the boons of freedom.

The understanding of freedom and liberty espoused by these naval officers, at least, was largely in accord with the vision promulgated at the CMS's Anglican missionary stations. Writing in 1881, the lay superintendant at Frere Town, William Streeter, described the settlement in similar terms:

The forty houses built by the people themselves, scattered over what used to be all jungle, and the favourite haunt of lions and leopards, looked pretty and imposing, and made our people think more of their town; and as each has his own plot of ground, they worked with a will, turning up with their big jembies the hard ground (which no Arab or Swahili would touch) in great rough clods to stand 'our winter sun' – like a Britisher would his plot with a spud, to be mellowed with wind, frost and snow – so that when the winds come they had just to break it down and sow.⁴⁷

This scene similarly struck at the heart of the liberal ideal of freedom and progress. The wild African landscape, and thus by default the African, was seen to have been tamed by civilisation. Christianity had transformed indolent savages into pastoral workers, who in

⁴⁶ *CMI*, March 1880, 'A Naval Chaplain at Mombasa', pp. 167-9.

⁴⁷ *CMI*, June 1881, pp. 375-6.

Streeter's eyes were as industrious as any Briton. With the adoption of British values, these newly civilised African communities made the laziness and squalor of their Arab and Swahili neighbours all the more apparent. This was vital testimony that Christianity, to return to that phrase so powerfully expressed in Peter Parley's children's textbook, was 'the only true religion [which] tends to [the] improvement of mankind'.⁴⁸

Self-justification was always part of missionary enterprise, whether in defence of cynical opponents, or in response to setbacks caused by natives who 'refused' to be civilised.⁴⁹ The challenge which emerged in the 1880s was that Anglican missionaries were reluctantly admitting that Islam was indeed winning increasing numbers of African converts. A consequence of this was a growing tension between missionaries in Central and East Africa and surrounding Arab communities.⁵⁰ This was also exacerbated by the growing hostility of Arab slave owners who feared the object of the missions was to liberate their slaves, and destabilise domestic slavery. The late 1870s and 1880s were marked by a series of attacks on mission stations by the indigenous population, especially brought about by the problem of missions harbouring fugitive slaves.⁵¹ In Britain, missionaries also had to defend against opponents who continued to argue that Islam was a more suitable religion for Africans than Christianity – as an 'un-progressive' religion, Islam was seen to require less change for Africans in terms of their social habits.⁵² Missionary journals had a direct influence over Britain's church-going public, and with a large and popular readership were an important source for missionary fundraising in Britain.⁵³ The testimonies of reputable British naval officers who had observed first-hand the regeneration of Africans living in Christian mission stations was therefore vital propaganda. The focus on children was a common feature in the writings of naval officers, and of representations of the East African

⁴⁸ Parley, *Universal History*, p. 128.

⁴⁹ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 112.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵¹ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, pp. 169-75.

⁵² Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 121.

⁵³ Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 93.

slave trade in general. Edward Alpers has noted how the child-trope was increasingly used within abolitionist literature during the 1860s and 1870s as a way of appealing to the sentimentalities of European audiences. The context in which such representations were published and received within Britain will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.⁵⁴

Christian Symbolism, emancipation and the anti-slavery ships

If naval officers made an explicit connection between suppression and the civilising mission through locating their work alongside Livingstone's, or by visiting mission stations and extolling their many virtues, they also did so through more implicit methods. Many naval accounts of suppression were infused with symbolism and tropes that implied theirs was also part of a godly mission. In particular the post-rescue phase of naval interception was particularly rich in Christian, and especially evangelical, symbolism. It was here that freed slaves were re-named, re-clothed, and encountered new foods and languages. In some ways naval rescue was represented as the first stage of re-birth and salvation. It was on board the ship that Africans, like children, would take their first steps towards being redeemed by learning the benefits of civilisation. Representations were heavily couched in biblical language and allusions – simple actions were laden with metaphors which sought to underline the symbolic connection between physical and spiritual emancipation.

A striking example of this kind of discourse was given by Captain Sullivan, who alluding to the biblical story of creation, stated: 'One of the first things, we are told, Adam did, was to name the animals, and one of the first things done by us was to name these slaves on their being received on board'.⁵⁵ Writing retrospectively in 1931, Tristan Dannreuther also referred to the practice of re-naming in similar terms. He stated that at

⁵⁴ Edward Alpers, 'Representations of Children in the East African Slave Trade', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30:1 (2009), pp. 27-40, p. 38.

⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 175.

the christening of liberated Africans in the East African mission stations 'it was the general practice to give them all the surname of the [naval] ship which captured them; with the result that in the Mission Stations at Zanzibar and on the mainland there were some hundreds of Mr., Mrs. And Miss Boadicea, Garnet, Turquoise, Reindeer, Mariner, Kingfisher, Penguin, Griffon, Algerine and later Conquest, Brisk, Cossack, Satellite, Pigeon, Redbreast &c'.⁵⁶ Of course naming, as an act of cultural imposition, was a characteristic of British imperial expansion and colonialism at a wider level. Throughout the empire, British explorers and scientists named landscapes and species in English terms, symbolically claiming alien territories. Naming worked in different ways, as conquest and as commemoration, but also as control of hostile environments.⁵⁷ All of these elements, in addition to an evangelical one, may be seen in the renaming of Africans on the anti-slavery patrols.

Linking to the ideas of salvation, paternalism and also civilisation was the metaphor of the naval ship as a home and a place of domesticity. James Juma Mbotela, who narrated the experiences of his father who was freed by the navy, recorded how the interpreter on board the man-of-war told the freed slaves to 'have no fear, as they were in the hands of the British who would guard them with love'. Typical of Mbotela's style and his evangelical beliefs, accounts written by other freed slave Christian converts also depicted suppression in a similarly idealised way. On board, Mbotela wrote, 'good garments were given to them, and good blankets. Every morning they had porridge, nice and hot, the same as the Europeans themselves were eating'.⁵⁸ Sub-lieutenant George Gordon's account of a prize voyage on board a dhow described the 'sickening odor [sic]', and how both the freed slaves and naval crew suffered through hunger. Their arrival at

⁵⁶ Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 50.

⁵⁷ Robert A. Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire' in Porter (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, pp. 294-319, p. 315.

⁵⁸ James Juma Mbotela, *The Freeing of Slaves in East Africa* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1956), p. 46.

the naval ship three days later offered an immediate contrast: 'The slaves were taken on board the ship, and lined up in the gangway, where they got a good washing of warm water from the steam pump. Then the ship's stores were drawn upon to find something to clothe them with. This was their home for the next few days . . .'.⁵⁹ In his autobiographical account written in 1937, Petro Kilekwa described that following his rescue by a boat crew from HMS *Osprey*, the naval crew and freed slaves set up camp on a nearby island and waited for the arrival of the naval ship. Kilekwa described how 'we were two days on that island and on the third day we saw something dazzling and white out at sea with three masts and some cross beams . . . the sailors we were with on the island were delighted and told us not to be afraid and, they said "look, that's our flag and our home on the water; it travels up and down"'.⁶⁰ This vision was invoked as a kind of Damascene moment in which the Union Jack was conceived as a symbol of safety and freedom, and the ship a sanctuary to both freed slaves and sailors alike.

The ship as an embodiment of domestic order also worked in contradistinction to the long-established abolitionist trope of familial separation. Describing a series of freed slave testimonies, Captain Sullivan stated that the many similarities between the stories might be summed up as: 'fights, murders, robberies, separation from friends, long journeys, cruel treatment, and sold at some market to be taken they know not where, with *the conviction that it was impossible ever to return to their own land of relations again*'.⁶¹ In contrast the naval crews were depicted as offering paternal protection, a kind of ready-made family. Again children formed a central part of this discourse. Sullivan described a twelve-month old boy who was 'often found in the arms of the boatswain's mate. . . I believe he was never heard to cry during his six weeks on board'.⁶² In a reversal of the discourse of separation, Devereux, writing in 1869, described how the crew of HMS

⁵⁹ Gordon, NMM, FIE/43, pp. 107-8.

⁶⁰ Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest*, pp. 15-16.

⁶¹ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 186, (Sullivan's emphasis).

⁶² *Ibid.* p, 177.

Lyra watched as ‘their’ freed slaves were distributed amongst the inhabitants of the Seychelles.⁶³ In a collection of freed slave autobiographies recorded by Arthur Cornwallis Madan of the UMCA, nearly all the children described their route into slavery through stories of familial separation, and long and fractured journeying. All of this was seen to be brought to an end by naval interception, and later arrival at the mission station. Typical of the tone and style of the narratives within Madan’s collection is the way in which a Makua boy ends his tale: ‘this is the end of my story. These are my wanderings. It was God’s providence that I have come here [to the mission station]. This is the end’.⁶⁴ Emancipation was overwhelmingly presented as the end-point, as if everything previous had been leading to the moment of re-birth.

Subverting the rhetoric: African experiences of suppression

The rhetoric of trusteeship, of course, elided many aspects of the encounter between the navy and enslaved Africans. Embedded within these apparently benign texts were a number of commonly invoked tropes, metaphors and realities which spoke of the trauma and fear which Africans frequently appeared to experience during their rescue. An exploration of these can help challenge the stereotype that for Africans naval interception was a wholly positive experience or one unquestionably associated with a sense of liberty or salvation. The divergences between the experiences of Africans and the public portrayal of suppression highlight the degree to which naval texts were embedded within the self-aggrandising rhetoric of anti-slavery and empire. The idea that naval rescue was more ambiguous than portrayed through British accounts links to an argument proposed by Edward Alpers, that the ‘middle passage’ of the East African slave trade constituted a far

⁶³ Devereux, *A Cruise*, p. 143.

⁶⁴ A. C. Madan, (trs. and ed.), *Kiungani; or, Story and History from Central Africa. Written by Boys in the Schools of the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), p. 45.

more complex set of fractured and multiple journeys than is usually assumed. From the moment individuals were enslaved inland they began a process of continued cultural readjustment in order to ensure personal survival.⁶⁵ Naval interception may have constituted yet another traumatic phase in the journey of enslaved Africans. Read in this way, this section represents a departure from many of the self-glorifying contemporary and historical accounts of suppression.

The point at which slave dhows were seized by the navy appears to have been a period of overt physical and mental distress for enslaved Africans. But because so little is known of Africans' experiences of enslavement prior to naval seizure, this may have been one in a continuing series of traumas. Both the official and unofficial records of naval suppression are littered with frequent accounts of bungled rescue attempts. These often resulted in high rates of injury and mortality – principally amongst the enslaved. The Admiralty return from January 1870 to March 1875, for example, recorded that of the 2,422 slaves 'captured' by the anti-slavery squadron, 1,733 were emancipated. The difference between these two figures – 689 individuals – was attributed to the number who had died between naval seizure and adjudication at the Vice Admiralty Court (approximately thirty nine of this group were, however, 'not condemned' on the basis of a legal ruling). The number of slaves who died at the point of seizure was not listed, principally because this was probably unknown. But some are likely to have been amongst those sometimes recorded as 'slaves escaped'.⁶⁶

An earlier example of an extreme case of African mortality on board a naval ship was recorded by naval chaplain Reverend Pascoe Greenfell Hill in his indicting account of

⁶⁵ Alpers, 'The Other Middle Passage', p. 21.

⁶⁶ 'Return of vessels captured for being engaged and equipped for Slave Trade: 1870-1875', *PP* (326) 1875. It is difficult to be completely precise with figures: some slaves were later returned to owners and the figures are not always clear. The thirty nine who were not freed were from a number of different seizures. A variety of legal reasons prevented the cases from being condemned. The seizures that were not condemned were small, consisting of one or two slaves. In some cases slaves were returned to owners as they were believed to be part of the dhow crew, rather than intended for sale, and as a result did not contravene anti-slavery treaties.

suppression, *Fifty Days Onboard A Slave Vessel In the Mozambique Channel In April and May, 1843*.⁶⁷ Hill's eyewitness narrative detailed the notorious case of the *Progresso*, a Brazilian slave brig that had been seized with a cargo of 444 slaves by HMS *Cleopatra* off the coast of Madagascar. Of the freed slaves landed at the Cape Station fifty days later, only 207 survived. The loss of over 200 Africans was largely attributed to their appalling treatment by the British naval crew. In describing the horrors of this journey, Hill's frequent allusion to images of the middle passage sought to invert the very principle of the 'freedom' of suppression. While Hill's account should be placed in the context of the 1840s British parliamentary conflict that surrounded the Royal Navy's Atlantic suppression campaign, his narrative provides a useful springboard from which to consider later accounts of suppression, and provides a precedence for questioning the supposed 'freedom' of naval suppression.

Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther recorded a number of chaotic rescue attempts. On one occasion Dannreuther described how two of his colleagues had been awarded medals by the Royal Humane Society: 'Lt. Pochin for jumping overboard after a mad slave at Lamu with a strong tide running . . . and Novis for jumping overboard after a pack of drowning slaves twice when a dhow capsized as we were boarding her in Pemba'.⁶⁸ It is notable that Dannreuther described the actions of the slave as 'mad'. Other naval men also perceived the mental state of freed slaves in ways that implied either irrational or more often, passive behaviour. Reflecting a widely-held racial stereotype, Colomb devoted part of a chapter of his published account to 'the docility of the negro'. He reflected with surprise how 'the sight of a man-of-war, the movement, the utter newness and strangeness of the scene' did nothing to provoke any element of inquisitiveness in the

⁶⁷ Reverend Pascoe Grenfell Hill, *Fifty Days on Board a Slave-Vessel in the Mozambique Channel in April and May 1843* (London: John Murray, 1844).

⁶⁸ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, ? August 1888, NMM, DAN/73.

freed slaves.⁶⁹ Dannreuther described a woman who had been injured during a rescue attempt in a similar tone:

They [the freed slaves] seemed insensible to pain. The writer saw a woman, who had been accidentally shot in the breast in a dhow action, smiling whilst being pierced repeatedly by a six-inch probe by the surgeon and apparently only pleased that he was doing the best to locate the bullet for extraction. . . . On coming on board for the first time they displayed no curiosity such as even a dog will show on entering such a strange place.⁷⁰

Dannreuther's and Colomb's responses saw the behaviour of the freed slaves as racially attributable. Others, however, were more sensitive to the potential trauma of naval rescue. Frederick Burrows, for example, recalled: 'Of course we used to fire a gun sometimes across there [sic] bow to frighten the slavers but that used to plunge the native people into agonies of terror and make them believe we were worse enemies than the Arabs. They would sometimes throw themselves over board and chance whether they got to shore'.⁷¹ Shooting at suspected slave-trading dhows was routine practice on the anti-slavery patrols. This last example not only highlights the trauma of rescue, but also the desperate attempts to which Africans were prepared to go to escape the experience. Clearly, for the enslaved Africans, it was not always instantly apparent that the naval ships represented salvation, or in fact anything close to it. Not surprisingly, the reality was far more complex than presented in the rhetoric of the accounts of officers and freed slave Christian converts.

While the initial seizure may have been the most overtly distressing phase of rescue, the records also suggest that Africans experienced a continuing sense of

⁶⁹ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 268-9.

⁷⁰ Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 49.

⁷¹ Burrows, NMM, MS79/091.

dislocation on board the naval ships. Naval officers frequently reported that freed Africans were suspicious of the motives of the anti-slavery crews as a result of Arab slave traders creating rumours of European cannibalism. Some were shocked to find that the Africans' anxiety was so great that, even in their emaciated state, they still refused to eat food offered by the naval crew.⁷² A typical description of this fear was narrated by a Nyasa boy who had been rescued by HMS *Briton* and whose account formed part of the collection of freed slave autobiographies recorded by Madan in 1887. He stated: 'On the "Briton", when we were brought biscuit we were afraid to eat it, for we thought it was made of men's bones and given to fatten us up'.⁷³ The sense of mistrust felt by the freed slaves aboard the naval ships was commonly couched in these terms, and appears frequently in the other accounts recorded by Madan. In fact there is evidence to suggest that naval men made no attempts to assuage such fears, but sometimes played on them as a source of entertainment. Another boy, for example, remembered 'every time the sailors brought out their swords and guns for drill, and pretended to attack us, ah! We were very much afraid and said: "To-day we shall certainly be eaten"', but in a typically benign way the boy quickly reassures the reader that, 'after all, they were only in play'.⁷⁴ Midshipman Dannreuther told his mother in passing that when freed slaves were on board HMS *Garnet* 'We used to make the children fight over bananas, which they considered a great luxury'.⁷⁵ The troubling realities that emerge from such statements were glossed over in the sentimental British accounts of the anti-slavery patrols.

The unusual nature of anti-slavery work produced among the naval crews a tension between the responsibility of having freed slaves on board and carrying out 'ordinary' shipboard duties. At its mildest, this sense of conflict was characterised by frustration that the freed slaves impeded normal on-board routine. Walter Kingon,

⁷² Dannreuther, 'Slave Cruising', p. 49.

⁷³ Madan, *Kiungani*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Bombay, 8 November 1889, NMM, DAN/73.

Master-at-Arms on HMS *Thetis*, for example, noted in his journal in 1874 the relief of landing a group of freed slaves at the Seychelles as they were 'a complete nuisance in the ship'.⁷⁶ Official guidance in terms of how freed slaves should be treated on naval ships was glaringly brief. The Admiralty Instructions issued to naval officers working on anti-slavery patrols included one cursory paragraph on the subject, which stated:

If Slaves should be on board, every effort is to be made to alleviate the sufferings and improve their condition, by a careful attention to cleanliness and ventilation, by separating the sickly from those who are in good health, by encouraging the Slaves to feel confidence in Her Majesty's Officers and men, and promoting among them cheerfulness and exercise.⁷⁷

Practical provision for accommodating freed slaves on board was also deficient. Naval crews tended to supplement the lack of provisions with items from their own stores or by pillaging the cargoes of seized dhows for items such as cooking utensils, food, matting, and calico, which was provided to freed slaves as clothing.⁷⁸ Again the reality presented a sharp contrast to the accounts explored above, in which the naval ship was represented through tropes of domesticity and homeliness.

One of the ways in which the naval crews attempted to cope with the perceived disorder of freed slaves was to introduce familiar shipboard rules and routines. The structured daily routine was used to organise the freed slaves in similar ways to the naval crew. James Juma Mbotela described how some of the freed slaves on board HMS *Thetis* were so scared by the pipe whistle used to give orders that they jumped overboard.⁷⁹

Washing took place in the morning, by means of the ship's pump, and Colomb described

⁷⁶ Journal kept by Walter Kingon on board HMS *Thetis*, 1874-1876, during anti-slavery patrols around Zanzibar, RNM, 2008.11(1).

⁷⁷ 'Instructions For The Guidance Of Her Majesty's Naval Officers Employed In The Suppression Of The Slave Trade', *PP* (577) 1844.

⁷⁸ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 277-8; Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 180.

⁷⁹ Mbotela, *Freeing of Slaves*, p. 46.

how the Africans were fed in grouped 'messes' at 7.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.⁸⁰ In their efforts to 'civilise', the naval crews also introduced Africans to what they perceived to be acceptable domestic arrangements. One of the first tasks undertaken when freed slaves came on board was to separate them into men, women and children.⁸¹ According to Lieutenant John Challice, writing in 1872, the Africans remained largely separated throughout their time on the ship, with the men and women living on either side of the quarter-deck.⁸² The unique situation of having large groups of women on board naval ships was also no doubt part of the reason for gender separation. It also probably reflected fears of the supposed sexual incontinence of Africans.

It is difficult to know how much the freed slaves would have understood of these strange shipboard routines and alien surroundings. In theory the interpreters employed on the anti-slavery squadron offered the necessary linguistic link between the naval crews and the freed slaves. In his autobiography, Petro Kilekwa portrayed the role of the interpreter in this idealised light:

A European and a black man peered down into the lower deck and saw us slaves, ever so many of us, and when we saw the face of the European we were terrified. We were quite sure that Europeans eat people but the European said to a black man: 'Tell them not to be afraid but let them rejoice,' and the European began to smile and laugh.⁸³

The interpreter, depicted as ally of both Briton and African, was represented as a bridge between the navy and the freed slaves. Kilekwa's idealised account was, however, likely to have been at odds with the experiences of many individuals. In reality, interpreters rarely had full command of the many regional languages spoken by enslaved Africans seized in

⁸⁰ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 278.

⁸¹ Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest*, p. 16; Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 175.

⁸² Challice, 'In Pursuit of Slavers', p. 307. Gender separation was also implemented on board transatlantic slave ships.

⁸³ Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest*, p. 15.

Indian Ocean waters.⁸⁴ A single shipload of enslaved Africans probably consisted of individuals from many different ethnic backgrounds. Captain Sullivan noted that there were individuals from eleven different tribes on board HMS *Daphne*, and only those who had some grasp of Swahili could be understood by the interpreter.⁸⁵ Sullivan's account of the freed slaves' testimonies recorded on board reflects the potentially directed tone of the questions posed by the interviewer. They also highlight, however, an admission as to the ambiguity of naval rescue. Asked 'Were you glad when this ship captured your dhow?' one woman answered 'She did not know she would be free'.⁸⁶ How much the freed slaves initially understood of the unfamiliar environment of the naval ship can only be surmised. Their apparent irrational and 'docile' behaviour reflects a racist characterisation on the part of naval officers, but also probably speaks of the physical and mental scars of enslavement. This was clearly intensified by the linguistic isolation and deep confusion many individuals must have felt on board the anti-slavery ships. This interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that missionaries often reported groups of freed slaves arriving at their settlements from the anti-slavery ships suffering from extreme physical and mental illnesses.⁸⁷

At a more insidious level, the attempts by some naval crews to re-introduce a sense of order to the ships involved practices that were clearly in opposition to expected ideas of liberty or humanitarianism. In Pascoe Greenfell Hill's account the naval officers responded to the challenge of sailing the Brazilian brig, and the perceived disorder of the Africans, by imprisoning them below deck. This action led to fifty four individuals being crushed to death. While this incident was so appalling that the case became notorious, the

⁸⁴ Alpers and Hopper, 'Parler en son nom?', p. 800.

⁸⁵ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 189.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁸⁷ Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 64.

practice of confining freed slaves did not appear to be entirely uncommon.⁸⁸ George Gordon's retrospective account of a dhow seizure provides insight into such an incident.⁸⁹ The account also offers a window on to one of the enduring conflicts of the navy's anti-slavery campaign in the western Indian Ocean region: the difficulties of distinguishing between illegally-traded slaves and legally-owned domestic slaves.

Gordon's account detailed a dhow seizure made during a routine boat patrol in July 1873 in the Mozambique Channel. The date is significant, as it directly followed the signing of the 1873 Frere Treaty. As outlined in chapter 1, a major loophole of this treaty was that it permitted the continued carrying of 'domestic' slaves on board dhows. This severely hampered the navy's ability to enforce the treaty successfully. As was often the case, Gordon's account reveals that on boarding the dhow, the small naval crew encountered a typically mixed group of individuals. According to Gordon there was a large crew, some 120 slaves, and a number of passengers who were found below deck with the slaves. Despite uncertainty over the identity of these individuals, the passengers were interpreted as 'evidently the owners of the slaves'. Having made this assessment, the naval crew proceeded to restrain both the crew and passengers by tying them to the side of the dhow with ropes. The following morning four or five women, who had been hidden at the time of seizure, emerged from the stern looking for food and water. Again ignoring their doubts over who these women were, the naval crew decided they were 'evidently the wives of the passengers, or belonging to them'. Gordon stated that 'fearing treachery, we locked them up again, passing food and water into them'. Gordon, and a crew of four men, then faced the task of sailing the dhow to Majunga (north-west Madagascar) in order to locate HMS *Briton* and deliver their prize. For the naval crew the challenge of this journey was evident: 'Watching our prisoners, feeding them, and the slaves, and handling

⁸⁸ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, Zanzibar, 29 July 1888, NMM, DAN/79. Dannreuther makes an incidental reference to slaves being kept below deck on HMS *Garnet* in this letter.

⁸⁹ Gordon, NMM, FIE/43, pp. 106-8.

the dhow, kept us busy all day'. In the evening, he stated, 'we returned the slaves to their deck below, as it would have been impossible to manage the sail at night, with so many getting in the way'. Despite the physically constrained conditions of the lower deck, which Gordon described in detail, together with the 'sickening' smell, the Africans were placed below deck on both nights of the three-day journey. At the end of the journey, the naval crew's sense of relief was palpable: 'The third day found us rounding the point at the entrance of Majunga, and to our great joy, we saw there our ship! . . . Glad indeed we were to be relieved from our responsibility and surroundings. The odor [sic] had been sickening, and our food the same as the slaves, with the addition of coffee and biscuits, for there was nothing else'.⁹⁰

This account reveals a number of striking insights about the nature of the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean region, and of naval men's attitudes towards implementing its suppression. Overwhelmingly it emphasises the complexity of the slave trade. Slaves often passed through the hands of many different owners.⁹¹ Similarly, that a slave on board a dhow ostensibly accompanying his or her master or working as crew could easily become, in the words of Admiral Leopold Heath, a 'saleable item' was a point continually pressed by naval officials throughout the 1870s.⁹² By this date the Admiralty instructions for suppression, which were initially based on west coast experiences, had been revised. The long list of equipment constituting fittings that identified slave trading vessels in the Atlantic context was found to be largely irrelevant in the Indian Ocean. The fact that slaves were often not restrained on board dhows was widely interpreted as further evidence of the 'benign' nature of 'Arab slavery'.⁹³ In this case, passengers who might or might not have been free individuals were imprisoned against their will by the naval crew. The 120 individuals who were judged unquestionably to be slaves were also

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Alpers, 'The Other Middle Passage', p. 33.

⁹² Commodore Heath to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Bombay, 12 Jan 1870, TNA, FO84/1328.

⁹³ See Colomb, *Slave Catching*, pp. 42-3.

restrained at times during the voyage, and the naval crew itself felt 'liberated' from its responsibility at the end of the journey. Gordon's account emphasises the ambiguous nature of 'freedom' on the anti-slavery patrols for officers and slaves alike. The boundary between enslavement and freedom was evidently far less sharply defined than represented in idealised accounts of naval suppression.

Speaking in 1869, Admiral Leopold Heath, the commander of the anti-slavery squadron stated 'every man putting his foot upon English soil becomes *ipso facto* free, and the deck of a British man-of-war is held constructively to be British territory'.⁹⁴ Freedom, at least as an ideological concept, was unquestionably the expected consequence of British naval interception. The same message dominated popular representations of the campaign. The prevailing image seemed to suggest that once Africans set foot on British ships they became free individuals. Idealised accounts saw naval crews not only rescuing Africans but delivering them into a life blessed with all the advantages of civilisation and Christianity. In this light, naval rescue was seen as bringing nothing but benefits to Africans. Recent scholarship on the history of anti-slavery has sought to demonstrate that whilst legal abolition is commonly depicted as 'a narrative endpoint', for the ex-slaves freedom often remained an unachievable reality.⁹⁵ This examination of the experiences of Africans on board the anti-slavery ships has highlighted the varying interpretations of freedom that existed in the context of the navy's campaign. Clearly it was not always obvious to African slaves that naval rescue meant freedom. Emancipation, as a consequence of naval interception, was 'bestowed' in worst-case examples through highly

⁹⁴ Commodore Heath to Consul Pakenham, Seychelles, 14 August 1869, TNA, ADM 1/6402. This statement was made in connection to the debate over fugitive slaves seeking asylum on board naval ships. Heath's statement was strongly resonant of the 1772 Somerset case. The details of this well-known case had far-reaching implications for the early British abolitionist movement, and debates about the legal status of slaves in England. Somerset's advocates argued that the air of England was too pure for slaves to breathe in, for 'the moment [slaves] put their feet on English ground, that moment they become free'.

⁹⁵ Joel Quirk, 'Ending Slavery in all its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective', *International Journal of Human Rights*, 12:4 (2008), pp. 529-554.

dubious means. Moreover, as the following chapter shows, that the lives of many liberated Africans settled in the region paralleled the lives of indentured labourers further questions the substantive outcomes of suppression and underlines the ambiguous nature of freedom within the British anti-slavery campaign.

CHAPTER 7

British responses to the 'problem' of liberated Africans

The previous chapter explored the idea that for Africans freedom was not always an obvious outcome of rescue by the anti-slavery squadron. This chapter extends that argument by looking at what happened to slaves after they had been liberated, and in particular how Britons in East Africa and London responded to this issue. Prior to the 1870s, little serious thought had been given to what would actually be done with ex-slaves. Lacking an equivalent to Sierra Leone, the settlement of slaves freed in the western Indian Ocean was unsystematic and often exploitative.¹ This had become a significant problem by the 1870s. The overwhelming lack of post-emancipation care was seen to be undermining the humanitarian objectives of Britain's anti-slavery campaign. Sir Bartle Frere was particularly influential in highlighting this problem, as too, was the CMS.² It accordingly formed a central focus of the 1871 Parliamentary Select Committee, which recommended that 'the disposal of the liberated slaves becomes a matter of large importance'.³ Instructed by the government to report and advise on the problem of freed slaves, a great deal of Frere's correspondence from his anti-slavery 'mission' focused on this issue. He made detailed observations of European missionary work being undertaken in East Africa. He also described the care provided to liberated Africans and offered proposals for its improvement.⁴ From this point, and throughout the 1870s, the question of how freed slaves might be cared for became one of the central questions of the East African anti-slavery campaign.

¹ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 112.

² *Ibid.* pp. 112, 150-4.

³ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. ix.

⁴ *PP 1873 (C.820)*, 'Correspondence respecting Sir Bartle Frere's mission to the East Coast of Africa', pp. 117-40. Frere published his observations and recommendations in *Eastern Africa as a Field for Missionary Labour* (1874).

Pragmatic factors such as costs, facilities, and the ability to transport freed slaves to different destinations necessarily influenced discussions about how freed slaves should be cared for. But at a deeper level, responses to the issue were shaped by fundamental ideological beliefs which lay at the intersection of Britain's anti-slavery mission, its civilising vision and its imperial priorities. It is these elements that this chapter will explore. Many believed that, having embarked on the campaign of slave-trade suppression, Britain was bound by a continued sense of responsibility to provide protection to the Africans it had freed. This widely-held view was summed up by Clement Hill (clerk in the African department of the Foreign Office) in 1873 when he stated 'It is clear that Great Britain . . . who has taken on herself the duty of liberating slaves, is bound, even at a large cost, to see that they are not sufferers by her acts'.⁵ The problem of freed slaves brought the question of imperial trusteeship to centre stage. It prompted debates over the nation's responsibility to these newly freed Africans, what shape that responsibility should or would take, and what form the 'freedom' of liberated Africans would ultimately constitute. In a sense these were questions that Britain had previously encountered in its handling of West Indian emancipation. And just as in the post-slavery Atlantic context, ideas of responsibility were similarly contested between different groups of Britons. What emerged was essentially a divide between popular and imperial notions of trusteeship. These views were not mutually exclusive but, as this chapter will show, often overlapped in various ways.

The problem of freed slaves

When asked by the Select Committee of 1871 his opinion of Aden as a destination for freed slaves, Captain Philip Colomb stated: 'I have always thought that the worst thing that could happen to a slave was to be captured by one of Her Majesty's ships; because

⁵ Quoted in Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 57.

there is no opening after that. He spends a happy time on board the ship, but his after career is quite a doubtful one'.⁶ In fact, those liberated at Aden experienced some of the worst conditions. In 1868, upon being informed by Captain de Kantzow of HMS *Star* that three to four hundred Africans would soon be landed at Aden, the British political resident, Sir Edward Russell wrote to the Indian Government requesting relief from this 'burden'. The addition to the population was, he stated, too great for 'this isolated settlement to bear'.⁷ A previous arrival of 134 freed slaves with smallpox had already stretched the inadequate medical facilities of the town.⁸ As previously explained, the priority of maintaining diplomatic stability in the Persian Gulf region led the Indian Government to view suppression as an imperial rather than Indian priority. Six months after Russell's first complaint, the then acting-political resident again emphasised the inadequacy of support and lack of available employment for freed slaves at Aden. Consequently, he stated, the Africans soon became 'dissatisfied with their new mode of life', and in the search for an alternative 'run away from their protectors, and then give this Department endless trouble as well as responsibility'.⁹ The language used here was characteristic of how liberated Africans were often perceived by British officials in East Africa. Certainly they were viewed by many as a 'problem' group. Much of the first half of Sir John Kirk's term as British consul at Zanzibar (1866-1886) was troubled by the continuing matter of where to settle freed slaves. Denied the additional consular staff to help manage the issue, Kirk spent much of his time trying to ensure that his office did not bear the financial burden of providing for liberated Africans in Zanzibar.¹⁰

⁶ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 83.

⁷ Sir Edward Russell, Major General Resident at Aden to the Secretary to Government Bombay, 24 December 1868, TNA, FO 84/1310.

⁸ Commodore Leopold Heath to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 5 April 1869, enclosure, TNA, FO 84/1310.

⁹ Captain Goodfellow to the Under-Secretary of State for India, Aden, 13 July 1869, IOR/L/PS/18/84.

¹⁰ Sir John Kirk to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zanzibar, 22 September 1871, TNA, FO 84/1344; Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, pp. 117-8.

In many ways Colomb's view got to the crux of the debate. Asked if 'their lot as liberated slaves is rather worse than their lot as slaves in Arabia?', the naval captain replied, 'I think so'.¹¹ Although this response must be tempered by the fact that Arab slavery was widely thought of as benign, this was still nevertheless a shocking admission. Colomb's was not an isolated voice. In fact, his statements to the Select Committee echoed the views of a number of other senior naval officers. Rear Admiral James Cockburn, Commander of the East Indies Station between 1871 and 1872, stated that the treatment of liberated Africans had been left to 'a hasty hope and chapter of accidents'.¹² Similarly, Captain Sullivan, who so solemnly believed suppression to be vital to the civilisation of Africa, stated in his final report in 1875:

with respect to the subject of the suppression of the slave trade and its accomplishment I would remark that no treaties and no efforts however great will lessen the traffic to any extent until the question of what is to become of the liberated African receives its due attention and consideration and a better and more certain freedom ensured to him.¹³

These officers believed that suppression was merely a palliative to more deeply-rooted problems. Although they questioned the idea that naval suppression alone would lead to freedom, they never, however, proposed that the campaign should be abandoned. Instead, they used such evidence to argue that suppression would only be successful if it worked alongside the 'internal' work of the opening-up and civilising of Africa. As highlighted in the previous chapter, for naval officers, suppression was seen to be integral to this greater vision.

¹¹ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 83.

¹² Rear Admiral Cockburn to the Secretary of the Admiralty, undated, 1871, TNA, ADM 1/6190.

¹³ Captain Sullivan to Rear Admiral Macdonald, Zanzibar, 17 November 1875, TNA, FO 84/1457.

As well as Aden, slaves freed in the 1860s were also settled in Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Bombay.¹⁴ The ultimate destination was as much the consequence of whichever settlement was closest to the slave dhow's seizure, or whichever was most favoured by the naval captain.¹⁵ With the exception of Aden, which had been governed by the Bombay Government since 1837, all were British colonies. Later in the 1870s, Natal became another British colony added to the list of destinations for freed slaves.¹⁶ A large proportion of Africans freed from the mid 1870s were also settled within the territory of the Zanzibar Sultanate, either in Zanzibar itself, or in the recently established European mission stations. Between 1873 and 1877, the CMS, the French Holy Ghost Mission, and the UMCA jointly took in 1,000 liberated Africans.¹⁷ The growing involvement of missionaries in the region has generally been viewed by historians as the beginning of a more systematic provision of care for liberated Africans, and a move away from the haphazardness that characterised the period of the 1860s.¹⁸ This being said, missions tended to favour taking in children and the prospects for adults often remained poor.

The experiences of liberated Africans tended to reflect the local conditions and policies of the different regions in which they were settled. However, there also existed commonalities of experience, not only between groups of freed slaves but also between them and indentured labourers. In many cases freed slaves were placed in employment in British colonies with planters and other private bodies. In Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Natal, freed Africans were placed under the same regulations as indentured Indian

¹⁴ The best general histories of liberated Africans in the western Indian Ocean region are Joseph E. Harris, *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, pp. 111-25, 150-60. Regional histories include Moses Nwulia, *The History of Slavery in Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1810-1875* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981); Deryck Scarr, *Seychelles since 1770: A History of a Slave and Post-Slave Society* (London: Hurst, 1999); Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen, 'Islam among the Zanzibaris of South Africa', *History of Religions*, 31:3 (1992), pp. 305-320. For the earlier part of the nineteenth century see Christopher Saunders, 'Liberated Africans in Cape Colony in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18:2 (1985), pp. 223-239.

¹⁵ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 69.

¹⁶ See Oosthuizen, 'Islam among the Zanzibaris', pp. 305-8.

¹⁷ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 157.

¹⁸ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 121; Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, pp. 16-49.

labourers. They were apprenticed or 'engaged' for a period of between three and five years, after which time they were 'freed' and allowed to settle in that place. In Mauritius and the Seychelles, Africans were generally employed as plantation or road labourers. In Natal they worked principally as plantation labourers, with children employed as domestic servants.¹⁹ In Aden, Bombay and Zanzibar, freed slaves were either employed privately with families, or alternatively they were simply let go in the hope that they would find some means of employment. Men often acquired jobs as sailors, porters, dock workers or general labourers, and women usually worked in domestic situations.²⁰

Liberated Africans were often at the mercy of the economic fluctuations of the settlements into which they were landed. Generally they were only 'gladly received' when labour was in demand.²¹ Sir John Kirk, who as British consul in Zanzibar had responsibility for the settlement of liberated Africans, did his utmost to ensure they were only sent to destinations in which there were employment openings.²² There was strong aversion to settling freed slaves in territories which did not come under either formal or informal British control. Certainly this reflected the fact that these individuals represented a useful labour source which was economically advantageous to imperial agendas. Underlying the objective of encouraging commerce was also the long-held premise that free labour would help stem demand for slave labour. Placing freed slaves under British control also theoretically meant that they would be fully protected by British legislation. The government's thinking in terms of its rights and responsibilities towards freed slaves was clearly summed up by a Foreign Office memo written in 1875:

¹⁹ Lieutenant Governor Henry Hulwey to the Earl of Carnarvon, Natal, 1 February 1878, Enclosure 5 in No. 23, TNA, CO 179/126.

²⁰ Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*, pp. 66-76; Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, pp. 112-15; Oosthuizen, 'Islam among the Zanzibaris', p. 306.

²¹ These were the words used by sugar planters at Mauritius when the navy landed 846 freed slaves there in 1861, Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 112.

²² Sir John Kirk to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zanzibar, 22 September 1871, TNA, FO 84/1344. In this correspondence Kirk outlined the various problems he faced trying to ensure freed slaves entered the labour market, whilst at the same time ensuring that they were adequately protected.

I think that having set ourselves the task of suppressing Slave Traffic, we should be perfectly justified, as a means to an end, in availing ourselves of the services of these freed Africans, so long as we can do so without permitting their lapsing into Slavery, and can assure their well treatment. For instance supposing it were possible to free a sufficient number of slaves in the Island of Zanzibar to supply the demand for labour there, taking sufficient guarantee which we could do, that these manumitted Negroes sh'd [sic] be well treated, would not we be justified in taking this step and thus doing away with the large demand for Slaves that has hitherto existed in that Island?²³

The belief that Britain, having liberated slaves, had the right to use them for labour was one element of the thinking. But, so too, was the sense of responsibility for ensuring their protection, in addition to providing them with a livelihood. All were viewed as mutually important to anti-slavery, commercial and 'civilising' objectives.

The proposal of settling freed slaves at Zanzibar was first put forward by the members of the 1871 Select Committee, the appointment of which was influenced by lobbying by the CMS and the BFASS. The committee drew heavily on humanitarian spokesmen from within the House of Commons. Its witnesses included a number of officials who were experienced in matters relating to the East African slave trade, including some who had observed it first-hand. Among them were former British consuls from Zanzibar (Christopher Rigby and Henry Churchill), naval officers including Captain Philip Colomb, and Admirals Charles Hillyar and Leopold Heath.²⁴ In addition to naval issues, much of the report was concerned with detailing the commercial potential of the East African region, with a particular focus on Zanzibar. Rigby described how Zanzibar was

²³ Foreign Office minute on Captain Prideaux's 'Report of Liberated Africans at the Seychelles', 2 January 1875, TNA, FO 84/1415.

²⁴ Howell, *The Royal Navy*, pp. 84-5.

now the chief market in the world for the supply of ivory, gum, copal, cloves and cowrie shells. The export market of other goods was similarly on the increase. Although British Indian merchants monopolised local trade, British merchants were losing out on the import trade due to the fact that trade in the Gulf region was being monopolised by American and German shipping merchants. It was in this context that the Committee proposed to enhance communication by the introduction of government sponsored mail services along the East African coast. Rigby also argued that the slave trade deterred free labourers from settling at Zanzibar for fear of being enslaved themselves.²⁵ One of the chief recommendations of the Select Committee was to establish a depot of freed slaves on Zanzibar. The aim of such a settlement was to gradually erode the need for slave labour in Zanzibar, whilst simultaneously helping to increase commerce. Both would have the effect of checking the interior slave trade.²⁶ Liberated Africans were themselves to become part of the British anti-slavery armoury, bringing a slow and measured death to slavery in Zanzibar and to the slave trade inland. Free labour would compete with slave labour; the resources of Zanzibar would be 'opened-up', and trade would be stimulated.²⁷

The suggestion by the Select Committee to manage the problem of liberated Africans in this way reflected a continuity of the deep-rooted mantra of British anti-slavery, which since its earliest inception had envisaged legitimate commerce as the antithesis to the slave trade.²⁸ In theory it sought to inspire the Sultan of Zanzibar with a vision of financial advantage through increased trade. The proposal was in this way akin to Thomas Buxton's 1840 *Remedy* to the slave trade which had sought to demonstrate to Africans the benefits of legitimate commerce over the immorality of the slave trade. Placing the onus on Africa

²⁵ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, pp. 46-7.

²⁶ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 135.

²⁷ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 7.

²⁸ The literature on this subject is extensive. Key texts include: Brown, *Moral Capital*; A. G. Hopkins, 'The "New International Economic Order" in the Nineteenth Century: Britain's first Development Plan for Africa' in Robin Law (ed.), *From slave trade to 'legitimate commerce'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 240-264; Turner, 'The Limits of Abolition', pp. 319-357.

itself, Buxton had stated: 'the slave trade is not their gain but their loss. It is their ruin, because it is capable of demonstration, that, but for the Slave Trade, the other trade of Africa would be increased fifty or a hundred-fold'.²⁹ In the same vein Hussey Crespiigny Vivian, senior clerk in the slave trade department of the Foreign Office, stated to the Select Committee that the gradual abolition of the slave trade, as implemented through the proposed depot of free labour, would not bring harm, but 'on the contrary' he stated, 'the resources of Zanzibar would be opened up, and there might soon be a flourishing trade'.³⁰

This proposal was not simply a blind recycling of anti-slavery tradition, however. It integrated, too, the specific pragmatic and political considerations of Britain's foreign policy within the region. Zanzibar, being the centre of the anti-slavery squadron's activities and the seat of both the Vice-Admiralty Court and British consular agency, was the obvious location for such a depot. It would allow slaves liberated by the court to be placed systematically by the British consul.³¹ In terms of maintaining political stability, the gradual introduction of free labour was viewed as a way of avoiding a revolt among the island's Arab population; a prospect many feared would be the result of any attempt to introduce immediate abolition.³² In summary, this proposition, which aimed gradually to undermine slavery without interfering with the independent authority of the Sultan's rule, was representative of Britain's approach to foreign policy within the region more generally, seeking as it did the gradual extension of anti-slavery influence through indirect means.³³ Frere also counselled the need for diplomacy, and was wary of conflicting with the Sultan's authority. The placing of freed slaves in this way would also have the effect of avoiding European jealousies. He argued that it was important to avoid any impression of British

²⁹ Buxton, *Remedy*, p. 266. For a detailed discussion of the ideology and attitudes which underpinned Buxton's 1841 Niger Expedition see Howard Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

³⁰ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 7.

³¹ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 134.

³² *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, pp. 7, 16.

³³ For an overview of Britain's approach to foreign policy in the region more generally see Blyth, *Empire of the Raj*, particularly chs. 3-4.

colonisation.³⁴ The maintenance of indigenous collaboration was seen to be essential to the wider interests of Britain within the region. Perceived anti-slavery responsibilities were to be carried out in concurrence with Britain's overall foreign policy, rather than as a veil for other priorities.³⁵

Liberated Africans settled within the region of the Zanzibar Sultanate (and this included the mission stations) were nominally under the protection and laws of the Sultan. In reality this meant they were also protected by the British consul and any other British officials in the region.³⁶ Those sent to British colonies came under the jurisdiction of the Protector of Immigrants of that particular colony. Here they were placed under the same regulations as Indian immigrant labourers. The Protector of Immigrants had the responsibility of allotting both freed slaves and Indian labourers to employers.³⁷ He was also required to monitor employers to ensure that they were not abusing the regulations of employment. These rules were published as Government Notices and dictated the laws on rates of pay, length of service and so on. They also outlined the employers' responsibilities in terms of education. Government Notice Number 177 of 1873, for example, dictated to employers in Natal that:

It will be especially required by the Government that the apprentices [liberated Africans] shall be taught to read and write in the English language, besides some useful trade or domestic occupation; and that they shall be gradually instructed in the great truths of Christianity. It is expected that they shall be trained to habits of cleanliness, and that their

³⁴ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, pp. 35, 30.

³⁵ Richard Huzzey has argued this for Britain's policy towards West Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. Anti-slavery was viewed as a question of foreign policy. Abolitionist intentions dovetailed with, rather than obscured other concerns regarding British authority or commercial influence. See Huzzey, "A Nation of Abolitionists?", particularly ch. 4.

³⁶ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, pp. 6, 30, 41.

³⁷ H.W.D. Beyts, Protector of Immigrants to the Colonial Secretary, Immigration Office, Mauritius, 21 August 1869, TNA, CO 167/519; Immigration Notice No. 4, 1875, Colonial Secretary's Office, Natal, 5 July 1875, TNA, CO 179/117.

lodgings shall be separate from those of the Kafir servants of the country.³⁸

Much is revealed in this legal declaration. The government clearly did, at least in theory, appear to feel an extra sense of responsibility towards the trusteeship of liberated Africans beyond that of other British 'servants'. In the case of Natal, liberated Africans were allotted extra privileges to the rest of the indigenous 'Kafir' population. In fact, here the liberated African community came to be most closely associated with the Indian part of the population. This determined that their social position was better, at least in official terms, than the rest of the African community of that colony.³⁹ In this context, liberation as a status appeared to over-ride that of race.

Liberated Africans came under the category of 'British protected persons'. This was a title assigned to most Africans born in British territories (both formal and informal) in the region. In official terms protected persons were of a lesser status than 'British subjects'. Although protected persons were entitled to some rights as set out in colonial law, they were not granted British citizenship.⁴⁰ 'British Protected Person' was an unclear term throughout the nineteenth century generally, but this appears to have been especially true for liberated Africans. Long after emancipation, they were almost always still referred to as either liberated Africans, freed slaves, or freed Negroes. The fact that it was considered appropriate to confer them with this identity indicates the unusual and specific conditions under which they were placed. It also reflects the on-going stigma of their previous enslavement. The title acted as a constant reminder of their status, with the continued implication that without British intervention they would otherwise have remained un-liberated.

³⁸ Government Notice No. 177 of 1873, TNA, CO 179/115.

³⁹ Oosthuizen, 'Islam among the Zanzibaris', p. 306.

⁴⁰ For an overview of the evolution of citizenship law in Africa see Bronwen Manby, *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2009), ch. 1. See also Richard Plender, *International Migration Law* (Brentford: Kluwar Publishing Ltd., 1988), p. 20.

Significant emphasis was placed on encouraging liberated Africans to adopt British values. Whilst naval officers might have approved of apparent kindred communities of freed slave settlements on the basis of their apparent 'Britishness', the intention was to promote common values and notions of *good* citizenship, rather than implying *shared* citizenship. Here Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' is relevant. What existed was an 'imagined' citizenship. Whilst (some) Africans, in Britain and the empire, were granted *de jure* citizenship, *de facto* they remained outsiders. As was the case empire-wide, no matter how anglicised indigenous subjects might become, in truth they remained barred from imperial citizenship.⁴¹ The late-nineteenth century saw ideas of citizenship and the expansion of suffrage intensely debated in Britain. However, it was never the intention to grant liberated, or indeed any Africans, the same rights as free Britons. In the wake of the 1867 Reform Act, British citizenship was clearly delineated as an 'exclusively white male prerogative'.⁴² Even then, only a proportion of men were included. Cumulatively the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts enfranchised only about 60 per cent of the British male population, leaving the lower classes and women still excluded from the vote.⁴³ Radical liberals like John Stuart Mill may have campaigned for equality, for example for women's suffrage, but he subscribed to the common belief that uneducated members of society whether poor white men, women or Hindus, needed to progress before they might enjoy the benefits of citizenship.⁴⁴ The same was true of the response to liberated Africans. These individuals were to be progressed under the responsible protection of Britain. Certain mutual obligations and duties were conferred, however these reflected the power imbalance of this relationship. Equality was not part of the discourse. Any rights granted to these individuals were exceedingly limited. Ultimately the fact that liberated Africans were apprenticed and

⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 93.

⁴² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 21.

⁴³ Keith McClelland and Sonya O. Rose, 'Citizenship and empire, 1867-1928' in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 275-297, p. 280.

⁴⁴ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 435.

placed alongside indentured labourers, and other 'servants of the country', reveals the reality of British perceptions of these individuals.

By the late-nineteenth century, there were well-established precedents for the large-scale movements of freed Africans to meet colonial labour demands. In this way the treatment of liberated Africans in East Africa was by no means exceptional in the history of British anti-slavery. The government's authorisation of the free labour migration scheme from Sierra Leone to the West Indies in the 1840s offers a parallel example. Some 13,500 Africans previously liberated by the navy were imported into Britain's West Indian colonies during this decade to meet post-emancipation labour demands.⁴⁵ The scheme strategically linked naval slave-trade suppression and the search for new supplies of labour in British colonies.⁴⁶ Recruitment in the western Indian Ocean region was never on this scale (partially because the amount of Africans liberated by the navy was much smaller). Furthermore any movements of Africans were essentially on an *ad hoc* basis rather than as part of a pre-planned initiative. The extent to which the settlement of liberated Africans was often reactive was evident in a number of settings. In the late 1880s for example, the Bombay government's response to a claim by the police commissioner that the large number of freed slaves was becoming a 'source of danger' was to investigate the possibility of sending them to the Straights Settlement in Fiji and Sarawak, and to the North Borneo Company, where labour was required. In the end, this suggestion was not pursued, probably because the police commissioner had informed the companies that the freed slaves were lazy and of a mentally low class.⁴⁷

That indentured labour schemes and other forms of coerced servitude were intimately associated with the process of European colonialism during the late-nineteenth

⁴⁵ David Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 24.

⁴⁶ Mamigonian, 'In the Name of Freedom', p. 42.

⁴⁷ Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*, p. 73.

and early-twentieth centuries has been explored extensively elsewhere.⁴⁸ During this period approximately 2.5 million people, mostly non-Europeans, were indentured across the globe.⁴⁹ There were quite clearly correlations between the settlement of liberated Africans and other indentured labourers in the western Indian Ocean region. Their settlement at Natal coincided with a rise in the importation of Indian 'coolie' labour to work on railroads and plantations.⁵⁰ Similarly at Mauritius and the Seychelles, the settlement of liberated Africans coincided with a dramatic rise in the numbers of Indians imported to support the sugar industry. What stands out, however, is that while Indian labourers arguably had some element of choice to enter indentured labour, liberated Africans had none. This inconsistency was highlighted by an anonymous writer in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* in 1877: 'The coolie and every other man on earth, I repeat, comes freely to Mauritius; but the African, who comes involuntarily – a victim to misfortune from which we pretend to release him – is enslaved for five years if one official pleases'.⁵¹

In fact, Indian labourers were imported in such high numbers into Mauritius that no new imports were needed for the rest of the century, especially as the demand for Mauritian sugar declined.⁵² At this island, liberated Africans were placed at a disadvantage because of the long-held tradition of favouring Indian labour, a process which had begun after the ending of slavery in 1833. Writing in 1869, the colonial governor of Mauritius, Sir Henry Barkly, informed the Colonial Office that he deemed Indian labour preferable to African labour. Typical of the way in which racial hierarchies were applied, Barkly argued

⁴⁸ There is a wealth of writing on this subject. Key texts include: Northrup, *Indentured Labour*; Kay Saunders (ed.), *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983); Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1834-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴⁹ Northrup, *Indentured Labour*, Table A.1., pp. 156-7.

⁵⁰ Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*, p. 58.

⁵¹ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, January 1877, p. 177, (hereafter ASR).

⁵² Northrup, *Indentured Labour*, p. 24.

that liberated Africans ‘have generally not proved as intelligent and efficient as Indians’.⁵³ Barkly had previously campaigned for the introduction of Indian indentured labour as a West Indian planter in the 1840s prior to taking up various colonial governorships.⁵⁴ With this preference in mind, he asked the government to find an alternative destination for slaves freed by the navy. He also stated that the Seychelles were not currently in a position to employ liberated Africans. Employing a clearly racist term, the civil commissioner of those islands stated that the islands were already ‘overstocked’ with Africans. He blamed this problem on the apparent ‘fecundity’ of Africans and the ‘un-enterprising’ character of the French Seychellois planters.⁵⁵ Two years later, the new governor of the islands, Sir Arthur Gordon, informed the Earl of Kimberley (Secretary of State for the Colonies) that African labour would now be of the ‘utmost utility’ to the Seychelles.⁵⁶ Between 1861 and 1875, when their settlement was discontinued, a total of 2667 liberated Africans were landed on the Seychelles.⁵⁷

As had been true of the free emigration scheme in the 1840s, the practice of liberating Africans from slave ships and then indenturing them in British colonies did not go unopposed.⁵⁸ In particular, criticisms made by the explorer and journalist Henry Morton Stanley helped raise the profile of this issue. Stanley and many other British visitors to the Seychelles were particularly concerned by the treatment of liberated Africans. He spoke on the matter at a public meeting convened by the BFASS in London’s Mansion House in November 1872, and again in Liverpool the following year. His principal argument was that

⁵³ Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Mauritius to Earl Granville, Mauritius, 31 May 1869, TNA, CO 167/516.

⁵⁴ John Benyon, ‘Barkly, Sir Henry (1815–1898)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1424, accessed 30 March 2010].

⁵⁵ Extract of the Civil Commissioner of the Seychelles letter, 6 May 1869, enclosure in Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Mauritius to Earl Granville, Mauritius, 31 May 1869, TNA, CO 167/516.

⁵⁶ Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Mauritius to the Earl of Kimberley, Mauritius, 7 March 1871, TNA, CO 167/533.

⁵⁷ Nwulia, *Slavery in Mauritius*, p. 283. Mortality rates for liberated Africans in the western Indian Ocean represent a significant historiographical gap.

⁵⁸ For debates surrounding the 1840s free emigration scheme see Asiegbu, ‘The Dynamics of Freedom’ and Huzzey, ‘A Nation of Abolitionists?’, pp. 122-6.

the payment of indentures to the colonial government in advance of their receiving liberated Africans represented nothing more than 'slavery'. The colonial government was, he claimed, profiting from the system, and this implicated England in the slave trade.⁵⁹ Sir Arthur Gordon denied Stanley's attack, stating that any initial payment was simply to defray governmental costs of 'maintenance and introduction'. Gordon refused to enter into a debate over the perceived incompatibilities of anti-slavery and indenture. He closed the subject by informing the Earl of Kimberley that the liberated African 'cannot be said to be a slave in any proper sense of the word. I believe the system of indenture to be beneficial to all parties concerned'.⁶⁰ Claims that introducing Africans to labour was an essential and beneficial element of the civilising process was a common argument used to justify such practices. For example, in 1873, the Lieutenant Governor of Natal wrote to Kirk and stated: 'I thank you very sincerely for your efforts to have the freed Africans sent to this Colony and while I feel that their labour will greatly assist the important industries of the Colony, I am convinced that their residence here will prove an efficient means of raising their own condition'.⁶¹ Liberated Africans were mercilessly exploited by the colonial system. But as was true of those who had advocated free emigration in the 1840s, British officials genuinely believed that African participation in the empire was a mutually beneficial relationship.

Other British visitors to the Seychelles also observed the poor conditions under which liberated Africans were living. How much Britain was to blame was a point of

⁵⁹ *ASR*, 1 June 1875, pp. 173-5. At the outset of the contract of indenture the 'proprietor' paid the colonial government between £3 for a child, and £5 for a male adult, Government Notice No. 111 of 1865, TNA, CO 167/519.

⁶⁰ Sir Arthur Gordon to The Earl of Kimberley, Mahé, Seychelles, 16 January 1873, TNA, CO 167/550. This echoed debates of the late 1830s and early 1840s about the 'freedoms' of indentured Indian labourers. Reports of abuses in the recruitment of indentured Indians were raised by the Anti-Slavery Society. This resulted in the temporary suspension of Indian migration. After various reforms, Indian recruitment was resumed to Mauritius alone in 1842 and to the West Indies in 1844, and from there expanded over the course of the century. See Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), pp. 21-2.

⁶¹ B. C. Pine to Sir John Kirk, Natal, 4 August 1873, TNA, CO 179/115.

contestation. Naval officer William Cope Devereux wrote to *The Times* in 1872 stating that Stanley's description of events at the Seychelles was 'ridiculous'.⁶² Another naval officer, writing to the same paper, stated that he was in a position to assure the public that liberated Africans received kind treatment from the colonists.⁶³ Captain Sullivan, writing three years later, however, believed that Africans had been let down by Britain. At the same time his statement was typically full of anti-French, and arguably engrained, anti-Catholic, rhetoric:

if we wanted to put our hands on any of the Africans liberated during the past 25 years on the East Coast we could not point to any unless it were a few still fagging for the lazy French Creole at the Mauritius & Seychelle Islands to wh. [sic] Islands some of them were banished.⁶⁴

This was a common theme. Devereux also blamed the condition of Africans at the Seychelles on the 'profligacy' of the Islands.⁶⁵ Africans had been exposed to corrupt behaviour including alcoholism and prostitution, and, as a result, their moral standards had not been raised.⁶⁶ The social activities of the French in their various island territories throughout the western Indian Ocean region were often criticised by Britons in this way. Sullivan stated that liberated Africans living among the French planters were 'often to be seen in the same state of nudity as in their own country'.⁶⁷ Similar to widespread British criticism of the Portuguese territories in East Africa, racial intermixing was seen to be a visible sign of the immorality of the Seychelles. In a statement that encompassed a full spectrum of ingrained racial thinking and francophobic attitudes, the CMS missionary, Reverend W.B. Chancellor, informed his London headquarters in 1875 that:

⁶² *The Times*, 18 November 1872, p. 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 22 November 1872, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Captain Sullivan to Rear Admiral Macdonald, Zanzibar, 17 November 1875, TNA, FO 84/1457.

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 18 November 1872, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Nwulia, *History of Slavery in Mauritius*, pp. 198-9.

⁶⁷ Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, p. 271.

French planters and Mauritian Creoles, half French, have been allowed to bully the Africans as it suited them. What with curtailed wages, stinted rations, insufficient clothing, bad houses, an excess of work and maltreatment, the African has been compelled to lie, to steal, to attempt murder and to run away from his hard taskmaster. The Creole [sic] then point and say, 'How is it possible to humanize such animals?' My answer is, 'By being human towards them'.⁶⁸

These criticisms paralleled the way in which the Islamic settlements surrounding the Christian missionary freed slave communities on the East African coast were negatively portrayed. In the same way that Arabs were described as lazy and dirty, French Catholics were seen to have failed to provide moral guidance to Africans. All of this, of course, helped to massage the supposed humanitarianism and superiority of British values. But what is perhaps most glaring in Chancellor's apparently 'humanitarian' response was the fact that he did not dispute the Creoles' claims that Africans were 'animals'. The extent to which racial attitudes were so firmly entrenched is clearly highlighted.

The solution: an Eastern Sierra Leone

The controversial treatment of liberated Africans at the Seychelles was one of the reasons why mission stations became more directly involved in the care of liberated Africans. It also prompted the first call for an 'Eastern Sierra Leone' – an idea which went on to receive a great deal of support from various different parties. This proposal initially entered the discourse of the East African campaign via the missionary movement. Seeing the poor conditions in which liberated Africans were living on Mauritius and the Seychelles, the Anglican Bishop Vincent William Ryan wrote to the CMS in 1866 urging that, as the

⁶⁸ Quoted in Nwulia, *History of Slavery in Mauritius*, pp. 198-9.

benefactor of slaves in West Africa, the society might offer some similar provision to slaves freed in Indian Ocean waters. He hoped that an equivalent freed slave settlement might be established on the Seychelles.⁶⁹ Ryan's plea helped engage the Lay Secretary of the CMS, Edward Hutchinson. The CMS, and particularly Hutchinson, became especially prominent in agitation over the plight of liberated Africans.

Due to the controversy outlined above, by the early 1870s the proposal for a freed slave settlement had shifted away from the Seychelles. The argument now focused on establishing a new British colony either on the coast of the East African mainland, or on an offshore island. Hutchinson was one of the principal proponents of the Eastern Sierra Leone vision. In his 1874 book *The Slave Trade of East Africa*, he traced the history of Sierra Leone with an emphasis on missionary work.⁷⁰ He highlighted how the West coast colony had produced a supply of native evangelists. The result of this concentrated evangelical settlement had, he argued, indirectly brought about an end to the slave trade. Sierra Leone was eulogised as an exemplar community whose civilising effects had been 'for the benefit of the whole of Africa'.⁷¹ He argued that the suppression of the East African slave trade, and the need for a freed slave settlement, provided an opportunity for the same concentrated missionary effort as had been undertaken at Sierra Leone. Freed slaves living in a parallel settlement on the East coast would benefit from the same advantages as those at Sierra Leone.

The British Methodist missionary, Charles New, also raised the issue in his popular account of his ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro published in 1873. Led by the same religious

⁶⁹ Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men, and Its Work, Vol. III* (London: CMS, 1899), p. 74.

⁷⁰ Edward Hutchinson, *The Slave Trade of East Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1874), ch. 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

incentive as Hutchinson, he also argued for a 'colony analogous to Sierra Leone'.⁷² A group of prominent members of the British settler community in Zanzibar also argued for the annexation of territory for freed slaves. Their emphasis was, however, less on religion and more on the commercial benefits that such a community would bring. The arguments of three leading residents were presented in a volume compiled by the UMCA missionary Reverend Edward Steere, entitled *The East African Slave Trade, and the measures proposed for its extinction, as viewed by residents in Zanzibar* (1871).⁷³ It is interesting that Steere described each of the three authors as representing the three main interests of Zanzibar – commerce and industry (Captain H. A. Fraser), knowledge of all classes of natives (Dr. James Christie) and successful Christian work (Bishop William George Tozer). In these three individuals all the bases of successful imperial trusteeship were seen to be represented. Through their experience of working with freed slaves, the three men assumed authority on the subject. They opposed the Select Committee's recommendations for a freed slave depot in Zanzibar, and were deeply critical of naval suppression. They stated that the anti-slavery patrols were ineffective and a 'useless' waste of government money. Most shocking was the statement that naval vessels had 'caused the death of hundreds, nay, thousands of slaves' in bungled seizure attempts.⁷⁴ Instead of wasting money on suppression, they advised that the imperial government would better spend its money on the annexation of territory either on the East African mainland, or on an offshore island. Here a freed slave settlement akin to Sierra Leone or Liberia could be established. The opening up of the country by roads would, they stated, be integral to any such community, and in that way alone would the liberty of freed slaves be a boon, rather than 'a caricature'.⁷⁵

⁷² Charles New, *Life, Wanderings, and Labours in Eastern Africa with an account of the first successful ascent of Equatorial Snow Mountain, Kilima Njaro. And remarks upon East African Slavery* (2nd Edn. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1874), p. 506.

⁷³ Steere (ed.), *The East African Slave Trade*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

Although not advocating ending the anti-slavery patrols, a number of naval officers also attempted to pressure the authorities into supporting the Eastern Sierra Leone proposal. Writing to the Admiralty in 1871, Commander of the East Indies Station Rear-Admiral James Cockburn stated: 'Some such place as Sierra Leone might be established on this Coast. Where free Africans can be cared for and educated made capable to enjoy that freedom [sic]'.⁷⁶ Without a British centre of civilisation, naval suppression was in his view largely ineffective. Two of Cockburn's predecessors, Admiral Sir Leopold Heath and Admiral Charles Hillyar, had argued that Britain should purchase the sovereignty of Zanzibar for the same purpose.⁷⁷ Captain Colomb similarly believed that liberated Africans settled in Zanzibar, unless annexed by Britain, 'would simply be slaves under another name'.⁷⁸ Although the details differed between these various advocates, all agreed that an officially owned freed-slave settlement would offer the best solution to the freed slave problem. Only in this way could freed slaves receive the full benefits of western civilisation. Such a settlement would also help advance British interests in the region. The Eastern Sierra Leone vision was pushed by a variety of people for a range of different reasons, but the provision for freed slaves was the primary motivation.

Ultimately the agenda from London during the 1870s did not match the idealised notions of those British men based in East Africa. At no point during the period of the campaign did any government support the idea of annexing territory for a freed-slave settlement.⁷⁹ For the government, Frere's recommendations of managing freed slaves through unofficial bodies, such as missionaries and private individuals, was a more economic and diplomatically-sensitive approach. Frere advised that such communities would evolve more 'naturally' within the surrounding community.⁸⁰ This recommendation

⁷⁶ Rear Admiral Cockburn to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Undated, 1871, TNA, ADM 1/6190.

⁷⁷ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, p. 262.

⁷⁸ *PP 1871 (c.420)*, p. 84.

⁷⁹ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, pp. 135-6, 157-8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

suiting imperial priorities. In fact, not only did the government ignore the calls for an Eastern Sierra Leone, but they also consistently avoided paying for the care of freed slaves placed in mission stations. Despite continual appeals by the Foreign Office for financial aid for the missions, the pleas were not met until 1886, when it was finally agreed that the government would grant missions £5 per head for each freed slave in their care.⁸¹

To a large extent, the government steadily pursued most of the Select Committee's recommendations. In particular the proposal to enhance naval provisions was met, and the period of the 1870s to the mid 1880s marked the most sustained period of commitment to the anti-slavery patrols. Ultimately British influence, supported by the potential threat of naval force, was applied gradually to subdue the slaving power of the Sultan of Zanzibar.⁸² Notable in its exception, however, was any follow up to the 'depot' plan for liberated Africans at Zanzibar. Although Earl Granville (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) did pursue the recommendation as far as asking Sir John Kirk his opinion on the issue, the latter counselled against it. In Kirk's view, the matter rested on questions of protection. He did not believe that such a settlement would be adequately safe and deemed it 'most dangerous to allow so helpless beings as a cargo of freed slaves to go into the hands of any proprietor here'.⁸³ Here Kirk echoed the widely held belief that without the security of British protection, liberated Africans were certain to be re-enslaved. The crux of the concern was that safety of freed slaves could not be guaranteed in a state that sanctioned slavery.⁸⁴ There was, though, significant irony in the idea of a 'depot' of liberated Africans. This term, which was consistently employed throughout the Select Committee's report, being normally associated with trade goods, was, of course, what Africans were no longer meant to be. The reality, as however shown, was that liberated Africans were in fact frequently exploited within British colonies as if they remained commodities.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁸² Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere mission'.

⁸³ John Kirk to Earl Granville, Zanzibar, 20 March 1871, TNA, FO 84/1344.

⁸⁴ Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery*, p. 134.

The same stereotype of Africans as indefensible victims was also used to disallow the possibility of allowing ex-slaves to return to their original homes. Crespigny Vivian was one of a number of officials who helped reinforce this view through evidence given to the Select Committee. He stated that it was 'out of the question' for liberated Africans to be repatriated, as they 'would be certain to be recaptured by some of the Arabs'.⁸⁵ The worry that the anti-slavery work of the navy and missionaries, having rescued Africans from slavery and provided for their subsequent care, might be undone by re-enslavement was a genuine fear that dominated discussions surrounding liberated Africans throughout the period. On the one hand, there was growing support for returnees, predominantly as part of missionary hopes to evangelise the interior of Africa through trained African preachers. On the other, many feared that once away from the paternalistic, Christian influence of the mission settlement, Africans would quickly lose any acquired belief and revert to their naturally savage state. The debate centred on whether the savage instincts of Africans could be entirely removed by Christian intervention, or whether they would only ever be masked. Livingstone had himself contemplated this question in *Missionary Travels*: 'When converts are made from heathenism it becomes an interesting question whether their faith has the elements of permanence, or is only an exotic too tender for self-propagation when the fostering care of the foreign cultivators is withdrawn'.⁸⁶ While Livingstone ultimately believed the key to the question lay in encouraging self-reliance, not all had such optimism in the African ability for independence. To Captain W. Prideaux (Acting Consul General at Zanzibar in 1873-4), the idea of repatriating freed slaves was not only cruel, but constituted a fundamental breach of trust on Britain's part. Like Kirk, Prideaux worried that Africans would be re-enslaved. He advised the Foreign Office against the proposal for an Eastern Sierra Leone, and believed that the best solution for freed slaves lay with government

⁸⁵ *PP 1871 (C. 420)*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 84.

allotment schemes such as undertaken at Natal.⁸⁷ What stands out of course is that amongst all the different proposals for liberated Africans, it was never a consideration that Britain would *not* play a role in their protection. Whilst the reality of such 'protection' was deeply questionable, the argument always maintained that British intervention was the best solution.

Suzanne Schwarz has traced the influence of the late-eighteenth-century Sierra Leone Company's ideas into the mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁸ Both Thomas Fowell Buxton's 'New Africa policy' and Livingstone's call for 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation' drew on aspects of the ideology of the Sierra Leone Company. The proposal for an Eastern Sierra Leone extends this continuity in British anti-slavery thinking even further. At the core of all these anti-slavery experiments was the idea of the improvement of Africa. By undermining the African slave trade with the substitution of legitimate commerce and Christianity, it was believed that civilisation would naturally flow. Schwarz has argued in the case of the Sierra Leone Company that although the use of economic strategies to destabilise the slave trade was pragmatic, the underlying objectives were humanitarian and religious. The recycling of the Sierra Leone vision on the East coast appears largely to have been led by the same intentions. This is not to say that the commercial benefits of such a settlement were not appreciated, merely that financial gain was not the primary objective. Charting a continuity of the founding ideals of the Sierra Leone Company to Buxton's 'New Africa' policy in the 1840s, Schwarz notes a close repetition of terminology between the Company's report of 1791 and Buxton's *Remedy* in 1840.⁸⁹ For example, the term 'European light, knowledge and improvement' was used in both the Company's report and Buxton's *Remedy*. It is significant that Edward Hutchinson employed the same phrase in his 1874 book. He wrote:

⁸⁷ Captain Prideaux to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zanzibar, 2 January 1875, TNA, FO 84/1415.

⁸⁸ Suzanne Schwarz, 'Commerce, Civilization and Christianity: The Development of the Sierra Leone Company' in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony J. Tibbles (eds), *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 252-276.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 253. See footnote 8.

‘As an abstract proposition, it cannot be denied that the diffusion of light and knowledge . . . will put an end to the traffic in slaves anywhere’.⁹⁰ Nearly eighty years after the founding of the Sierra Leone Company, the same anti-slavery remedy was seen to be universally applicable and directly transportable to the East African context.

Sierra Leone was seen as the greatest symbolic representation of free British soil, from Granville Sharp’s original conception of ‘a province of freedom’ to it becoming after 1807 the centre for slaves freed by the navy. As Schwarz notes, the name of the principal settlement, Freetown (founded in 1786) was ‘a self-conscious expression of the colony’s abolitionist identity’.⁹¹ It was in this light that the West Coast colony was re-imagined and used to bolster arguments for an East Coast freed-slave settlement. The advocates of this scheme had, however, a profoundly selective memory. The controversies that had surrounded Sierra Leone – continuation of slave trading, poor living conditions, severe administrative instabilities, civil unrest, and the fact that the very founding principles of the colony had been repeatedly questioned – were not acknowledged.⁹² Nevertheless, the re-emergence of this idea serves to highlight how those working in the later part of the nineteenth century intimately connected their abolitionist efforts with those of the previous Atlantic campaign. A rose-tinted view presented Sierra Leone as an exemplar of the joint objectives of anti-slavery and the improvement of Africa.

The freed slave problem and religious denominational allegiance

Alongside evangelicals from the established Church, non-conformists formed a vital element of the early-nineteenth-century abolitionist movement. This trend continued and

⁹⁰ Hutchinson, *Slave Trade of East Africa*, p. 83.

⁹¹ Schwarz, ‘The Development of the Sierra Leone Company’, p. 252.

⁹² For a discussion of the problems of the Sierra Leone vision see Turner, ‘The Limits of Abolition’, pp. 352-4.

was strengthened by the non-conformist crusade against American slavery.⁹³ The important association between non-conformism, abolitionism and other popular reform movements in the early- to mid-nineteenth century has been the subject of detailed historical research. David Turley, for example, has emphasised the interconnections between anti-slavery, temperance and Bible and Tract societies during the period 1790-1860. It was commonplace for reformers in this period to 'connect different social evils either casually or as part of a more general moral declension'.⁹⁴ The ongoing importance of dissenters and other reform movements, and the longevity of their association with the abolitionist cause, was also evident in the East African campaign. Chapter 8 shows how groups in Britain such as Quakers, Methodists, Baptists and temperance societies continued to support anti-slavery in the late-nineteenth century. This trend can also be seen in the activities and thinking of certain naval officers. In particular, George Lydiard Sullivan and George King-Hall stand out as two individuals who were both ardent non-conformists. For them, commitment to anti-slavery seems to have been largely motivated by humanitarian and religious convictions. As we have seen, this formed a contrast to many officers who were motivated more by prize money and manly competitiveness. King-Hall and Sullivan were individuals that we might, on the other hand, call 'true' abolitionists. It is notable then that both were committed non-conformists.

In fact, George Sullivan's religious views led him into a series of conflicts with the High Church chaplain on board HMS *London* in 1876. Sullivan reacted against the ritualistic tendencies of the High Church and advised the chaplain, E. L. Penny, to moderate his services. The chaplain refused to follow Sullivan's orders or to accept the captain's authority. The issue eventually required the intervention of the Admiralty, which sided with Penny. Interestingly the case drew a considerable amount of public interest and was reported in both the national and provincial press. The press overwhelmingly supported

⁹³ James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 167.

⁹⁴ Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, p. 141.

Sullivan and criticised the conservatism of the Admiralty. *Punch* stated that the chaplain should have known 'that to set Roman candles ablaze in the main, is sheer theological arson'.⁹⁵ *The Times* wrote that having found himself on board ship with fifty non-conformists, it was regrettable that Penny, as a representative of the Church of England, had persistently attempted to irritate and estrange his fellow crew members. This episode highlights the high proportion of non-conformists serving in the navy in the late-nineteenth century, and shows the depth of the dissenting commitment of some naval personnel.⁹⁶ It also demonstrates the continuity of a non-conformist tradition which emerged, especially amongst the non-officer class, as an important aspect of naval life in the eighteenth century.⁹⁷

The growing importance of religious missionary work within the East African region is reflected in the activities of naval officers who visited the mission stations. However, King-Hall's diary, written in the late 1880s, provides particular insight into the types of individual who allied themselves to specific movements. It also demonstrates the overlapping networks and concerns that existed across and within different denominations. Reaction against the High Church tradition and the strength of non-conformism appears to have been a common theme amongst some naval officers throughout the campaign. King-Hall's Protestantism, like Sullivan's, was much more liberal than that propounded in the High Church missions. Reflecting after a visit to one UMCA mission, he wrote: 'I am afraid that the University Mission is very extreme and that the tendency of all this high ritual is to wrap up the life giving kernel with a gorgeous and sensuous covering'.⁹⁸ For King-Hall, the CMS freed slave settlements were far more satisfactory. At Freretown he recorded how the

⁹⁵ Quoted in Howell, *The Royal Navy*, p. 124.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-4.

⁹⁷ Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy*, see above, p. 165.

⁹⁸ King-Hall, onboard HMS *Penguin*, entry dated 1 April 1888, also entry dated 18 June 1888, RNM, 1995.150/1-2.

crew attended 'a nice simple service'.⁹⁹ He also observed and agreed with the education given to freed slaves by the Free Church Mission (Methodist) at Mombasa.¹⁰⁰

Like many dissenters, King-Hall was also an advocate of the temperance movement, and campaigned tirelessly for its expansion both at home and whilst serving in East Africa. For him, visits to the freed slave missionary settlements appeared to offer the spiritual and moral depth that was lacking on board ship. Here, he engaged with like-minded people, talking over issues such as temperance, theology and 'the slave question'.¹⁰¹ Sometimes he tried to persuade his fellow crewmembers to embrace his own commitment to self-improvement. On one occasion, in 1888, he invited Mrs Mary Clement Leavitt, a notable American campaigner of both the temperance and suffrage movements, to give a lecture on board HMS *Penguin*. She was secretary of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union that had recently been established in 1885. King-Hall described her as 'the great woman T.T. lecturer'. At the same meeting he recorded conversing with Mrs Houlder, wife of the LMS missionary, Reverend J. A. Houlder, on the subject of the slave trade.¹⁰²

Denominational allegiance influenced ideas about what form post-emancipation care for liberated Africans should take. However, simultaneously, the debate also frequently transcended denominational loyalties. The Eastern Sierra Leone idea was, for example, supported by individuals from across a range of denominations. It was proposed by the CMS, but members of the High Church UMCA missionary society also backed the idea. So, too, did the non-conformist Captain Sullivan, and the Methodist missionary Charles New. Perhaps most notable is that a number of commentators believed that out of all the mission societies active on the East African coast, the French Catholics provided the best model for freed-slave settlements. Support came from those who believed that the UMCA missions were too evangelical, with too much gospel preaching and not enough industry.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, entry dated 13 May 1888.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, entry dated 8 May 1889.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, entry dated 6 April 1888.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, entry dated 11 November 1888.

They approved of the more practical style of education in the Catholic missions. There, a typical day consisted of five and a half hours of schooling including work in skilled or manual labour, and one hour of religious exercises.¹⁰³ Having visited all the East African mission stations, Bartle Frere recommended in his report that the Catholic missions offered the best model for subsequent missionary societies working in East Africa. Frere had already met with Pope Pius IX on his way to Zanzibar, and informed him that the government would look favourably on the extension of the Roman Catholic mission there.¹⁰⁴

Referring to the French Holy Ghost mission at Bagamoyo, Frere wrote in his 1874 published account: 'I can suggest no change in the general arrangements of the institution, with any view to increase its efficiency as an industrial and civilising agency, and in that point of view I would recommend it as a model to be followed in any attempt to civilise and evangelise Africa'.¹⁰⁵ He advised that the CMS, already established on the coast, should follow this example in the establishment of a freed slave settlement. The founding of Freretown by the CMS in 1875 was the culmination of these recommendations. The main preoccupation of Frere, therefore, differed from Livingstone's vision. In accordance with his High Church beliefs, Livingstone thought that gospel preaching should form a substantive element of the evangelisation of Africa. Frere, however, described as a man of strong religious convictions with a firm attachment to the Church of England but tolerant of other denominations, essentially proposed that the church should evangelise through a system of 'institutional good works'.¹⁰⁶ Frere went on to suggest that the British consular department in Zanzibar should provide the same financial support, regardless of nationality, to both French Catholic and British missions. Both, he stated, were involved in 'promoting the

¹⁰³ Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ John Martineau, *The Life and Correspondence of Bartle Frere* (London: John Murray, 1895), pp. 31-2; Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 24.

objects which the British Government has in view for the freedom and civilisation of East Africa'.¹⁰⁷

As already discussed, such government subsidies were not forthcoming until 1884. Kirk, writing in 1871 to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, addressed this very issue. For him, it was overwhelmingly a matter of economics. Struggling to support the burden of liberated Africans, his department could not afford to be choosy on the basis of denominational allegiance. Even so, despite a number of disagreements with the then head of the UMCA, Bishop Tozer, Kirk stated that when allotting freed slaves, he would still 'give Bishop Tozer as head of a Protestant and English Society the first choice'.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, as the number of liberated Africans increased, Kirk willingly sent them to the French missions as well. Writing to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1872, Kirk supported his actions by stating that the French missions were acting 'I believe, on sound Missionary, Political and Economic principles'.¹⁰⁹ Those settled in French missions were still considered to be under the protection of the British consul and the nominal protection of the Sultan.

A most surprising advocate of the French Catholic missions was Captain Philip Colomb, an ardent Protestant. As discussed in chapter 4, his comparison of Islam to Catholicism cast both in a damning light.¹¹⁰ And yet within the same publication, under the heading 'The Genius of Roman Catholicism', Colomb went on to praise the French missionaries for their work with freed slaves. Like Frere, he approved of the secular emphasis of the teaching. He believed that the French mission produced more visible effects of introducing 'civilisation' at a much faster rate than the UMCA.¹¹¹ He, too, believed that the latter placed too much emphasis on proselytizing at the expense of

¹⁰⁷ Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁸ Sir John Kirk to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zanzibar, 22 September 1871, TNA, FO 84/1344.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Zanzibar, 16 January 1872, TNA, FO 84/1357.

¹¹⁰ See pp. 136-7.

¹¹¹ Colomb, *Slave Catching*, p. 428.

engaging Africans in practical industry and encouraging 'material prosperity'. In this, Colomb claimed to voice the thoughts of most naval officers, who, he stated, generally believed that only a 'small [an] amount of practical good [sic] results from the labours of missionaries'.¹¹² To a large extent this does seem to have been the prevailing view. As discussed, the comments of those who visited the East African missionary stations showed that many naval men believed that practical training was as important, if not more, than religious teaching. However, the emphasis placed on the secular over the spiritual was not simply a reaction against the High Church approach. It also appeared to stem from a particular perception of liberated Africans which viewed them as less intellectually capable than Africans manumitted through other channels. Frere, for example, stated that even some 'of the best-selected lads have absolutely no capacity for intellectual acquirement by means of reading and writing'.¹¹³ The UMCA perceived slaves freed by the navy as less well-suited to their primary evangelising objectives. Reverend Steere stated that if the missions were to be 'filled from the slave-dhows' a 'lower' style of training would have to be introduced, which would instead concentrate on industrial teaching.¹¹⁴ This was a prejudice which no doubt placed liberated Africans in an even more disadvantaged position as they tried to establish their lives post-emancipation.¹¹⁵

Clement Hill recognised that 'objections may very likely be raised to thus encouraging a Roman Catholic institution'. But until English missionary societies followed their example and sought to 'train up their pupils to be useful citizens as well as pious Christians', 'what is to be done?' he asked. Getting to the root of the debate, he stated, 'It is surely better that these pagan Africans should learn Christianity, even in a form with which we do not agree, than that they should be left in their present benighted state.' Trained in the same 'useful' way, Hill argued that a 'Protestant home' for liberated slaves

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹¹³ Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Frere, *Eastern Africa*, pp. 40-1.

¹¹⁵ For examples of such problems see Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*, pp. 66, 73.

could be 'a starting-point of the greatest value to civilisation and to commerce'.¹¹⁶ Support for the East African Catholic mission stations was a pragmatic response. For naval officers, it appeared that any Christian institution providing moral and educational training to Africans was better than landing them at overcrowded settlements where they might be re-enslaved. For officials in London, the benefits of training liberated Africans in trade and industry, even within Catholic missions, supported overall commercial objectives. The majority believed that, at the very least, Catholicism was an improvement on leaving Africans to their own backward ways or to the influence of Islam. Reverend Steere was concerned over the higher proportions of boys at the UMCA missions in Zanzibar. His fear was that if more girls were not introduced, boys would be 'sorely tempted to turn Muhammedans as the only means of obtaining wives'.¹¹⁷ Steere talked about being engaged 'in a race with Islam' for converts.¹¹⁸

The proposal to follow the French model for providing care to liberated Africans demonstrated an innovation in thinking. It shows how the internal politicking of different religious denominations could be softened by the effects of empire. Protestantism in all its various forms remained an important element of British national identity in the late-nineteenth century. However this was about race rather than theological debate. It was a formulation which could allow Protestants to support Catholics in Christianising Africans, while at the same time arguing for the expulsion of Catholics from Britain.¹¹⁹ Captain Colomb's response, in particular, highlights this. As an officer who was vehemently anti-Catholic in the context of Ireland, he was happy to support Catholicism in Africa. This was about encouraging Africans to adopt the values and liberal institutions which underpinned Christianity. If it meant Africans were converted to Christianity via Catholicism it was better

¹¹⁶ *PP 1873 (C.820)*, p. 140.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Frere, *Eastern Africa*, p. 41.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, p. 530.

¹¹⁹ See for example John Woolfe, 'Anti-Catholicism and the British Empire, 1815-1914' in Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion*, pp. 43-63.

than not at all. Christian missions, the opening-up of trade and communication, and an anti-slavery presence were all inseparably aligned to the same cause of attempting to modernise this supposedly ancient part of the world.

If British responses to the settlement of freed slaves were contested, there was, nevertheless, consensus that anti-slavery offered an opportunity for civilising East Africa. Whether managed under direct governance of Britain (an option which was not considered to be economically or politically viable by the government), or through unofficial bodies including employers and missionaries, the advantages would be mutually beneficial to both Africans and Britons. All proponents, whether non-conformists or High Church, missionaries or naval officers (who were perhaps less sensitive to the realities of the imperial agenda) were nevertheless united with politicians in the belief that Africans would best be progressed by a European (but preferably) British paternal hand. This exploration of British responses to the 'problem' of liberated Africans has once more demonstrated the degree to which racial arguments were absolutely central to anti-slavery debates in this period. Anti-slavery thinking encompassed more than merely freeing enslaved African from dhows. It was about freeing Africans from their own backward society, and freeing them from the influence of the archaic customs of Islam. But as this chapter has demonstrated, freedom was in many ways a veneer. The rhetoric of commonality – the idea that an African freed slave could work as well as any Briton, or a freed slave child could recite Sunday School verses as well as any working-class British child – in fact bore some reality. That reality was, however, less about parallel examples of good citizens and rather more about a shared exclusion from the privileges that Britishness apparently brought. Ultimately, any notions of citizenship were undermined by the fact that African's rights and supposed freedoms were severely limited by the imbalance of power in the imperial relationship.

CHAPTER 8

The Royal Navy's anti-slavery campaign in popular culture

When compared to the transatlantic abolition movement or the response to American slavery, the East African anti-slavery campaign did not enter the British public's consciousness to the same degree. It was never, for example, the focus of mass petitioning. Nor did a market of material culture engraved with anti-slavery motifs emerge ready for consumption by committed abolitionist Britons. Although slave narratives were published, none experienced anything like the immense popularity of a book like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).¹ As the previous chapters demonstrated, a number of dynamics came together in the late-nineteenth century under the umbrella of anti-slavery, including popular imperialism and patriotism. The shift from the early period of abolitionism in terms of how anti-slavery came to be thought about is nowhere better illustrated than in the representation and consumption of the East African campaign within British popular culture. This chapter will demonstrate that public interest in the campaign was more often a matter of patriotism than a commitment to anti-slavery *per se*. However, this was not explicitly the case. The final section of this chapter will show how abolitionist and missionary societies continued to publicise the slave trade for reasons that were primarily anti-slavery in objective. Like the transatlantic abolitionist campaign, the later nineteenth-century movement was also compatible with other popular reform and religious movements within British public society.

Crucial to patriotic interest in the navy's anti-slavery campaign was the upsurge in popular naval sentiment and of popular militarism in the late-nineteenth century. The appeal and success of the 'cult of the navy' in this period was as much shaped by popular

¹ For consumerism in the transatlantic abolition campaign see Oldfield, *Popular Politics*. For the popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* see Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 355.

culture as it was by the authorities.² The media and the entertainment industries were instrumental in helping to shape the navy's cultural role. Individuals such as the editors and correspondents of popular illustrated newspapers and magazines avidly encouraged patriotic celebration of navy and nation. And the Admiralty, for its part, actively supported the press in this role.³ This context was vitally important for representations of the anti-slavery campaign. This chapter will show that during the 1880s and 1890s, popular representations of the patrols became ever-more disconnected from anti-slavery and increasingly subsumed by imperialist and navalist propaganda, especially that aimed at the juvenile boys' market.

It was not only the symbolic value of the navy which grew in the late-nineteenth century, but the size of Britain's naval fleet also expanded exponentially. In response to the expansion of rival naval powers, principally France, Russia and Germany, Britain also embarked on a massive phase of naval expansion and modernisation. The requirement of a larger navy prompted a significant recruitment drive: between 1889 and 1905 active naval personnel rose from 65,000 to 131,000.⁴ As discussed, by the late-nineteenth century the navy's public image had been recast in a more positive light. In keeping with the values of the period, earlier portrayals of licentious and drunken sailors had been largely replaced by pious, moral heroes. The circulation of this enhanced public image, and the popularisation of the navy was vital in helping the Admiralty recruit more men and aided navalists in lobbying for higher naval budgets.⁵ It is argued that the anti-slavery campaign specifically played an important role in shaping this more positive public image and driving naval recruitment. One naval rating acknowledged that amongst his reasons for joining the navy in 1900 was the naval adventurers he had read in popular books and magazines, like the

² Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, ch. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴ Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp.8-9, 18-21.

⁵ Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 5.

Boy's Own Paper and *Chums*.⁶ As shown below, heroic representations of the anti-slavery campaign were widely disseminated in such magazines, which were both popular and persuasive amongst their young audiences.⁷

The late-nineteenth century saw a sharp rise in literacy rates. Historians tend to credit the introduction of the 1870 Education Act which resulted in the creation of over one million new school places as having a significant effect on literacy rates.⁸ This was followed in 1880 with the introduction of compulsory education for children up to the age of ten. Higher levels of education brought increased readership levels amongst the British public.⁹ The audience that most benefited from rising literacy were the middle classes, which had largely eliminated illiteracy by the end of the century. However, working class groups, if not wholly literate, at least had access to a form of 'collective' literacy through reading aloud.¹⁰ This was the context for the reception of the huge expansion of popular literature, such as novels, periodicals and newspapers, which occurred in the late-nineteenth century, and which was supported by new printing technologies and cheaper production methods. The latter provided a platform for representations of the anti-slavery campaign which reached a mass audience. Such materials were consumed regionally and nationally, and across classes.¹¹

The market for books, newspapers and weekly periodicals accordingly boomed over the course of the nineteenth century. Visual culture also altered dramatically. New media technologies provided a mass of etchings, lithographs, photographs, and towards

⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, ch. 8.

⁸ For a discussion of this see Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain 1850-1950*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 27. Hampton questions the rapidity of the consequences of the 1870 Education Act, arguing instead that improved literacy was more gradual.

⁹ David, *Arctic in the British Imagination*, p. 186.

¹⁰ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 27.

¹¹ Much has been written on this subject, key texts include: R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Ohio: Columbus, 1998, 2nd Edn.); Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press*; David Vincent, *Literacy & Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); For a good overview see Aled Jones, 'The Press and the Printed Word' in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), pp. 369-380.

the end of the century, glass lantern slides. These provided for the consumption of a mass visual culture distinguishable from fine art and accessible to all classes.¹² This shifting cultural background defined how suppression influenced popular culture in Britain. This chapter will consider the significance and reception of the navy's anti-slavery campaign across a range of popular culture. It will look at how suppression was disseminated through written and visual media in newspapers, weekly periodicals, literature and lectures. It will consider who the audiences of this material were, and what kinds of representations dominated. It will explore what British people knew about the navy's campaign, and examine which groups were interested in it, and for what reasons. It has already been argued that naval officer's perception of the anti-slavery campaign both shaped and were shaped by idealised notions of British national identity. This chapter assesses in what ways, if any, the campaign impacted on the imagination of wider British society.

The press

The naval anti-slavery campaign coincided with a huge expansion of the press, which took place during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹³ As a result, the press in all its forms played a crucial role in the dissemination of representations of slave trade suppression in Britain. Cheaper production methods, the faster distribution of information, and the abolition of stamp duty in 1855, all contributed to this growth. In the two years between 1854 and 1856, the number of provincial papers rose from 264 to 379. Regular local daily papers were established for the first time in all the major British cities, all selling

¹² Stephen Humphries, *Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1989); Paul Jobling and David Crowling (eds), *Graphic Design: reproduction and representation since 1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Ryan, *Picturing Empire*; Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration: the technical revolution* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles Ltd., 1973).

¹³ See footnote 11.

for a penny.¹⁴ By the 1880s and 1890s there were 150 daily papers selling in England. The penny papers, together with cheaper weeklies and Sunday papers, altered the readership of the press and expanded it to the mass-reading public.¹⁵ From the mid-century, illustrated papers emerged as a new form of journalism. These papers employed wood-cut engravings to enliven news reports and enjoyed popularity with both middle-and working-class audiences.¹⁶ The periodical press similarly witnessed a massive explosion during this period, and catered for all sectors of society.¹⁷ Slave-trade suppression was represented in various forms in all the above media. The campaign was covered in middle-and working-class newspapers and periodicals, and was reported at a national and provincial level. The press occupied a central position within late Victorian society, and was one of the main sources through which people obtained information.¹⁸ Press reportage therefore played an absolutely crucial role in dictating what British people knew about the anti-slavery campaign and how they came to imagine it.

In the traditional daily papers such as *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, coverage of slave-trade suppression tended to focus on the official and political elements of the campaign, relaying Parliamentary speeches and reports, rather than concentrating on naval activity. The period around the 1871 Select Committee, Bartle Frere's negotiations in Zanzibar, and the subsequent visit of the Sultan of Zanzibar to England in 1875 were the main periods of coverage.¹⁹ The publicity surrounding Livingstone's search expedition also helped raise the profile of East African anti-slavery during the early 1870s. The proceedings of large anti-slavery meetings, such as that convened by the BFASS on the East African slave

¹⁴ Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 31.

¹⁵ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, pp. 27-30.

¹⁶ Bob Clarke, *From Grub Street to Fleet Street: An Illustrated History of English Newspapers to 1899* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 247-50; Jobling and Crowley, *Graphic Design*, ch. 1.

¹⁷ J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1994).

¹⁸ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 20.

¹⁹ On the Select Committee and Frere's negotiations see for example: *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 August 1872, p. 1, 15 August 1872, pp. 2-3, *The Times*, 24 October 1872, p. 10. For the Sultan of Zanzibar see *The Times*, 22 June 1875, p. 8.

trade in 1872 and the jubilee meetings held in London and Manchester in 1884, as well as the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, were relayed, often with speeches recorded verbatim.²⁰ The editorial section of newspapers like *The Times* was also an important forum for abolitionist societies such as the BFASS to maintain the public profile of the East African anti-slavery campaign; other prominent individuals sometimes shared their views on the campaign there.

East African suppression was never disputed in the way that the West Africa squadron had been in the 1840s. However, some dissenting voices did appear in the press. Accounts of bungled captures involving the deaths of either naval crewmembers or enslaved Africans were one of the main issues to prompt critical editorial letters.²¹ As the previous chapter showed, the plight of liberated Africans also received a large amount of negative press. It was seldom argued, however, that the cruisers should be withdrawn and on the whole the press was generally supportive of the campaign. On the other hand, there was an ongoing argument that the anti-slavery patrols should be supplemented by internal suppression, brought about through free emigration schemes as one writer proposed in *The Graphic* in 1873, or, as argued by the BFASS and many naval officers, through the total abolition of slavery in the Eastern world.²² Apart from the negotiations of the early 1870s, the campaign was rarely a front-page priority for the mainstream papers. Between the late 1860s and early 1890s, coverage can best be described as a steady trickle. Press interest was certainly not constant throughout the campaign, rather coverage ebbed and flowed, reflecting the commercial imperative of mainstream papers and periodicals of ensuring their stories were topical. In contrast to the more sensational illustrated and penny papers which will be discussed below, the central purpose of newspapers was to inform the public

²⁰ Meetings of the BFASS see: *The Times*, 26 July 1872, p. 10, 5 November 1872, p. 4, 7 January 1885, p. 7.

²¹ *The Graphic*, 8 March 1873, p. 215 and 3 May 1873, p. 410; *The Times*, 25 October 1888, p. 13.

²² *The Graphic*, 3 May 1873, p. 410; *The Times*, 25 October 1873, p. 13; *ASR*, May 1887, p. 106.

of current affairs. The intermittent coverage of the anti-slavery campaign within the mainstream newspaper press reflected this.

From around the 1870s, reports of the anti-slavery patrols usually came via telegraphic news agencies such as Reuters.²³ As a result, news of the campaign became geographically far more widespread across the provinces. It also meant, however, that there was little variety in how the campaign was reported within these papers. Often reports ran to no more than a few lines, and reproduced verbatim the telegraphs sent by senior naval officers of recent slave dhow seizures, or intelligence from British consuls reporting on the current state of the slave trade. It was common for the same excerpt to appear across dozens of different daily papers. Coverage of Lieutenant Myles Cooper's death provides a representative example.²⁴ Table 2 shows how widely the story was covered across the country. Apart from the reports in *The Times* and *The Graphic*, all the other newspapers reproduced the same, short telegraphic communication. *The Times* carried slightly longer articles, and received two letters on the subject, and *The Graphic* included an illustration of Cooper alongside its short article. Outside of these two papers, priority given to the story was low. Nevertheless, it was still the case that many of the cheap daily or weekly provincial papers carried the story. Reflecting the new pace at which information could be exchanged, it was not only Cooper's death that was covered, but follow-up stories also featured. For example, extracts of the reports of Cooper's fellow crewmembers were published in the following months. The expansion of the provincial press post-1855 made news of the anti-slavery patrols available to the masses in a way that was previously impossible.

²³ Nalback "The Software of Empire", pp. 68-94.

²⁴ See chapter 5, pp. 153-5.

Table 2: Coverage in newspapers of Lieutenant Cooper's death in 1888.²⁵

Newspaper	Number of entries		
	October	November	December
Nationals			
The Graphic	-	1	-
Illustrated London News	-	-	-
Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper	1	1	
Morning Post	1	1	1
Pall Mall Gazette	1	1	-
Reynold's Paper	1	1	-
The Standard	1	-	1
The Times	5	1	1
Provincials			
Aberdeen Weekly Journal		1	1
Belfast News Letter	1	1	2
Birmingham Daily Post	1	1	1
Blackburn Standard & Weekly Express	-	-	1
Dundee Courier & Argus	1	-	1
Freeman's Journal & Daily Commercial Advertiser (Dublin)	-	-	1
Glasgow Herald	-	-	1
Hampshire Telegraph & Sussex Chronicle	-	1	1
Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser	-	-	1
Ipswich Journal	1	-	-
Lancaster Gazette & General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland & Yorkshire	1	1	-
Leeds Mercury	3	1	-
Liverpool Mercury	-	-	1
Newcastle Weekly Courant	-	-	1
Sheffield & Rotherham Independent	1	-	-
The Star (St. Peter Port, Guernsey)	1	-	-
Western Mail (Cardiff)	1		
York Herald	1	-	2

²⁵ The dates of publication of all of the articles in the provincial papers were broadly the same reflecting when telegraphic communications arrived. They were published on or around the following dates: 20 October, 17 & 21 November, 29 December.

The illustrated press adopted a very different approach to reporting news than the traditional papers. The *Illustrated London News*, which was founded in 1842 by liberal MP Herbert Ingram, and later *The Graphic* in 1869 by engraver and illustrator William Luson Thomas, in particular covered the naval campaign relatively frequently.²⁶ Between 1858 and 1890 the *ILN* was edited by John Lash Latey, a staunch supporter of radical politics since the 1832 Reform Bill. His son John Latey, who was educated at the Working Men's College, London, went on to establish the working class *Penny Illustrated Paper*, which will be discussed below.²⁷ The *ILN*, which bridged the period of both Oceanic anti-slavery campaigns, also covered the transatlantic naval campaign extensively, and demonstrates continuity in the illustrated press of interest across the two campaigns.²⁸ Although the campaign featured on the front pages of the illustrated papers more than in the mainstream press, the level of coverage should not be overstated. A brief survey of the *ILN*, for example, shows, not unsurprisingly, that the number of reports about the Crimean War in two and a half years was over six times more than for three decades of the East African anti-slavery campaign. That said, the illustrated press still represented one of the main, and most accessible sources, for popular depictions of the navy's anti-slavery campaign. The representations of suppression in these papers therefore had a significant influence on how the British public came to view the campaign.

Both the *ILN* and *The Graphic* offered a mix of news, useful information and serialised novels, and their pages were illustrated with good-quality wood-cut engravings. Published weekly and priced at sixpence per issue, they were aimed at the middle-class public, and both papers were widely read by this group.²⁹ Using bold headlines and dramatic engravings, the illustrated papers concentrated on depicting the action of the

²⁶ Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, p. 115.

²⁷ W. B. Owen, 'Latey, John (1842–1902)', rev. Joanne Potier, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34415, accessed 18 July 2010].

²⁸ See Hamilton and Blyth (eds), *Representing Slavery*, pp. 211-13.

²⁹ Clarke, *From Grub Street*, pp. 247-50.

anti-slavery patrols, showing lively sea chases, the seizure and destruction of slave dhows, and the liberation of groups of recently rescued Africans on board the naval ships (figs. 5.7, 5.8, 8.1). Slave-trade suppression offered prime material for the illustrated press. The news values of the *ILN* 'were those that lent themselves to illustration that would grace and not offend the middle-class table'. The paper delighted in Royal events, colonial exhibitions, the stories of great men, and the depiction of exotic places and peoples.³⁰ The *ILN* had a circulation figure of 60,000 copies per week. However, as historians of the Victorian press usually stress, popular papers could also be read in restaurants, public houses, coffee houses, working-class cafes and clubs, factories, and public libraries. Readership would have therefore extended far beyond circulation figures.³¹ In the context of this thesis we might also include the availability of popular papers within the officers' mess on board ship.³² In his study of representations of Arctic exploration in popular culture during the same period, Robert G. David has pointed out that the attraction of the pictures in these papers was often greater than the text. As a result they were probably influential beyond the literate public, to semi-literate and non-literate groups.³³ We can assume therefore that the representations of slave-trade suppression within these papers would have reached a considerably wider audience in Britain.

There are in fact many parallels between the ways in which Arctic exploration and naval suppression were represented in British popular culture during the late-nineteenth century. David, for example, identifies the cult of the explorer as an important influence on Arctic representations.³⁴ In naval suppression we might replace this with the cult of the military or naval hero. Both topics had broad audience appeal and were widely assimilated into various forms of popular culture. The emphasis of representations was easily adjusted

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³¹ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 27.

³² See chapter 5, p. 158.

³³ David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*, p. 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

to fit the audience, whether that was middle-or working-class, adult or juvenile. David's study also shows how stereotyped images were perpetuated to the point that the Arctic became almost entirely a construct of the imaginary rather than reality, a point which was also very much true of naval suppression. As will be demonstrated below, the same themes could work just as easily in factual accounts as they could in fiction.

A key point is that the reports and images featured in the illustrated papers were often produced by naval officers serving on the anti-slavery patrols. Engravings were generally copied directly from their sketches or photographs.³⁵ The repetition of similar pictorial images by naval officers created a series of visual stereotypes around the campaign. In the same way, particular narratives were constantly recycled. This is significant as it meant that much of what the British public knew about slave-trade suppression was based on what officers essentially wanted them to know: whether this was their accounts recycled in newspapers and lectures, the reproduction of their sketches and photographs in the illustrated press, or the ideas espoused in the published literature of writers such as Colomb and Sullivan. Ultimately, then, the representations which dominated popular culture originated from a relatively small group of naval officers. Not only did these men tend to perpetuate the same themes over time, but as we have seen throughout this thesis, their thinking and attitudes were bound by their specific naval, professional, middle- and upper-middle class backgrounds. The traditions that were important to naval officers – manliness, Christian militarism, imperial duty and patriotism – were therefore the dominant themes that emerged in this material. Their prevailing racial attitudes and the imagining of suppression through crude racial categories were also the overriding messages of these representations. The narratives of naval officers were, of

³⁵ See for example fig. 8.1 which was based on sketches by Mr Millett, an officer of HMS *Garnet* in 1888. Photographs taken by Captain Sullivan and originally published as engravings in *Dhow Chasing* (1873) were also widely reproduced in the press (see figs. 3.8-3.9). The production of images in this way was part of satisfying the demands of a public who had become accustomed to expecting some degree of pictorial accuracy in their newspapers. Jobling and Crowley, *Graphic Design*, p. 26.

course, mediated by the manufacturers of this material, for example by newspaper and periodical editors. But the emphasis on presenting slave-trade suppression as a romanticised, imperial narrative appears to have been a priority of both naval officers and newspaper and periodical editors alike.

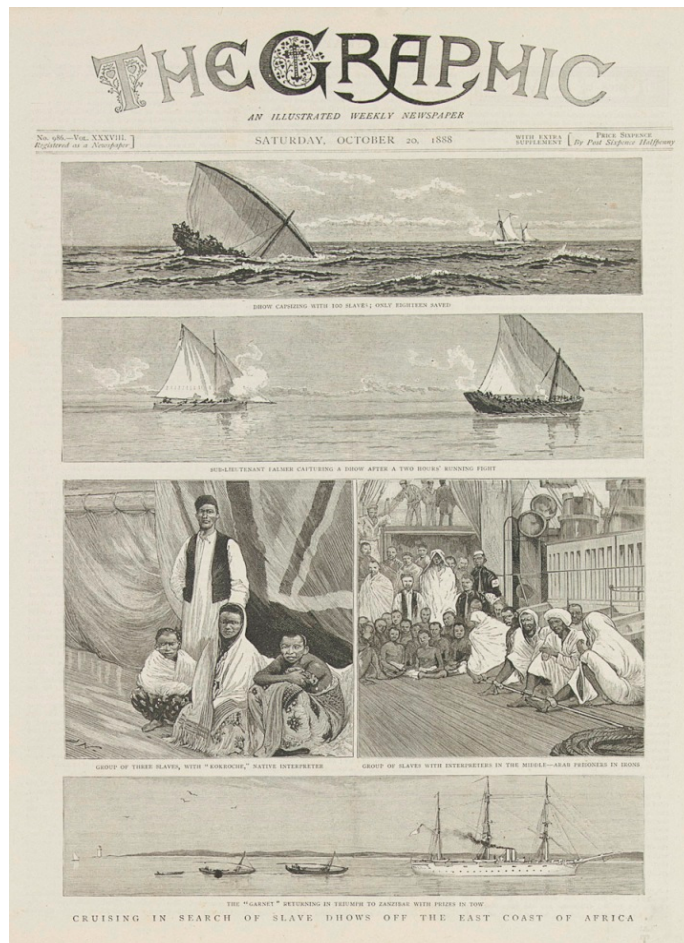


Fig. 8.1: 'Cruising in search of slave dhows off the East Coast of Africa', *The Graphic*, 20 October 1888 (front cover).

Figure 8.1, which featured on the front cover of *The Graphic* around the time of Lieutenant Cooper's death in 1888, provides a characteristic example of how suppression was represented in middle-class illustrated papers. Together with its accompanying text, many of the typical motifs were featured:

Our engravings are from sketches and photographs by two naval officers, Mr T. H. Millett and Mr William F. Frost. The former writes: - "Slave cruising is very popular with the men, and they show great zest in doing their utmost to stamp out the nefarious trade. The *Garnet* has been very lucky so far. One of the sketches represents the capsizing of a dhow with one hundred slaves, besides the crew. Eighteen men only were picked up. Another shows a running fight, which took place with a large dhow and the cutter *Olga*, under Sub-Lieutenant Palmer. He succeeded in capturing the dhow after two hours and a half. Four Arabs and slaves (two of whom were women) were killed, and a few wounded. A third depicts the *Garnet* towing dhows back in triumph to Zanzibar, to be tried at the Consular Court, Zanzibar. Their condemnation means prize-money to all hands, including the proverbial ship's cook. The groups of the rescued slaves and imprisoned Arabs are on the quarter-deck of the *Garnet*, where they were made comfortable, and the Arabs in irons reflected over their misdeeds.

Naval officers employed powerful imagery in association with interpretive text to cast themselves as the heroes of suppression, as the liberators of enslaved Africans, and the capturers of enemy Arab slave traders. (See also figs. 5.7 and 5.8). Again the narratives were simplistic and caricatured

This example also demonstrates how failed rescue attempts and the deaths of Africans (and not surprisingly Arabs) were often treated lightly in this material. This echoed the way in which the deaths of indigenous peoples in colonial wars tended to be represented in the press during this period.³⁶ As Rudyard Kipling wrote ironically of war

³⁶ John, Springhall, "'Up Guards And At Them!'" British Imperialism and Popular Art, 1880-1914' in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 49-72, pp. 56-8.

reporting in 1891, 'It was above all things necessary that England at breakfast should be amused and thrilled and interested'.³⁷ It did not matter so much who died during the action. The monotonous reality of patrolling for slave dhows was unlikely to provide any thrills to the British public. Bungled rescue attempts provided far more apposite material. Death, injury or disease, rather than detracting from stories in fact enhanced their sensationalist appeal. That newspaper editors were aware that accounts of slave-trade suppression had an appealingly gory side is demonstrated in a review of Captain Sullivan's *Dhow Chasing*. Writing in *The Graphic* in 1873 the reviewer stated: 'the graphic pictures of the rescued slaves, will delight alike the lover of adventure and the veriest hunter after sensationalist horrors'.³⁸ The emphasis of the illustrated papers was on sensationalist fare. Appealing to notions of anti-slavery was a secondary intention, if an intention at all. Editors could happily nestle reports of the anti-slavery patrols amongst other examples which appealed to middle-class enthusiasm for stories of national greatness and empire. Returning to figure 8.1, amongst the other leading illustrated stories within this issue were: the unveiling of a statue to honour William Shakespeare at Stratford-Upon-Avon, the visit of the Prince of Wales to the King of Romania, and a meeting of the Council of Regency in the British princely state of Gwalior, India. Slave-trade suppression could sit on the front cover of this issue and provide wholesome entertainment in the same way as these other stories, but of course, crucially, it also provided greater excitement for its readers. It was not irrelevant that this story related to anti-slavery. It mattered that this was about the nation's abolitionist crusade, but it mattered because it proved Britain's national virtue, not because it highlighted African enslavement.

If slave-trade suppression was represented in middle-class illustrated papers in a way that was sensationalist and disconnected from ideas of anti-slavery, then this was even more the case for papers aimed at the working classes. These perpetuated many of the

³⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *The Light That Failed* (1891), quoted in *ibid*, p. 56.

³⁸ *The Graphic*, 26 April 1873.

same visual narratives, but in general the engravings were cruder and their subjects even more caricatured. Hand-to-hand combat on board dhows was a favourite subject. A naval cutter pulled alongside a dhow, and an ensuing battle between a band of brave blue jackets and a motley looking crew of cutlass-wielding, piratical Arabs, quickly became a shorthand and enduring way of representing the anti-slavery patrols. The *Penny Illustrated Paper* printed such a scene on its front cover in November 1872 (fig. 8.2). The engraving purported to depict a real engagement with a slave dhow recently carried out by HMS *Daphne*. The accompanying text stated: 'With the dauntless pluck for which British men-of-war have ever been renowned, a cutter's crew of the *Daphne* proceeded to tackle a slave dhow'.³⁹ When contrasted with the front page article of *The Graphic*, this image demonstrates how the penny papers used far more melodramatic and sensationalist means to represent the campaign. Coverage of suppression was as easily assimilated into the general theme of the penny paper as it was into the more expensive illustrated papers. In the penny papers the coarse wood cut engraving was employed as the main medium for depicting bloodthirsty and gruesome events, which were a staple of such papers.⁴⁰ The accounts given by naval officers of violent slave dhow captures – the heroic stories of officers wounded in action such as Lieutenant Fegen as discussed in chapter 5 – provided the necessary material for such imaginary scenes (fig. 5.1).

³⁹ *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 16 November 1872, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Jobling and Crowley, *Graphic Design*, p. 30.

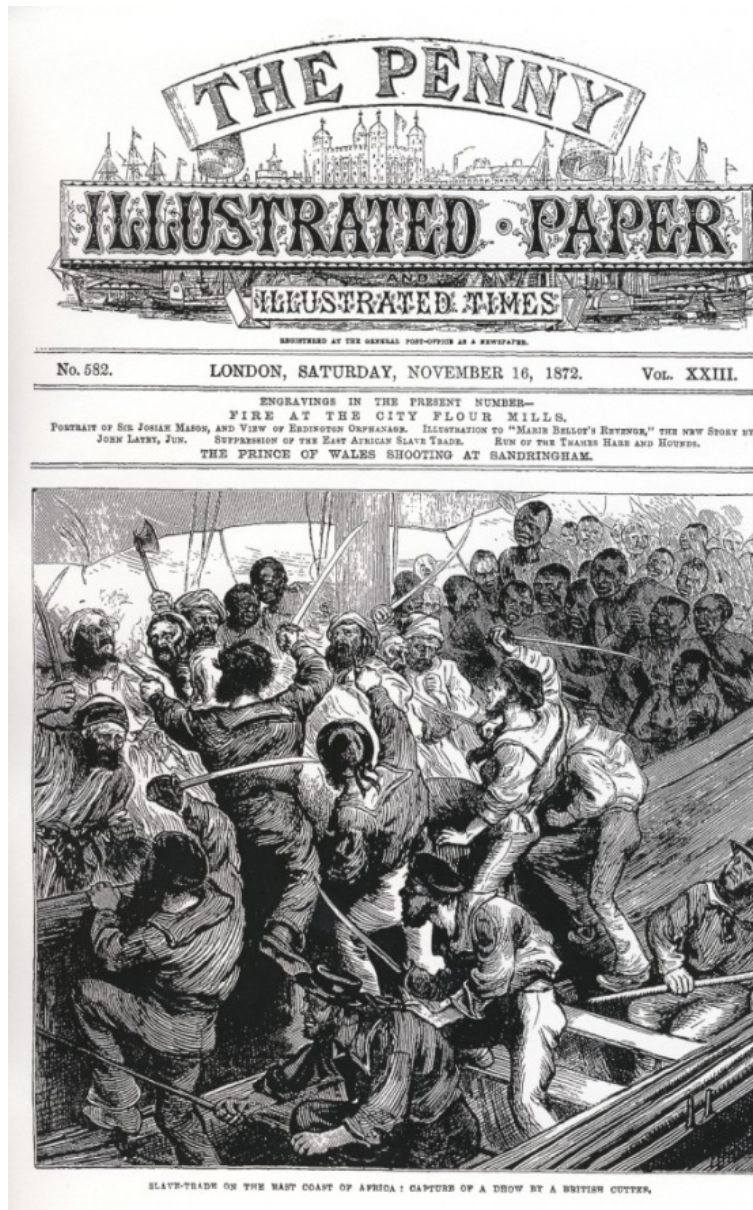


Fig. 8.2: 'Slave-Trade on the East Coast of Africa: capture of a dhow by a British Cutter', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 16 November 1872 (front cover)

Boys' journals

It was in this context that boys' journals became a highly popular arena for representing slave-trade suppression. The production of children's literature boomed during the course of the nineteenth century in books, weekly journals, and monthly

annuals.⁴¹ This section will concentrate on looking at the periodical market as this is where slave-trade suppression appeared most. Adventure stories were the main staple of boys' journals, and fictional tales of the East African anti-slavery patrols were easily and frequently adapted to fit this popular market. During the 1880s and 1890s, slave-trade suppression featured in profusion in boys' journals, both as short stories, and as chapters of longer naval adventure-serialisations. Some were authored by well-known imperial adventure writers, such as Gordon Stables and Lieutenant Colonel Percy Groves; others were authored by men who had themselves served on the anti-slavery patrols.⁴² The language, substance and visual representations in these accounts paralleled adventure and war stories rather than anti-slavery tracts.

A visual example of this is shown in figure 8.3. On the back page of the *Halfpenny Marvel* the same standard illustrated banner was used each week to advertise stories appearing in future issues. These two issues, published over two consecutive weeks, advertised a naval suppression story and a 'Red Indian' story.

⁴¹ For an overview see Lewis C. Roberts, 'Children's Fiction' in Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing, *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), pp. 353-369; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, ch. 8.

⁴² A handful of stories written in the 1880s were authored by Lieutenant Charles Rathbone Low, who had served on anti-slavery patrols in the Bombay Marine, see, for example, C. R. Low, 'A story of the slave trade', *Young England*, 1 December 1885, p. 565.

The "Marvel" is published EVERY WEDNESDAY.



Are you fond of Red Indian Stories? You probably are, so you should not miss seeing No. 21 of the "Union Jack." Our circulation has increased so rapidly of late that there must necessarily be many who have not had of the "Union Jack." We might therefore mention that it is a companion paper to the "Halfpenny Marvel," and each of the numbers is complete in itself, containing a long tale of mystery or adventure, with plenty of illustrations. It is quite as good as the "Halfpenny Marvel," for such authors as S. Charles Hook, Harry Rhyll, Maxwell Scott, Ed Meredith, and Paul Herring write for both papers. So that if you like as you will like our companion. No. 21 of the "Union Jack" contains a story of peril and adventure with the Indians and brigands in Mexico, entitled:

"THE APACHES' CAPTIVE,"
By PAUL HERRING,
and the picture below illustrates an incident taken from it.
Ask for No. 21 of the "UNION JACK" (Price 1d.), now on sale.



"Some of them carried a log of wood between them, and, giving this a swing, they battered at the stout door."

The "Marvel" is published EVERY WEDNESDAY.



EVERY BRITON
probably knows that in many parts of the world that abomination the slave trade still exists, and even flourishes, in spite of the country's strenuous efforts to suppress it. Strange though it may seem, there are actually white men—though they are necessary of the same—engaged enough to assist in the snatching of poor defenceless blacks from their homes, and to carry on the degrading traffic in human blood as a means of making money. In order to bring home even more vividly to the public mind the horrors of the slave trade and the terrible sufferings which have to be endured by all who fall into the hands of mercenary traders, the "Union Jack" this week publishes a long, complete tale, entitled:

"THE SLAVER CAPTAIN,"
which graphically describes the adventures met with by a British gunboat while in search of an annual slave vessel. All who are in sympathy with our country's endeavours to abolish the slave trade—and what Briton is not?—should read the story.
Ask for No. 23 of the "UNION JACK" (Price 1d.), now on sale.



"Hans had cut the boat adrift, and was rapidly rowing away from the burning vessel." (See "The Slaver Captain," in the "UNION JACK.")

Fig. 8.3: Advertisements for 'The Apache's Captive', 18 September 1894, p. 16 and 'The Slaver Captain', 25 September 1894, p. 16, *Halfpenny Marvel*.

The nonspecific nature of both adverts demonstrates how suppression was assimilated into the wider popular adventure genre. As was typical of both popular and educational children's literature of the period, the portrayal of other 'races' was a staple of such magazines. Here young British children saw various indigenous others, from 'Red Indians' to 'poor Blacks', presented in analogous ways. All of this aimed to entertain, but crucially it offered British children 'a playground in which Anglo-Saxon superiority could be repeatedly demonstrated vis-a-vis all other races'.⁴³

That slave-trade suppression could be imagined in an entirely indiscriminate way was summed up by a piece published in 1888 in *Young Folks Paper* entitled 'Boyhood's Ambitions'. In this the anonymous contributor advised his young audience that hankering after 'acts of heroism' was a healthy and expected part of the journey into adulthood. Recalling some of his own childish ambitions he wrote:

⁴³ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 204.

‘What *wonderous* pictures I did conjure up . . . in which I was engaged in either a fierce hand-to-hand conflict with some swarthy dhow captain, or heroically diving from the vessel side to the rescue of a drowning Admiral! . . . No sooner were my dreams of naval glory dispelled, than I thirsted for a life of roving freedom on the boundless prairie’.⁴⁴

Slave-trade suppression was represented in the same way as any other kind of adventure that could simultaneously offer excitement and instruction to young boys. The publication of suppression stories in boy’s journals peaked in the 1880s and 1890s, coinciding with the rise of popular navalism. Through its assimilation into the ‘cult of the navy’ and the rise in popularity of juvenile adventure stories, the popular appeal of the navy’s anti-slavery campaign importantly outlasted mainstream press interest, which peaked in the early 1870s.

A survey of some of the journal titles which featured slave-trade suppression stories provides a sense of the target audience. They included *The Boys Own Paper*; *Boys of England: A Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction for the Youths of All Nations*; *Chums: An Illustrated Paper for Boys*; *Little Folks*; *Routledge’s Every Boys Annual*; *Young England*; *Young Folks Paper: Literary, Olympic and Tournament*; and *The Union Jack: Every Boy’s Paper*. These were all examples of the new wave of ‘improving journals’, which replaced the previously ubiquitous ‘penny dreadfuls’ in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The latter featured gothic horrors and stories of criminal heroes. By contrast, ‘improving’ journals complimented the increasingly nationalistic and imperialistic tone of children’s education. The majority were priced at one pence a week, or sixpence monthly, and were therefore affordable to both the middle and working classes. The editors of this material included men such as ex-army officer and imperial fiction publisher Edwin J. Brett (*Boys of England*, *Boys of Empire*) and publisher William Lawrence Emmet

⁴⁴ Anonymous, ‘Boyhood’s Ambitions’, *Young Folks Paper*, 15 September 1888, p. 173.

(*Sons of Britannia, The Young Briton, The Young Englishman*). First published in 1879, *The Boy's Own Paper* was the longest-running of this kind of journal, and within a few years enjoyed a vast readership of over one million.⁴⁵ The journal was published by the Religious Tract Society and advertised itself as 'dedicated to providing healthy, wholesome fare, Christian in tone but without religious emotionalism'. Brett's *Boys of England* was estimated to be selling 250,000 copies per week by the 1870s.⁴⁶

As the titles suggest, this literature was gender rather than class specific. The development of improving literature has been interpreted as part of the larger response by the middle-classes to the greater enfranchisement of working-class men as a result of both the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts. With the working classes forming the electoral majority, anxieties developed over the different cultural values that working-class people held. This was partially seen to be evidenced in their enjoyment of crime-filled, sensationalist penny dreadfuls and radical newspapers.⁴⁷ The hope of such critics was to 'elevate the masses' by providing them with a culture more in line with middle-class values. The extension of the male franchise had significant implications for the role of the popular press in speaking to this newly enfranchised audience.⁴⁸ Encouraging patriotism within the pages of boys' magazines was part of this dynamic. Critics of the penny dreadful recommended a penny literature 'which would unite middle and working-class readers in their mutual identity as members of an imperial nation'.⁴⁹ Slave-trade suppression provided an exemplary image of Britain and demonstrated exactly those masculine values of patriotism, duty and courage that middle-class Victorian parents, educators and journal editors were so keen to propound.

⁴⁵ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 202-3.

⁴⁶ Troy Boone, *Youth of Darkest England: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p. 71.

⁴⁷ Boone, *Youth of Darkest England*, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 53.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Boone gives a good overview of this on pp. 65-71.

The degree to which the lower classes truly engaged with such journals or, moreover, absorbed this middle-class, self-improving doctrine has been debated by contemporaries and historians alike.⁵⁰ Bernard Porter has argued forcefully that working-class children were unlikely to have had the time or inclination to engage in leisure activities such as reading improving literature.⁵¹ In this sense it is safer to interpret these journals as reflecting the views of the middle-classes, and their attempts to impose their own values on the working-classes, rather than the thinking of the poor themselves.

The characterisation, plot and narrative style of slave-trade suppression stories was largely derivative. Normally the central character was a youthful midshipman or lieutenant who had recently embarked on an exciting life at sea. The stories nearly always centred on a chase or fight scene, and often included descriptions of leisure time which invariably involved hunting big-game up river. These complemented the images and narratives that appeared in the illustrated newspapers and were present in book form such as R. M. Ballantyne's *Black Ivory: A Tale of Adventure Among the Slavers of East Africa* (1878).⁵² All the familiar masculine tropes discussed in chapter 5 were featured in profusion in these stories. The young reader was invited to consume the exotic lands and peoples that the equally young officer encountered, and delight in the exciting skirmishes he inevitably found himself in. Chasing slave dhows and fighting Arab slave traders might be one such episode. *Young Folks*, for example, published a serialisation by J. A. Maitland in 1881 entitled 'Tom Rodman, Junior'. In this the reader sees the protagonist become a hero to the Sandwich Islanders having slain a shark that was threatening bathing women and

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 71 for an outline of the debate. John Springhall has argued the popularity of improving journals amongst working-class children see "'Pernicious Reading'? 'The Penny Dreadful' as Scapegoat for Late Victorian Juvenile Crime", *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990), pp. 223-46. Boone and others suggest in contrast that there is no evidence to suggest this amount of popularity amongst working-class readers.

⁵¹ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 124.

⁵² R. M. Ballantyne, *Black Ivory: A Tale of Adventure Among the Slavers of East Africa* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1878).

children in one chapter, before going on in the following chapter to chase Arab slave dhows around Zanzibar, and rescue what Tom describes as ‘poor, helpless darkies’.⁵³

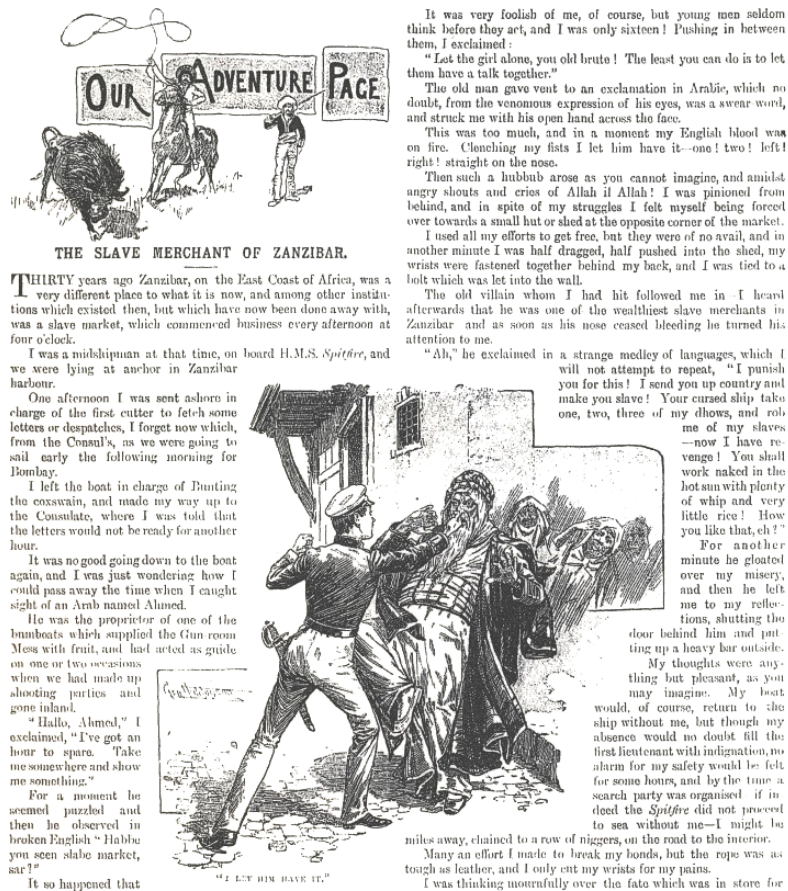


Fig. 8.4: ‘The Slave Merchant of Zanzibar’, *Chums*, 16 November 1892, p.149.

Figure 8.4 shows another typical example. This short story entitled ‘The Slave Merchant of Zanzibar’ was published on ‘Our Adventure Page’ in *Chums* in 1892. The engraving accompanying the story depicts the central character, a sixteen year old naval midshipman, punching an Arab slave merchant in the Zanzibar slave market. The naval officer is attempting to prevent the Arab merchant from separating an African slave girl from her brother (who are noticeably missing from the image). The engraving and caption which reads, ‘I let him have it’, was typical of the way such stories celebrated youthful aggression. The white, more-manly appearance of the naval officer is contrasted against

⁵³ *Young Folks*, 19 February 1881, pp. 53-4.

the untidy looking Arab. With the latter wearing the traditional clothing perceived to typify the effeminacy of the Orient, the Anglo-Saxon ideal was made obvious to its young readers. The stereotypical racial and cultural imaging projected in the more serious illustrated papers was easily adapted into the realm of fiction. Of course this is a vital point. Most readers, whether children or adults, would not have had first-hand knowledge of slave-trade suppression or of any of the places, peoples or situations that were depicted in these popular representations. The constant repetition of images and narratives served continually to strengthen the stereotype to the point that reality and fantasy became ever more blurred. Both figures 8.3 and 8.4 show how fantastical representations of the anti-slavery patrols had become by the last years of the century.

In these tales the young naval characters were presented as bound by common imperial purpose. Yet the narratives also featured a typical stock of national types. These incorporated the usual traditional caricatures of the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh. In one short story published in *The Union Jack* in 1881, the English Midshipman James Summers commands his boat crew on a dhow-chase which features a heavily caricatured Irish rating named Pat Bryan.⁵⁴ Another naval story written by the popular imperial fiction writer Gordon Stables entitled, 'Stanley O' Grahame: Boy and Man' was serialised in *The Boy's Own Paper* in 1883.⁵⁵ One of the chapters in this story opens with the Scottish hero standing on the banks of the River Clyde recalling his memories of dhow-chasing in Indian Ocean waters. In the same way that the titles of the penny journals invited boys from all nations to partake in their values, so the stories of slave-trade suppression provided a set of national characters for readers throughout the country to identify with and thereby perhaps even be enticed into naval service. Again it was essential that these characters competed not against one another, but against other inferior races, thus emphasising

⁵⁴ Lt. Colonel J. Percy Groves, 'His First Command: A Tale of the East African Slave-Trade', *The Union Jack: Every Boy's Paper*, 24 November 1881, p. 123.

⁵⁵ Gordon Stables, 'Stanley O' Grahame: Boy and Man', *The Boy's Own Paper*, 9 June 1883, p. 582.

imperial unity over class or background. Of course, one of the main problems with trying to interpret this kind of material is to what degree we can ever know whether readers absorbed such values. However, what we can say is that it was certainly the intention of editors and authors to appropriate suppression as a platform for disseminating their own middle-class values to British boys. Furthermore, such material served as important recruitment material for the military.⁵⁶ In the context of popular navalism, heroic and exciting stories of slave-trade suppression aimed to foster ideas of navy and nation and present an enticing account of imperial service to its young readers.

Published accounts

Another important medium through which naval officers disseminated their account of suppression to the British public was through non-fiction books. A handful of accounts written by naval men on the subject of the anti-slavery patrols were published during the course of the campaign. These followed a tradition of other naval writers who had been involved in the less sustained attempt at suppression in the Indian Ocean during the earlier part of the century.⁵⁷ The accounts which appear to have had the widest influence in popular culture were Philip Colomb's *Slave Catching in the Indian Ocean* (1873) and George Sullivan's *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters* (1873). Both books were partially written in the form of the popular travel narrative and in this way were aimed at mainstream, as well as specifically abolitionist, audiences. Reviewing Colomb's book, *The*

⁵⁶ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 208.

⁵⁷ See for example Barnard, *A Three Year Cruise in the Mozambique Channel*; Lieutenant T. Boteler, *Narrative of Voyage to explore the shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar performed in H.M. Ships Leven and Barracouta under the direction of Captain W.F.W. Owen, R.N.* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833); W. H. Hall, *Narrative of the Voyage and Services of the Nemesis from 1840 to 1843* (London: Henry Colburn, 1844); Pascoe Greenfell Hill, *Fifty Days Onboard A Slave Vessel In the Mozambique Channel*; James Prior, *Narrative of a voyage in the Indian Seas in the Nisus frigate to the Cape of Good Hope, Isles of Bourbon, France, and Seychelles, to Madras, and the Isles of Java, St. Paul, and Amsterdam, during the years 1810 and 1811* (London: Richard Phillips, 1820).

Athenaeum wrote: 'the general reader will find the book replete with amusing anecdotes and descriptions of manners and customs'.⁵⁸ Both authors were clearly aware of the potential of capitalising on the popularity of the Livingstone story, the raised awareness of the East African slave trade, and of the public's growing fascination with foreign exploration in general. Of the two accounts, Sullivan's was certainly more sympathetic. Colomb, on the other hand, perhaps aiming to be purposefully controversial, frequently stood out as an apologist for Islamic slavery.

The inclusion of numerous woodcut engravings based on photographs appears to have boosted the audience appeal of both accounts. The images included landscapes and seascapes, but most portrayed groups of African slaves, a number of which were discussed in chapter 3. The novelty of the photograph as a new form of visual representation, and moreover the accepted authority of this type of image when compared to earlier visual media, appears in particular to have enhanced the value of these books and increased their power to enliven anti-slavery sentiments. The *Illustrated Review* wrote: 'If there are any who complain of money wasted in the suppression of this traffic, we recommend them to look at one or two of the woodcuts in this [Sullivan's] book . . . and we venture to think its full horror will be brought home to their breasts'.⁵⁹ For *The Athenaeum*, the strength of this account was in its un-sensationalist approach: it describes the horrors of the slave traffic 'briefly and clearly, but the author has supplemented his pen by the camera . . . [making] highly-wrought passages unnecessary'.⁶⁰

Colomb's and Sullivan's accounts were extensively reviewed across a wide range of press publications including mainstream newspapers such as *The Graphic* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, popular family journals like the *London Journal*, and more weighty literary and critical journals such as *The Athenaeum*, the *Foreign Quarterly Review* and the *Westminster*

⁵⁸ *The Athenaeum*, 17 May 1873, pp. 624-5.

⁵⁹ *Illustrated Review*, 8 May 1873, p. 489.

⁶⁰ *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1873, p. 560.

Review. They were also discussed in specifically abolitionist publications, including the *Anti Slavery Reporter* and the *Church Missionary Intelligencier*. From this we might presume a correspondingly broad audience which included both the popular and literary branches of the upper- and lower-middle classes, as well as the abolitionist and missionary audience. The reception of both books therefore provides a sense of how such audiences viewed the naval anti-slavery campaign. The *London Journal*, one of best-selling of the mass-market periodicals, described the further extension of the suppression policy into East Africa as a 'truly Christian expenditure'.⁶¹ Colomb's and Sullivan's accounts were seen as crucial to re-awakening the public's interest in the anti-slavery cause, and naval suppression was overwhelmingly viewed as the right response to defeating the problem of the slave trade. What is noticeable amongst the reviews of these books was that there was a high level of support for the naval campaign. The *Illustrated Review* saw Colomb's book as continuing the line of anti-slavery literary tradition and likened it to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the way that it emerged as a call to arms during a period in which abolitionist intent was flagging.⁶² Of Sullivan's book the *British Quarterly Review* wrote: 'It is a book to make one's blood boil. English-men are greatly changed, if its revelations do not arouse the dormant spirit of liberty and philanthropy which swept away West Indian slavery forty years ago'.⁶³

Specifically abolitionist audiences were also engaged by these books. They were received by abolitionist societies as highly useful pieces of propaganda. There was, however, a degree of difference in the reception of Colomb's and Sullivan's books between the missionary and abolitionist camps on the one hand, and the mainstream press on the other. The *CMI*, for example, published an extensive attack on Colomb's apologetic treatment of Arab slavery. His views were seen as draconian, and they believed his

⁶¹ *London Journal*, 25 January 1873, p. 56.

⁶² *Illustrated Review*, 5:70 (April: 1873), pp. 437-8.

⁶³ *British Quarterly Review*, 58:115 (July: 1873), p. 224.

sympathies to be 'with the oppressor not the oppressed'.⁶⁴ The *English Churchman* compared the two accounts and wrote: 'Captain Colomb does not feel that horror at the very name slave which is felt by many of us at home . . . Captain Sullivan on the other hand, is an uncompromising abolitionist'.⁶⁵ Such criticisms of Colomb did not emerge in the mainstream journals. This is important as it returns us to the point that naval officers' narratives were widely accepted as truthful accounts of suppression within mainstream popular culture. The significant lack of criticism of Colomb's highly racist account also demonstrates the extent to which late Victorian middle-class readers accepted racial prejudice as natural. The *Anti-Slavery Reporter* did not review Colomb's book at all, but received Sullivan's account favourably. In particular they focused on quoting Sullivan's descriptions of the horrific conditions enslaved Africans endured on board slave dhows, and included his engraving of a severely emaciated slave (figure 8.5). It was not, of course, by coincidence that this review and image appeared underneath a notification of the next public meeting of the BFASS at which Sir Bartle Frere would be present.⁶⁶ The personal observations and visual images created by naval officers were a significant source of abolitionist propaganda, and it was important that these were capitalised upon to engage their members' sympathy. The CMS summed this point up, when they wrote in the *CMI* that 'Naturally . . . we turn with much anxiety to these records of naval officers, actively engaged in the suppression of the traffic, for such information as they can give us'. They, too, highlighted the power of the same image of the single, emaciated slave in Sullivan's book, writing that it would 'make a very sensationalist frontispiece to an anti-slavery tract far surpassing the well-known "Am not I a man and brother?"'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *CMI*, June 1873, pp. 177-88, 186, 181.

⁶⁵ *English Churchman*, 3 July 1873, quoted in the *CMI*, August 1873, p. 253.

⁶⁶ *ASR*, 1 July 1873, p. 154.

⁶⁷ *CMI*, June 1873, pp. 177-88.

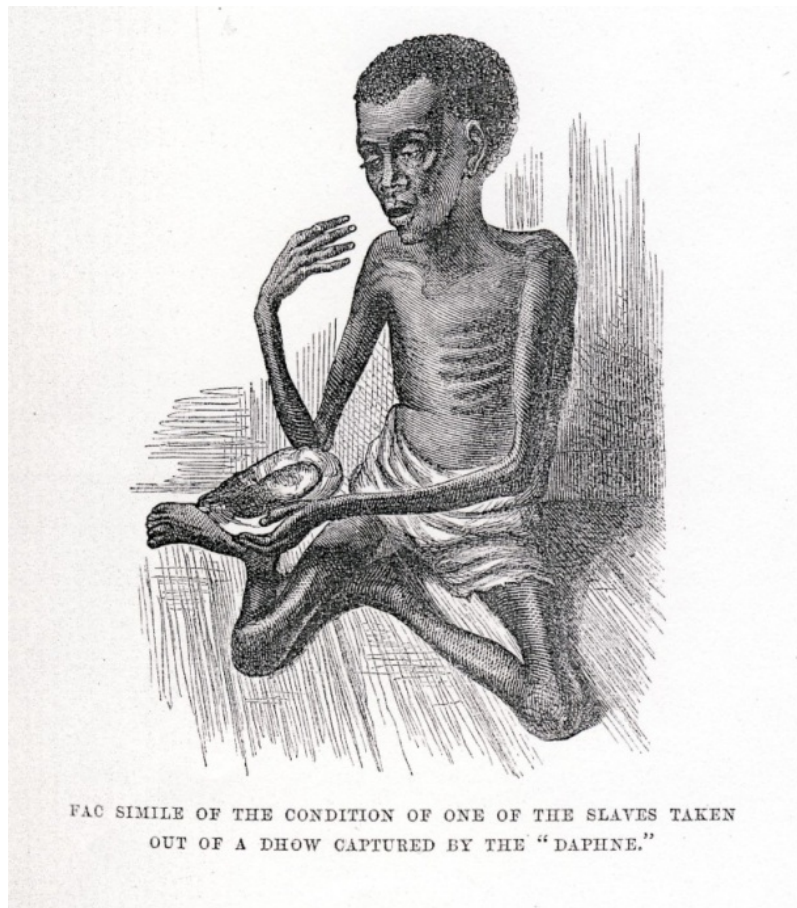


Fig. 8.5: 'Fac Simile of the condition of one of the slaves taken out of a dhow captured by the "Daphne"', from Sullivan *Dhow Chasing*, p. 161.

For a short time, at least, these two accounts appear to have engaged a certain level of public interest amongst middle-class audiences. There is no doubt their reception was helped by the popularity of the Livingstone story. Beyond the members of the abolitionist and missionary societies, the degree to which the general public purchased any of these books with abolitionist intent in mind is difficult to gauge. What is notable is that the most impassioned demands made in these book reviews, and indeed in the books themselves, was that the public should take notice of the East African slave trade, and understand its political context. *The Examiner* closed its review of Colomb stating 'the highest praise that can be awarded to it is, that it will lead many to think afresh the

problem of slavery and the slave trade'.⁶⁸ The only request these commentators made of their readers was that they first ruminate on the question of the slave trade, and then disapprove of it. A call for public activism was not part of the discourse. The *Illustrated Review* might have placed Colomb's book alongside *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but the former appears to have lost any of the celebrity status it (questionably) had, rather quickly. Sullivan's account had more longevity; the illustrations from his book were on occasion recycled in the press into the 1880s.⁶⁹ Midshipman Tristan Dannreuther referred to reading Sullivan's account whilst serving on anti-slavery patrols in 1888, and recommended his mother to buy a copy if it was not out of print.⁷⁰ By that stage the book does not appear to have been well-known however. Perhaps because they were not novels, the accounts of naval suppression did not enjoy the same popularity or longevity as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Anti-slavery lectures and magic lantern shows

The lecture hall remained an important platform for raising public awareness of issues surrounding slavery and abolitionism. Established anti-slavery societies continued to arrange lectures, and from the 1870s the East African slave trade and Islamic slavery formed a common focus of such meetings. Although the BFASS stated their objective of ending world slavery through 'moral, religious and pacific' means rather than through physical force, they did not outwardly denounce the navy's suppression of the East African slave trade.⁷¹ In fact, as we will see, by the 1890s glass lantern slides of the naval campaign became an important source of the BFASS propaganda. At a large public meeting convened by the BFASS at the Mansion House in 1872, Major-General Rigby was unanimously

⁶⁸ *The Examiner*, 7 June 1873, p. 595.

⁶⁹ See for example *The Union Jack: Every Boy's Paper*, 24 November 1881, p. 123.

⁷⁰ Tristan Dannreuther to Mrs Dannreuther, 12 December 1888, NMM DAN/73.

⁷¹ 'The policy of the Anti-Slavery Society with regard to the Suppression of the Slave Trade' *ASR*, May 1887.

supported by the audience when he stated that the apathy of the Admiralty and Treasury was responsible for the present state of the East African slave trade. He received 'great applause' when he argued that greater energetic action for the suppression of the slave trade was necessary. Again, the accounts of naval officers who had witnessed the horrors of the slave trade first-hand were treated as significant evidence for the need for more intervention. At the same meeting, Thomas Fowell Buxton stated that the mass of information furnished by naval captains 'left no doubt that a tremendous evil was going on . . . [and] there was little excuse for ignorance on the subject'.⁷² With the main brief of the BFASS being the collection and dissemination of information about slavery, the accounts of naval officers formed an important part of its armoury.⁷³

The BFASS convened two mass meetings in August and October 1884 to mark the jubilee of the abolition of slavery, and to review the work of the society over the previous fifty years. The first was held at the Mansion House and was attended by the Prince of Wales. To mark the longevity of British abolitionism the dais was symbolically set with two busts of Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. In front were laid a set of chains brought back from Zanzibar by the late Sir Bartle Frere, a number of wooden yokes, and a long chain to which twenty slaves had been attached when rescued by HMS *London*. The event was attended by large numbers, the hall being 'densely crowded from end to end'.⁷⁴ The second of the jubilee meetings was held in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. At this 'the great African explorer' Henry Morton Stanley was invited as guest speaker to lecture on 'the horrors of Slavery in that Dark continent'. Evidently Stanley's fame and popularity preceded him. By this date he had already published two bestsellers relating to the subject of the East African slave trade: *How I found Livingstone* (1872) and *Through the Dark*

⁷² ASR, October 1872, p. 63.

⁷³ See Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 7-11, for an outline of the BFASS policy and strategy. Sailors' eyewitness testimonies of the middle passage were similarly used as important abolitionist propaganda in the transatlantic campaign.

⁷⁴ ASR, October 1884, p. 172.

Continent (1878). Stanley's high profile helped attract a crowd of 5,000 people to the main meeting in the Free Trade Hall, and a further 1,500 more were accommodated in an overflow meeting in a neighbouring hall of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).⁷⁵ These numbers were not insignificant; they at least equalled the size of audiences at some of the popular lectures given throughout Britain by touring American fugitive slaves during the 1850s.⁷⁶ To what extent this high turnout reflected mass support for the anti-slavery campaign over and above the popular hype surrounding Stanley is difficult to say. The BFASS must have hoped that a crowd-puller like Stanley would help engage new supporters. At the previous meeting the lack of financial support by the British public had been lamented. The society was supported by Friends only, and with only 170 subscribers, annual funds amounted to a mere £200. It was stated that an annual income of at least £1,000 was needed to fulfil the society's main objectives.⁷⁷ The amount of subscribers was less than a tenth of the number who subscribed to the London Committee of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1788.⁷⁸ This gulf in the amount of subscriptions demonstrates the decline in importance of formal abolitionist societies, and also suggests a corresponding decline in public support.

Lack of public monetary support was an ongoing theme for the BFASS. In 1894 it reported that the society had delivered thirty seven lectures, mostly illustrated by glass lantern slides. Nearly all the lectures had been free, as it was found that charging admission fees had restricted attendance.⁷⁹ The decades of the 1880s and 90s were the heyday of the glass lantern show, or more popularly termed, 'magic' lantern show. It became fashionable for middle-class homes to own their own lantern. Amateur and professional lantern

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, November 1884, p. 197.

⁷⁶ Richard Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Louisiana: Louisiana University Press, 1983), pp. 18-19. Blackett notes how crowd-pullers such as Frederick Douglass attracted audiences of up to 3,000. What he labels smaller audiences, might number 1,000.

⁷⁷ *ASR*, October 1884, pp. 185, 187.

⁷⁸ Subscribers numbered around 2,000 people, Oldfield, *Popular politics*, p. 137.

⁷⁹ *ASR*, January 1894, p. 12.

showmen travelled all over Britain during this period, often attracting huge audiences. In this way the magic lantern show had a truly cross-class appeal and it became one of the leading methods for organisations like churches and popular reform movements to spread propaganda to semi-literate and non-literate audiences.⁸⁰ The BFASS seized upon the mass popularity of the magic lantern as a way of enlivening lectures and encouraging new audiences, especially, it seems, amongst the working-classes. In 1892 it purchased a lime-light lantern and a set of glass lantern slides that had been specially prepared for the BFASS by the Royal Geographical Society. These depicted 'nearly every phase of Slave life, and of the Slave-trade in Africa, by land and sea'.⁸¹ The slides were central to a new drive by the society to publicise the continued existence of slavery and the slave trade in Zanzibar, now a British protectorate, and to garner public support in lobbying Parliament for its abolition.⁸²

The slides, many of which depicted images of slavery in Zanzibar, were shown in illustrated lectures delivered by a specially paid touring lecturer, Mr Frederick Banks. The provision of these lectures was advertised in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* from November 1892. Groups within London and the provinces who were interested in hosting an 'illustrated lecture' were invited to apply to Mr Banks. One such lecture delivered in Brighton was advertised by distributing between 4,000 and 5,000 illustrated handbills, an initiative rewarded by the turn out of a large audience.⁸³ The society wrote: 'It is hoped that not only an increased interest in the Anti-Slavery cause throughout the kingdom will be awakened by these lectures, but that a considerable augmentation of the Society's income will be the result of this new undertaking'.⁸⁴ On average Banks delivered up to forty

⁸⁰ Humphries, *Victorian Britain*, p. 25. Humphries provides a good overview of the magic lantern show in popular culture.

⁸¹ *ASR*, November 1892, p. 357.

⁸² *Ibid.*, January 1894, p. 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, November 1892, p. 357; January 1893, pp. 13-14

lectures a year. The series ran for three years until his death in 1896.⁸⁵ A large proportion of the lectures were delivered to London-based organisations. However, lectures were also delivered in Aylesbury, Brighton, Charlbury (Oxfordshire), Chelmsford, Dorking, Dover, Hitchin (Leicestershire), Reading, Sidcot (Somerset), Sutton (Surrey), St. Neots (Cambridgeshire), and Tunbridge Wells, as well as the cities of Bristol and Wolverhampton.⁸⁶

Table 3: Programme of the BFASS lectures given on the subject of the slave trade and slavery in Africa in January and February 1894.⁸⁷

January 3 rd	Primitive Methodist Church, Harringay
January 4 th	YMCA, Clapham
January 9 th	YMCA, Wimbledon
January 18 th	YMCA, Kingston Upon Thames
January 19 th	YMCA, Islington
January 22 nd	YMCA, Brighton
February 1 st	Mutual Improvement Society, Argyle Square Church, King's Cross
February 5 th	Holy Innocents Church, Hammersmith
February 6 th	Band of Hope (Temperance) Society, school room of the Baptist Chapel, Hackney
February 7 th	Friend's Meeting House, Bristol
February 8 th	Friend's School, Sidcot, Somerset
February 15 th	The Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man, St. Matthew's School, Kingsdown, Bristol
February 22 nd	Wesleyan Mutual Improvement Association, Woodgrange Wesleyan Chapel, Forest Gate
February 27 th	YMCA, Wolverhampton
February 28 th	St Paul's School, (Church of England), Wolverhampton

Table 3 lists the fifteen lectures given during January and February in 1894, and shows a representative sample of the lecture programme during the three-year period. The number and frequency of these lectures provides some indication of the priority given by the BFASS to the lecture series. It also provides a profile of the types of groups which allied themselves to the anti-slavery cause in the late-nineteenth century. The alliances between

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, January 1896, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, September 1893, pp. 290-2; March 1893, p. 102; January 1894, pp. 43-5; January 1896, p. 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, January 1894, pp. 43-5.

anti-slavery and non-conformist religions and also to other associated reform movements that historians have highlighted for the earlier part of the nineteenth century clearly still existed at the end of the century.⁸⁸ Those non-conformist groups hosting lectures, for example the Quaker and Baptist societies, had anti-slavery roots dating back to the very earliest stages of the British abolitionist movement. At that time the abolitionist movement was largely middle-class. Later in the mid-nineteenth century, working-class radicals, notably the Chartists, allied themselves to the anti-slavery cause as a way of gaining attention for their own political cause.⁸⁹ Richard Blackett notes that working-class people made up a large proportion of the audiences who went to hear famous American ex-slaves, such as Frederick Douglass, speak, when they toured in Britain during the 1850s.⁹⁰ And Alan Rice has explored how Lancastrian cotton workers saw themselves as bound to support enslaved African cotton workers in the American south during the period of the American civil war as a result of their working the same commodity.⁹¹

What stands out for the late-nineteenth-century period is that a large majority of the groups which hosted BFASS lectures were working-class self-help societies. These had mainly flourished in mid-century and reached their zenith during the late-Victorian period. Organisations like the YMCA, mutual improvement and temperance societies were a central feature of the social and educational life of working-class Britons. Often centred on the church, they provided vital support to the needs of the ever-growing mass labour force that had expanded as a consequence of industrialisation. Mutual improvement societies – some of which emerged on the back of Chartist strength – catered to a wide, predominantly male, working-class membership. They were run by workers themselves and

⁸⁸ For a profile of early abolitionist supporters see Oldfield, *Popular Politics*, ch. 5 and Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, chs. 5 and 6.

⁸⁹ Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, p. 185.

⁹⁰ Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, p. 19.

⁹¹ Alan Rice, 'The cotton that connects, the cloth that binds: Manchester's civil war, Abe's statue, and Lubaina Himid's transnational polemic', *Atlantic Studies*, 4:2 (2007), pp. 285-303.

offered an important platform for their informal education.⁹² As had been true of the early- and mid-nineteenth century, anti-slavery continued to integrate with a wider culture of philanthropy, religion and moral improvement. However, as David Turley has emphasised for the period up to 1860, anti-slavery constituted 'a series of changing alliances', and although 'strong integrating features existed, at the same time distinct attitudes and emphases existed'.⁹³ Many of the groups which allied themselves to the anti-slavery cause at the end of the century did so for reasons that were specific to their concerns as a result of the changed political, economic and social landscape in which the working-classes now dominated.

A large proportion of the BFASS illustrated lectures were organised in connection with the YMCA. Founded in 1844, membership of the YMCA initially tended to include young men in their late teens and early twenties who worked in 'respectable' professions, such as in clerical and retail positions. But from the mid 1870s the association made a conscious effort to recruit more working-class members. It aimed to provide moral as well as religious guidance to the mass of young men who had moved into the city to work in industry.⁹⁴ The link between the YMCA and anti-slavery was forged at its founding, when it was established as an inter-denominational Christian body with specifically religious and humanitarian aims. One of its initial tasks was to organise lectures and collect information about missionary work in Africa.⁹⁵

A small number of temperance societies also hosted the BFASS lectures during this period. One of these was the Band of Hope, which was a non-denominational temperance society established in 1847 to serve working-class children. As well as promoting temperance, it also espoused causes such as anti-slavery, Sunday-School work, and the

⁹² Neville Kirk, *Change, continuity and class: labour in British society, 1850-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 52-4.

⁹³ Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, p. 227.

⁹⁴ Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, class and the male youth problem, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 158.

⁹⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 344.

Ragged Schools movement. Magic lantern shows were one of the principal forms of propaganda used by the organisation to try and persuade its young members to 'take the pledge' of abstinence; by 1900 The Band of Hope had a membership of approximately three million children.⁹⁶ In fact, the temperance movement can largely be credited with pioneering the use of magic lanterns, and influencing its development within mass popular culture. From the late 1860s, temperance societies had realised the power of the illustrated lecture to reach semi and non-literate audiences, who were excluded from literary forms of propaganda.⁹⁷ Such shows appeared to have been genuinely popular with their young audiences. The memoirs of one working-class girl living in London's East End in the early twentieth century, for example, recalled the immense excitement of local children at seeing the Band of Hope's magic lantern shows on a Monday evening.⁹⁸

Capitalising on the popularity and suitability of magic lantern shows for children, the BFASS presented a handful of lectures specifically to children. At others they made up a significant proportion of the audience. At the close of an afternoon lecture given at the YMCA in Kingston upon Thames, the audience of young people and young children 'did not wish to leave the room, but desired to see and hear more about the poor Slaves'. During the evening, in the same hall, a lecture was presented to adults only. The meeting was presided over by the Vicar of Kingston, who, in his opening remarks, referred to the experiences of one of his relatives who had worked 'in years gone by, on board one of Her Majesty's ships, engaged in suppressing the Slave-trade in African waters'. Using a familiar abolitionist appeal, women in the audience were invited as 'English mothers' to reflect on the 'destruction of child life'. Graphic descriptions were given of how Arab traders brutally murdered children in front of their mothers, leaving their bodies to be devoured by beasts

⁹⁶ Don Vann and VanArsdel (eds), *Victorian Periodicals*, p. 268; Humphries, *Victorian Britain*, pp. 46-8.

⁹⁷ Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows* (California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 86.

⁹⁸ Doris Bailey, *Children of the Green: A true story of childhood in Bethnal Green 1922-1937* (1981), quoted in Humphries, *Victorian Britain*, p. 46.

and birds of prey.⁹⁹ Employing another familiar tactic, 'Christian women' were reminded that the cloves they used to cook with were without doubt chiefly cultivated by slave labour on the island of Pemba.¹⁰⁰ Inviting British women to abstain from using slave-cultivated cloves was a token compared to the mass-abstention campaign of middle-class women from using slave-produced sugar in the transatlantic context. However, it demonstrates the longevity of certain anti-slavery tactics and rhetoric, implicitly recognising the success of such appeals in the earlier abolitionist campaign.¹⁰¹

A long report in the *Wimbledon Gazette* in January 1894 provides a detailed picture of the content of the BFASS lectures. The lecture was held at the local baths under the auspices of the YMCA. It began with Mr Banks showing a map of Africa, and demonstrating to the audience the 'enormous area over which Slave-raiding and Slave-selling are still carried out by the Arabs'. After this followed a series of glass-lantern slides depicting:

scene after scene . . . [of] Slave-raiding and Slave-hunting; gangs of men, women and children on the Slave march to the market of the coast; Slaves at work; Slaves flogged, and in other ways punished by cruel masters; men and women yoked with heavy chains, or by heavy branches of trees cut down, and trimmed to the gigantic "Y," the forked end riveted under the chin or at the back of the head of the miserable captives; Slaves at sea, battened down on the lower decks of dhows like herrings in a barrel; Her Majesty's cruisers searching for Slaves in creeks and rivers; Slaves set free from galling bondage by British officers, and their gallant crew etc., etc.

As well as maps and slides, the lectures also showed real objects of African slavery.

Wooden yokes, fetters, chains and ropes were used to demonstrate the physical pain

⁹⁹ *ASR*, January 1894, pp. 43-6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, March 1893, p. 103.

¹⁰¹ For more on the role of British women in the sugar abstention campaign and transatlantic abolitionism see Midgely, *Feminism and Empire*, pp. 48-63.

endured by slaves. Again the use of objects parallels earlier-eighteenth-century abolitionist tactics, an obvious example being Thomas Clarkson's chest of African produce.¹⁰² Before closing the lectures, Banks would invite a number of young men to the stage, to form a 'slave-gang', and using the various objects would demonstrate the different methods of captivity.¹⁰³ Using the same method he would also show how 'negligent or rebellious Slaves are punished by various cruel appliances'.¹⁰⁴

The power of slavery objects to engage and invoke sympathy from public audiences was also capitalised upon by missionary societies. In 1898 the Nurses Missionary Association borrowed a number of objects from the UMCA for display at a fundraising exhibition of missionary work to mark the bicentenary of the Medical Missions branch of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In addition to other 'curios' from Central Africa, shackles and yokes, apparently taken from 'living victims' of slavery, were displayed. The anonymous reviewer described the reaction of the predominantly female audience: 'it was these instruments of torture, the horrible thronged whips and the heavy chains and anklets, the rough wooden yokes . . . which brought home to one the physical horrors of the African slave trade with force and loathing'.¹⁰⁵ Missionary societies, in addition to some of the more established temperance societies, were also among the main organisations which held large collections of glass lantern slides. The CMS had one of the largest collections; by 1890 it owned forty sets of slides containing 1,200 images. Lanterns and slides were loaned out free of charge to groups wishing to run their own

¹⁰² See Schwarz, 'The Development of the Sierra Leone Company' in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles (eds), *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 256-61.

¹⁰³ *ASR*, January 1894, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, March 1893, p. 103.

¹⁰⁵ *The Nurses Record & Hospital World*, 16 July 1898, pp. 55-6. The writer also stated how the audience had since read 'The Capture of the Slaver' by Reverend D. Gath Whitley. This pamphlet, produced by the UMCA, told the derivative story of a slave gang's march to the coast, their shipment on board a dhow, their rescue by a Royal Naval cruiser, and finally the deliverance of the freed slave children to the UMCA orphanage at Zanzibar. A copy of this pamphlet is held in the NMM collection, accession number MGS/62, its front and back cover is shown in fig. 3.5, chapter 3, p. 83.

magic lantern shows.¹⁰⁶ From the 1880s onwards this became a vital propaganda weapon for missionary societies.¹⁰⁷ Amongst the CMS's collection illustrating the Niger region of Africa, were slides of the slave trade, including three entitled 'Slave Catching', 'Slave Gang', and 'Slave Dhow'.¹⁰⁸

As magic lantern shows became more popular, the lectures delivered became formulaic to meet demand. The slides held by the English Temperance Society included sets showing the 'East Coast of Africa' and 'Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief Expedition'. During 1890, the lecture 'Stanley's "Darkest Africa"', which probably included slides of the slave trade and slavery, was delivered to the Gospel Temperance Mission in Hoxton, and to the inhabitants of the workhouse in Lurgan, County Armagh.¹⁰⁹ Travel images were one of the staples of the magic lantern show, and those showing scenes of foreign countries and cultures were especially popular. When combined with the extensive use of magic lanterns by missionary societies, and with the loaning out of their slide collections, images of Africa, and of slavery and the slave trade, were widely consumed by the mass British public via this medium.

Three rare examples of glass lantern slides from the collection of the NMM dating from c. 1890 and illustrating slavery in Zanzibar reveal the types of images shown in these illustrated lectures (figs. 8.6-8.9). Figure 8.6 shows a particularly emotive example depicting an enslaved and enchained boy in Zanzibar. The slide is inscribed: 'An Arab master's punishment for a slight offence. The log weighed 32 pounds, and the boy could only move by carrying it on its head. An actual photograph taken by one of our missionaries'. Figure 8.7 depicts a group of Arab slave traders who were caught by a naval anti-slavery patrol as they tried to sail out of Zanzibar harbour under the French flag with seventy kidnapped children. Figure 8.8 shows a group of slaves posed on board a Royal

¹⁰⁶ 'Magic Mission Lantern', *Review of Reviews*, 2:12 (1890: December), pp. 561-7.

¹⁰⁷ Humphries, *Victorian Britain*, pp. 74, 134.

¹⁰⁸ 'Magic Mission Lantern', p. 564.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Naval ship after rescue. While the exact provenance of these images is unknown, figure 8.6 was certainly collected by missionaries for the purposes of illustrating the slave trade in Zanzibar, and it is likely that these slides, or at least similar examples, would have been used by the BFASS, as well as a whole host of other groups, during magic lantern lectures. A number of other photographs in the NMM collection also fit closely the descriptions of some of the slides discussed above, and were probably made into glass lantern slides. They include figure 8.9 which depicts a Royal Naval anti-slavery crew boarding an Arab dhow around 1885.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ These are all held in the NMM collection, under the following accession numbers: Fig. 8.6, ZBA2618; fig. 8.7, ZBA2619; fig. 8.8, ZBA2606; fig. 8.9, ZBA2609. See Hamilton and Blyth (eds), *Representing Slavery*, pp. 226-30.

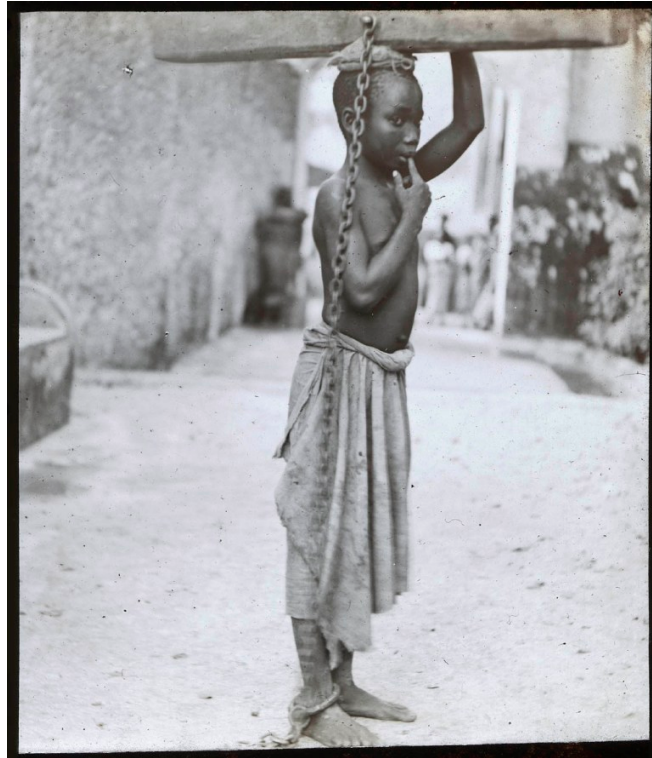


Fig. 8.6: 'Slavery in Zanzibar', c. 1890, silver gelatin glass lantern slide



Fig. 8.7: 'Slave dealers caught in the act', c. 1890, silver gelatin glass lantern slide

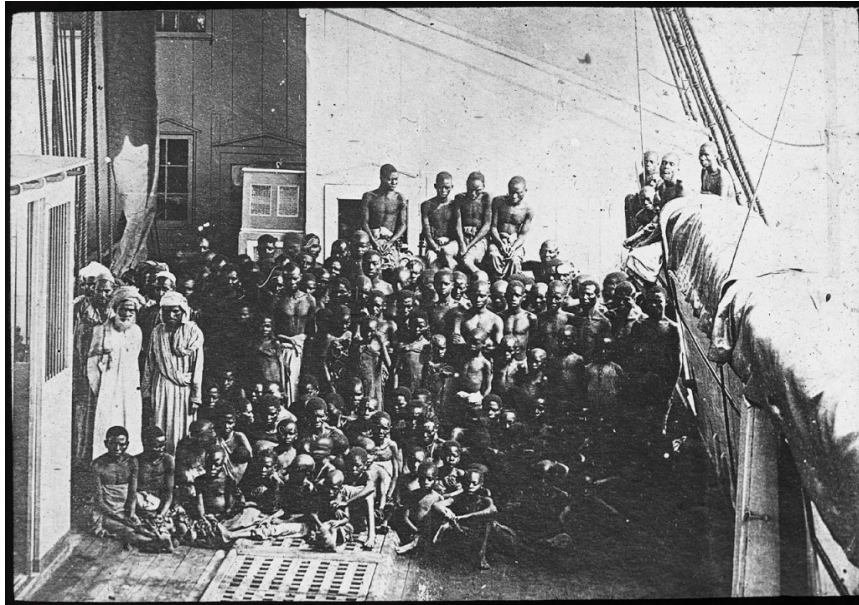


Fig. 8.8: 'Slaves released', c. 1890, silver gelatin glass lantern slide



Fig. 8.9: 'Boarding a slave dhow' c. 1885, albumen print

The images and narratives presented in these lectures continued to employ all the stereotypical views of African slavery that had their roots in the transatlantic abolitionist campaign. The enduring narrative of the slave as dependent victim, as illustrated in chapter 3, is seen in all its various manifestations. Through the combined use of image, narrative and objects, the focus on the bodily suffering of the enslaved, stories of kidnapping, familial separation and cruelty to children were invoked in a most powerful form. The idea that photographs were irrefutably true was essential to this abolitionist material. Here were many of the same painted or illustrated views of Africans that anti-slavery campaigners had relied on in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, verified in apparently certain terms through the new medium of photography. However, whereas abolitionist prints in the early-nineteenth century had been predominantly consumed by middle-class audiences, the mass media of the late-nineteenth century transformed the nature of that audience, widening access of anti-slavery material to all classes.

The BFASS was convinced that the glass lantern lecture provided an incredibly powerful way to disseminate their work. Reporting on the lectures, Frederick Banks wrote: 'of all methods of arousing the sympathies of the British public, these illustrated lectures are the most effective, as the hearts of young and old alike are reached and deeply touched by appeals, not only to the ears but to the eyes also, in a manner that will never be forgotten'.¹¹¹ During one such lecture a leading member of the Birmingham YMCA stated that they 'supported the policy of the Anti-Slavery Society [of] adopting so interesting a method of disseminating information upon Slavery and the Slave-trade'.¹¹² This novel way of engaging audiences in anti-slavery also attracted publicity from local newspapers. The *Oxford Times* described: 'A thrilling lecture on the Slave-trade of the present day in Africa was given by Mr. Banks of the Anti-Slavery Society, in the Town Hall

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, March 1893, p. 103.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, January 1894, p. 45.

[in Charlbury] . . . The lecture was illustrated by dissolving views, the lantern being one as we seldom see'. The town hall was 'crowded to excess, every seat and all standing room being occupied', with some individuals having to be turned away.¹¹³ Write-ups in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* similarly recorded large audience turn-outs at the illustrated lectures. One lecture given at the Stratford YMCA was attended by between 800 and 1,000 people.¹¹⁴

Although these lectures drew large audiences and the society deemed them a success in terms of spreading information, they were not financially successful. By 1895 the donations collected at the end of the lectures had not been sufficient to cover the initial outlay of expenses. Such was the situation that when the lecturer Frederick Banks died suddenly in 1896, the society could not afford another fully paid lecturer.¹¹⁵ Nor did the lectures raise subscriber numbers as had been hoped. In 1895, despite having 19,000 Friends, less than 200 individuals subscribed financial support. This was little improvement on the figure quoted ten years earlier of 170 subscribers. The BFASS reported that 'even the "Friends" have grown more or less lukewarm in the cause for which their fathers showed such great enthusiasm'.¹¹⁶ As for the general public it believed that: 'the man in the street does not think much of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. He seems to have the notion that it is a pottering, grandmotherly kind of body, which is always meddling with the business of friendly Powers'.¹¹⁷

The fact that working-class audiences enthusiastically attended the lectures but were unwilling to donate financially to the anti-slavery cause is difficult to interpret. Perhaps they felt that knowing about slavery and the anti-slavery cause was as much support as they were able, or wanted to give. They may have felt sympathy, but perhaps

¹¹³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, September 1893, p. 292.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, September 1893, p. 291.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, January 1896, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, January 1895, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

they did not feel a connection in the way that British cotton workers did with African slaves working the same commodity on the Southern cotton plantations during the American civil war.¹¹⁸ Recalling his memories of attending glass lantern shows put on by evangelical religious organisations for seasonal hop pickers working in the early 1900s, one man stated how all the workers saw them as free entertainment: ‘There were funny pictures and views of places’. They would go along, but not take them too seriously.¹¹⁹ Perhaps it was the same for the audiences attending the BFASS lectures. After all, anti-slavery lectures were only one of many glass lantern shows that their societies might host during the magic lantern season.¹²⁰ Was it that audiences went along because the images provided a fascinating glimpse of foreign lands and cultures that they would otherwise never see? It is impossible to second guess the motives of each individual for attending such lectures. What the above survey does, however, demonstrate is that a number of organisations influencing the social life of the working classes in late-nineteenth-century Britain did engage with the anti-slavery movement. Furthermore, non-conformist organisations continued to support anti-slavery as they had done for over a century.

Historians of anti-slavery have traditionally seen the mid-nineteenth century as the point at which mass popularity for abolitionism declined.¹²¹ More recently, an opposing argument has proposed that anti-slavery popularity continued into the late-nineteenth century.¹²² Does the above survey support this assertion and demonstrate an extension of public support even further? The emergence of the mass market and mass media allowed anti-slavery to be represented in ever more novel and popular ways. The pervasiveness and popularity of the press in late-Victorian life meant that a sizeable

¹¹⁸ See above p. 285.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Humphries, *Victorian Britain*, p. 139.

¹²⁰ The high point of the season was during winter and around Christmas, and trailed off in the summer months, *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹²¹ Key names that have proposed this include Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, p. 166 and Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, p.167.

¹²² See Huzzey, “A Nation of Abolitionists?”

proportion of Britons would have known something about the navy's anti-slavery campaign. Through these media, children and adults and working-class and middle-class people were brought into contact with anti-slavery. However, although such material was popularly consumed, as shown, for example, in the high attendances at the BFASS magic lantern lectures, this did not always lead to clear support for the anti-slavery movement. Throughout this thesis it has been stressed that the naval anti-slavery campaign became assimilated into the pervasive patriotic culture of the late-nineteenth century to the point that its humanitarian emphasis was often lost. It has also been argued that the anti-slavery patrols offered a prime platform for encouraging naval recruitment. In this way anti-slavery was often disconnected from such representations. In mass popular culture, anti-slavery, it appears, was consumed as entertainment more than it was acted upon. That the East-African slave trade was not about atonement for national guilt appears to be a crucial point, and one which fundamentally altered the way in which Britons engaged with and thought about anti-slavery in this period.

CONCLUSION

When Tristan Dannreuther wrote about his experiences of slave-trade suppression in the *Naval Review* in 1931, he was a fifty nine year old retired naval captain, and no longer the young, impressionable midshipman whose letters were explored in previous chapters. Summing up the response of his naval colleagues to their work on the anti-slavery patrols, he wrote 'The sentimental talk of the "brotherhood of man" did not appear to us to apply to the raw African slaves'.¹ Dannreuther's retrospective words were more perceptive than perhaps he realised. One of the defining features of naval officers' attitudes to their experiences of slavery was an extreme lack of empathy for enslaved Africans. In fact, forty years on from his service on the anti-slavery patrols, Dannreuther's views were little altered. His response to what he had encountered was still overtly racist and unsympathetic. His understanding of the nature and consequences of slavery continued to lack insight. The slaves they encountered on the anti-slavery patrols were, he wrote, 'mentally and physically of a poor type and always illiterate'. When slaves were aboard the naval ships 'they displayed no curiosity such as even a dog will show'. Describing the Red Sea slave trade, he stated that 'the slaves were usually buxom girls obviously kindly treated who themselves offered little resistance to being put into the Arab slave market'.² His remarks demonstrate the enduring nature of such views beyond the nineteenth century.

The attitudes of naval officers reflected the hardening of racial attitudes which characterised late-nineteenth-century Britain. Overwhelmingly they viewed local societies in the western Indian Ocean region in explicitly racist ways. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated that many officers arrived in East Africa with a set of preconceived racial and cultural

¹ Tristan Dannreuther 'Slave Cruising', p. 49.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49, 46.

expectations about Africans and 'Eastern' peoples. These were shaped by numerous discourses which abounded in British culture in both popular and scientific circles, and which represented indigenous societies in an increasingly negative light. Chapter 3 highlighted how scientific racism, the emerging study of the natural and biological sciences, and the associated culture of knowledge collection and dissemination, profoundly influenced the way in which naval officers perceived and represented Africans. Chapter 4 demonstrated how popular tropes of Orientalism were invoked to represent Arab peoples. The discussion of Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien's caricature of the Sultan of Zanzibar, for example, highlighted how central the 'Eastern' stereotype was to representations of Arab culture and the Arab slave trade. Among motifs that proliferated in British representations of the Oriental world, or the present-day Middle East, slavery, violence, sensuality and eroticism were the aspects of Arab culture that naval officers chose to record and circulate. Writing of Orientalist representations, Joanna de Groot has quoted Alphonse de Lemartine, a French traveller, who described his journey to the Orient in 1833 as 'a great episode in my interior life'.³ This description is pertinent to how naval officers perceived and represented their experiences of the anti-slavery patrols. Established models of male heroism and adventure were central to the way officers saw their role in liberating enslaved Africans. In their letters, journals and memoirs they narrated their experiences as if they were heroes of imperial adventure stories fighting against piratical Arab slave traders. They continually blended real experiences with imagined constructs. Naval officers' representations were as much a reflection of their imagined 'interior lives' as they were a product of reality.

Naval officers were important conduits of information about the societies and peoples they encountered, and also about slavery and the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean. Their observations and opinions were a vital source of information for officials in

³ De Groot, 'The Construction of Language', p. 102.

Britain debating the slave trade. Their reports informed parliamentary understanding of the nature of the slave trade. For example, the evidence given by naval officers to the 1871 Select Committee on the East African Slave Trade was central to the subsequent recommendations made for suppressing the slave trade. The records of naval officers' observations of the horrors of the slave trade – in both written and visual form – were a continual source of propaganda for humanitarians working to keep the anti-slavery cause alive in the minds of the government and British public. Naval officers also made a significant contribution to what the British public knew about the western Indian Ocean region more generally.

The importance of changes to communication technology in the late-nineteenth century has been emphasised throughout this thesis. Particularly important were the altered ways in which knowledge was disseminated and received: the emergence of a modern mass media and a mass audience fundamentally influenced the kinds of representations that emerged from this activity, and also the range of people that accessed this material in Britain. Chapter 8, for example, highlighted that in the 1890s magic lantern shows became an influential medium for representations of slavery and the slave trade, and were popularly consumed by working-class audiences. This represented a change from the early-nineteenth-century popular support of anti-slavery which came predominantly from the middle-classes.

Prior to the 1860s, places such as Zanzibar, Mombasa, Madagascar and the Seychelles were relatively unknown to the general British public. However, coupled with the expansion of the Britain's imperial presence within the western Indian Ocean in general, the navy's anti-slavery campaign elevated such places in the British public's consciousness. Entries for Zanzibar in *The Times* during the decade of the 1850s, for example, numbered only forty eight. By the 1870s there were 2,461 entries, or over fifty times as many. These entries mainly covered the anti-slavery campaign, geographical

exploration and growing missionary activity.⁴ The figures clearly demonstrate the expansion of British political and commercial concerns in East Africa, and the rise in importance of the Indian Ocean region within the British consciousness. This study has concentrated on examining the accounts of naval officers from the context of anti-slavery. However, officers travelled extensively while working on the anti-slavery patrols, and their records also reveal much about their observations of geography and the built environment of the western Indian Ocean region, as well as offering insight into the responses of naval officers to the rapid changes occurring in the region on the eve of Europe's colonisation of Africa.

In one sense the naval campaign deepened British understanding of the Indian Ocean world. On the other hand, the attitudes of naval officers were so deeply affected by racial and cultural prejudice that their representations of the region and its peoples clearly offered a highly distorted account. Naval officers largely presented a picture of the region that was defined by slavery, lawlessness, despotism and savagery (depending on which group of people they happened to be observing). They concurred with the observations of men like David Livingstone and Bartle Frere who presented East Africa as a region in desperate need of Britain's supposedly civilising influence. The presence of slavery in Africa and the East was seen as a relic of an ancient era; a confirmation that this part of the world lagged behind the progress of the Western world.

As chapter 4 demonstrated, the view that slavery was embedded within all religious and cultural aspects of Islamic society was an essential part of the anti-slavery rhetoric, and one to which naval officers frequently contributed. The juxtaposition of representations of Islamic slave traders with Christian naval liberators was essential to highlighting the external nature of the slave trade. Unlike the transatlantic campaign, Britain was dealing with a non-Christian, non-European enemy. The idea of 'national guilt'

⁴ Internet search, *The Times*, Thomson Gale Databases.

for Britain's slaving past, which was so integral to abolitionist rhetoric in the transatlantic campaign, was far less prominent in the East African campaign. Looking back on Britain's history from the position of the late-nineteenth century, naval officers were quick to remember Britain's abolitionist past, but less ready to recall the nation's slave-trading past. Indeed from the earliest stages of the anti-slavery movement, abolitionists had represented their crusade as proof of Britain's love of liberty. The anti-slavery acts of 1807 and 1833, and the navy's suppression of the transatlantic slave trade, were celebrated with immense amounts of self-congratulation. 'Abolition was hailed as an extraordinary, unparalleled national accomplishment. It validated British virtues'.⁵ With the nation's virtue enhanced by this benevolent act, the sense that it was Britain's duty to set an anti-slavery example to other nations became central to the 'culture of antislavery' and to patriotic discourse.⁶ The East African anti-slavery campaign represented the zenith of this ideal.

Naval officers prevailingly viewed themselves as racially and culturally superior to the foreign others they encountered. They cast themselves as liberators, both in real and metaphorical terms, bringing law and order to an otherwise lawless region, and freeing Africans from physical enslavement, as well as from the mental bonds of 'savagery'. The delivery of liberated Africans to European missionaries where they might learn what naval officer Captain George Sullivan called, 'the real sense of the word freedom', marked the culmination of this idealised narrative.⁷ 'Freedom' was to be shaped according to the accepted liberal doctrines of British society. Naval intervention was represented as necessary for the improvement of the region. In this way naval officers viewed their role as part of Britain's larger attempt to civilise and progress this supposedly backward region. It was in this light that the anti-slavery patrols were viewed as a continuation of Livingstone's crusade to bring 'Christianity, commerce and civilisation' to Africa (chapter 6). Anti-slavery

⁵ Quirk and Richardson, 'Anti-slavery, European Identity', p.5.

⁶ Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, see chapter 6 for a discussion on discourses of patriotism within anti-slavery.

⁷ Captain Sullivan to Rear Admiral Macdonald, Zanzibar, 17 November 1875, TNA, FO 84/1457.

was bound to Britain's 'national and "civilizational" identities'.⁸ In this way it was located within a parcel of wider imperial concerns. This is what anti-slavery meant to the vast majority of naval officers. The *wrongness* of slavery and slave trading was not under debate. In fact, it was the opposite. It was the *rightness* of the anti-slavery crusade that confirmed Britain's superiority over and above all other nations.

While there is no doubt that some naval officers were shocked and moved by what they experienced on the anti-slavery patrols, it is also clear that more were profoundly unmoved. Caring about the welfare of enslaved Africans was low on the list of naval officers' priorities. That they frequently described freed slaves as 'creatures' and 'animals' demonstrates their overriding racism. Coinciding with this period of high imperialism and the hardening of racist attitudes, the naval anti-slavery campaign was about confirming Britain's material, military and moral superiority. Commitment to anti-slavery was more a commitment to these ideals, rather than humanitarian ideals. Chapter 8 demonstrated that it was also in this light that the navy's anti-slavery campaign was largely represented and received within popular culture in Britain. For example, representations of the anti-slavery patrols were included in boys' journals as part of the genre of masculine, imperial adventure stories. It appears that patriotism, and support for an idealised sense of national identity, of which anti-slavery formed one aspect, was the staple of anti-slavery commitment by the late-nineteenth century. It was in this way that Tristan Dannreuther's comment on naval officers not believing in the 'brotherhood of man' – a doctrine which had been so central to early abolitionism – was so pertinent.

Commonly held assumptions about civilisation and progress intersected with every aspect of the navy's anti-slavery campaign in the late-nineteenth century. Ultimately, as chapter 7 demonstrated, any idealised notions of citizenship for liberated Africans were quickly undermined by the hugely exploitative and abusive imperial labour regimes in

⁸ Quirk and Richardson, 'Anti-slavery, European Identity', p. 4.

which they were often subsumed. However, it is a mistake to attempt to understand the history of British anti-slavery according to present-day values and humanitarian expectations. As others have argued, the sincerity of British anti-slavery commitment should not be simply brushed aside because of hindsight in the wake of the 'bloody history' of European colonialism.⁹ Chapter 7 looked at British responses to the problem of liberated Africans in ideological terms. But much more work needs to be done to better identify what happened to the 12,000 Africans who were freed as a result of the navy's suppression of the slave trade in the region. Other additional questions arise from the themes examined in this thesis. For example, we have concentrated on looking at the racial attitudes of British officers and how they represented the foreign others they encountered. However, cultural encounters are not simply one-way exchanges. One future path of enquiry could include interrogating how Britons serving on the anti-slavery patrols were themselves perceived and represented by the local societies and peoples with whom they came into contact.

An understanding of how naval officers perceived the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean region, as well as its cultures and peoples, and how this was represented, has helped shed new light on how the British public itself viewed the region. In recovering these attitudes this thesis has highlighted some of the main points of thinking about race, empire and identity during the late-Victorian period. Crucially, this study has highlighted the idea that British identities in the context of the late-nineteenth-century anti-slavery patrols were shaped through a process of a constant dialogue which took place between Britain and its empire. Previous studies of the navy's anti-slavery campaign in the western Indian Ocean have predominantly offered narrative style histories which have been preoccupied with operational matters and the diplomatic background. As such they have written a naval history of slave-trade suppression. Taking a different and more

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

interdisciplinary approach, this thesis has engaged with new themes and a range of varied sources in order to contextualise this activity within the social and cultural fabric of late-nineteenth-century British society. Additionally, by inquiring into the way in which slave-trade suppression has been constructed as a glorified naval and national history, this thesis moves away from the tendency of previous historians to mythologize this activity. Read in this way, this thesis provides deeper insight into the historical realities of the anti-slavery campaign, and significantly advances our understanding of this element of British imperial history.

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