

Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Slavery and Contested Tourism in Zanzibar*

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*Ignorance or concealment of major historical events constitutes an obstacle to mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation among peoples. UNESCO has thus decided to **break the silence** surrounding the slave trade and slavery that have affected all continents and have caused the great upheavals that have shaped our modern societies.*

UNESCO Slave Route Project¹

*When confronted with sequestered histories, there is a tendency in the West to stress the importance of “**breaking the silence.**” This desire has many roots, including Western psychotherapy, which suggests that trauma can only be cured through the discursive repetition of a narrative of the traumatic event. But as many scholars have pointed out, silence is not always a symptom of a damaged psyche or of censorship from an outside power. Silence can also be a strategy that groups employ in order to negotiate oppressive conditions. In this way it can be productive of particular kinds of identities and positive possibilities.*

Bayo Holsey²

On Zanzibar (Tanzania), memorials to the days of slavery are few and well hidden behind locked gates and down dusty roads until recently traveled only by a handful of tourists. Among residents, mention of the days of slavery elicits silence from the descendants of slaves and masters alike. Although slavery was abolished at the end of the nineteenth century, memories of it have been resurrected at times of political strife on the island throughout the second half of the twentieth century and even into the twenty first, including and perhaps most significantly during a bloody revolution that followed independence from British rule in 1964.

Today, tourism is playing a role in attempting to revive those memories, but to do so is not

¹UNESCO, "The Slave Route," <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/the-slave-route/>.

² Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). 5.

without consequences. A number of players are involved including the governments of Tanzania and Zanzibar, the Zanzibar International Film Festival, UNESCO's Slave Route Project (hereafter SRP) and numerous tour companies and NGOs. The main goal for most is to increase revenues for Zanzibar and Zanzibaris. However, for many of the groups like the NGOs, some participants in ZIFF and for the Slave Route Project, the purpose, as the quote from UNESCO above indicates, is also to "break the silence" about Zanzibar's former role in trading and using slaves. The result of this attempt to "break the silence" is a case of what scholars have termed "contested heritage and dark tourism," tourism that focuses on historical events or cultural facts that are a source of conflict for the host society.³

"Dark Tourism" in Zanzibar

My first visit to the island of Zanzibar, known locally as Unguja, was in the fall of 2003. I came as a tourist at the end of a "safari" by jeep through Kenya and Tanzania's famous animal preserves—Masai Mara and Serengeti. We were an educated group, interested as much in the people and history of the places we visited as we were in seeing the animals. To that end, we had arranged for visits to a number of historic sites in Zanzibar including the slave memorial created on the grounds of the old, nineteenth century Anglican Church in the centre of Stone Town, the historic old city on the island.

³ Dark tourism is a relatively new field of study, though it has antecedents in fields like museology and battle field preservation. Several collections of articles have been published in recent years that both examine specific instances of tourism centred upon such "dark" pasts as the Holocaust in Europe, the "killing fields" of Cambodia and on slavery and slave trades, especially in the Atlantic and the Americas and theorize the practice of creating tourist sites from disasters, natural and man-made. Of the collections see for example: Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, eds., *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol, UK; Buffalo, NY; Toronto, ON: Channel View Publications, 2009); G.M.S. Dann and A. Seaton, eds., *Slavery, Contested Heritage and Thanatourism* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Hospitality Press, 2001); J. Lennon and M. Foley, eds., *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (London: Continuum, 2000).

Slavery was the research topic that was to bring me back to Zanzibar the following year so I was eager to see and hear all about it from the local point of view. Our Zanzibari tour guide, who introduced himself as one of the Swahili people, a mix of Arab and African, did not disappoint us. We were barely loaded on the bus taking us from the airport before he began to regale us with tales of the “evil” Bibi Zem Zem, daughter of the first Sultan of Zanzibar and Oman (that is, Arabs), whose ghost he said still haunts the island. According to our guide she had a reputation for mistreating slaves—beating and even killing them.

In the days that followed, we were taken to several sites, including the old Anglican Church its grounds where a memorial to the slaves, created by a Swedish sculptor, Clara Sornas, was installed in 1998 and where the basement of an adjacent building was supposed to have housed slaves on route to foreign shores or to the slave market held on the grounds above. Another visit took us to Mangapwani cave and its neighboring “slave chamber” on the west coast twenty kilometers north of Zanzibar city where we were told slaves had been hidden from the British Navy as they tried to stop the notorious trade.

Now, fast forward a year to the fall of 2004. I had just arrived to begin my research. My proposal to do research on household slavery had been accepted by authorities at the Zanzibar National Archives two months previous to my arrival.⁴ Thus, I expected to begin my research as soon as the necessary permits were completed. My first morning on the island, still a bit jet lagged, the director of a tour company with whom my husband and I had worked came to my hotel offering to show me around and help me get settled. Our first stop was at the home of an acquaintance, a man known as a local historian of Zanzibar. We were welcomed and shown into

⁴ I had also presented my thesis to two Zanzibari scholars among others at a workshop in Bergen, Norway the previous June with no indication that the topic might be problematic. In retrospect, I realize that such scholars have to present a different demeanor when visiting in the global north that they would at home, but at the time, I was yet inexperienced in Zanzibar cultural and political discourse.

his office. I can still see three of us sitting around his large table in a room lined with books and old photographs. After the usual introductory conversation, he asked what my research topic was. I replied that I would be doing archival research and interviews on household slavery. I wanted to examine the impact of household life including slaves on Zanzibari, Swahili cultural practices and identity. As soon as the words were out of my mouth, it was as if a wall had descended between me and these two men. Although I would meet the historian again on several occasions I never mentioned slavery again. The tour company director told me later that slavery was a forbidden subject, suggesting that focusing on it would lead to trouble, but that was the extent of the discussion except to say that his company did not take tourists to the slave memorials and he did not understand why people who had never been slaves on Zanzibar would find such memorials of interest or come to Zanzibar to weep about the plight of slaves long dead. My sense with both of these men was that there was something going on beneath the surface, something more than embarrassment about Zanzibar's past, but it would be years before I would be able to articulate what that something was.

Although these two men were the first to indicate that I had stepped into a minefield, they were not the last. I went back to the tour company that had taken our group on my first tour of the slave sites in 2003. I had him take me back to Mangapwani on a day tour to the north end of the island and we talked a bit about what he knew of the history of slavery in Zanzibar, which was very little. I asked him if he knew people who were descendants of slaves and whether he thought they would talk to me about it. Though he was sympathetic, he thought they would not. He told me that history of slavery was a very delicate and difficult subject on the islands. I assumed based on my studies that he meant that it was a source of embarrassment because

people wanted to forget they were descended from slaves. Certainly, shame associated with slave status still remains.

Zanzibar

Zanzibar is an archipelago located off the east coast of Tanzania. It is also part of a region in East Africa that is referred to as the Swahili Coast, a region known for its complex history and culture that grew out of vast trading networks that spanned the Indian Ocean for millenia. Trade between the Arabian Peninsula and the East African coast began before the birth of Islam and played an important role in the adoption of Islam by some from the eighth century so that by the thirteenth century Islam was the religion of most coastal cities from Mogadishu in the north to Kilwa and Sofala in the south. For much of that time the islands of Zanzibar were minor players, but in the late eighteenth century Zanzibar became of seat of power for the Sultans of Oman.

Oman and the Swahili Coast had long relationship from the time the Omanis responded to cries for help from the rulers of the city of Mombasa in its long war to oust Portuguese invaders who had arrived on the coast in the sixteenth century destroying several coastal cities and capturing Mombasa. Subsequent to the defeat of the Portuguese at Mombasa in 1744 , the Omanis also forced them off neighboring islands in the region, especially for our purposes Zanzibar's two main islands, Unguja (now referred to as Zanzibar) and Pemba.

With the departure of the Portuguese, the Omanis engaged freely in slave trading from the East African coast. Slaves were used for a time on date plantations and as domestic servants in households in Oman, in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula and farther east. They also supplied slaves to the French for use on sugar plantations on the Mascarenes and some to the Americas trade. However, that period was short lived, by the early nineteenth century, demand for slaves

was drying up especially once the British had defeated the French and brought their newly minted anti-slave trade campaign to the Indian Ocean.

At about the same time, the Sultan of Oman, Seyyid Said, having trouble at home in Oman decided to move his capital to Zanzibar, to Unguja. He made an agreement with the ruler of Unguja, the Mwinyi Mkuu to cede or sell some of the best agricultural land on the island to him and other Omani merchants. With the slave trade diminishing, the Omanis looked for another source of wealth and found it in cloves. But cloves needed a labour force to grow and harvest and slaves were seen as the preferred labourers under the circumstances. Thus Zanzibar became the new destination for slaves from the African mainland.

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Omanis exercised considerable influence over the adjacent Swahili Coast, but not without assistance. Early on, Seyyid Said made alliance with the British, who agreed to help with problems he had with other Omanis, especially the Mazrui clan in Mombasa. At mid-century, he had a permanent British advisor at his court in Zanzibar; gradually, through the second half of the nineteenth century, British influence became more like British control. Much of that control came in the form of treaties signed by Said's successors, related to the abolition of first slave trading (1873) and finally the practice of slavery itself (1896). By the end of the century, Zanzibar was a British protectorate, "indirectly" ruled by Omani sultans at the behest of the British.

UNESCO World Heritage, the Slave Route Project (SRP) and Tourism in Africa

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization initiated its World Heritage programs at a convention in Paris in 1972. The SRP, part of the cultural arm of that section was initiated in 1993 with the purpose of "breaking the silence" on slavery in the Atlantic

world. However, it was in Ghana in 1995 that the project was fully launched. Then President Rawlings hosted the event that included the fledgling SRP members, members of the World Tourism Organization and representatives of several African states. The conference produced ‘Accra Declaration on the Cultural Tourism Slave Route Project’ the goal of which was ‘to rehabilitate, restore and promote the tangible and intangible heritage handed down by the slave trade’, and to reveal the ‘common nature’ of the Atlantic slave trade ‘in terms of Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean’.⁵ Although the stated aims of the SRP were:

- 1) to break the silence surrounding the slave trade and slavery through the historical study of the causes and dynamics of the *transatlantic slave trade*
- 2) the clarification of the consequences and interactions resulting from the slave trade
- 3) to contribute to the establishment of a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between races and peoples.⁶

In the early 2000s, slavery in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean were added to the list of regions and slave trades for which the silence would be broken and “causes and modalities” would be studied. An emphasis on objectivity and scientific study has at times been added and removed from its publicized aims along with a call to examine the consequences of the slave trades, “especially the interactions between the peoples concerned in Europe, Africa and the

⁵ Government of Ghana, Ministry of Tourism, National Tourist Development Programme 1996–2010 (Integrated Tourism Development Programme GHA/92/013, Final Report, 1996), pp. 85–86 quoted in Tom McKaskie, "African American Psychologists, the Atlantic Slave Trade and Ghana: a history of the present ", ed. Benedetta Rossi, *Reconfiguring Slavery: West African Trajectories*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009). 48. For Ghana this event launched a 15 year tourism plan that culminated in the GHANA TOURISM ACT 817 OF 2011 creating a new tourism board and established a fund to promote tourism on a sustained basis. Victor Tete, "Tourism Development Experience in Ghana," ed. United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN, 2010). In celebration of that event the Government of Ghana held World Tourism Day on September 27, 2011. A number of tourism projects were mentioned, but in the announcement on the Government of Ghana web page no mention is made of the slave forts or of the slave trade. Larry George Botchway and Constance A. Takyi, "2011 World Tourism Day Celebrations Launched," Government of Ghana, <http://ghana.gov.gh/index.php/news/general-news/6976-2011-world-tourism-day-celebrations-launched>.

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Caribbean.”⁷ In both its original and current forms, the SRP has sought to achieve its aims through four programs: 1) scientific inquiry (archaeological, historical); 2) education and teaching “on the slave trade and slavery”; 3) promotion of cultures generated by the slave trade; 4) cultural tourism. At first glance these are laudable goals, but if we look at the two of the earliest projects, Ghana and Senegal, we can see some of the potential problems that have arisen—problems of contested memories of slavery in one instance, problems of authenticity in the other.

Contested Heritage and Dark Tourism in Ghana

Perhaps the one of the best known memorials to the Atlantic Slave Trade is St. Georges or Cape Coast Castle at Elmina on Ghana’s south coast. It is also one of the most studied in part because of its association with the SRP. A recent and thorough work on the problems slavery tourism has created and the creative ways in which Ghanaians are dealing with it is by Bayo Holsey (quoted above). Holsey lays out the problem thus:

“ . . . local residents are regularly assailed with European popular and academic historical narratives about the slave trade. Within these narratives, Africans on the continent are denounced for being outside of the march of progress that is seen to define human history as both victims and perpetrators of the trade. In this context, local residents seek to distance themselves from the slave trade in order to avoid its stigmatizing effects and ultimately to attempt to improve their position in the “global ecumene” (Hannerz 1992).

At the same time, however, as a result of the tremendous growth of diaspora tourism, some local residents, particularly adolescents, have become interested in going to the castles and learning about the slave trade. Many of them have as a result begun to discuss the slave trade as part of a critique of racial oppression in ways that draw upon diasporic examples. Many of them have as a result begun to discuss the slave trade as part of a critique of racial oppression in ways that draw upon diasporic examples.”⁸

⁷ See for example the stated aims listed in an evaluation of the project published in 2005. Kim Forss et al., “Evaluation of the Slave Route Project 1994 – 2004,” (UNESCO, 2005). and in

⁸ Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*. 2-3.

Holsey goes on to argue that both groups, old and young, deal with the historical reality of the slave trade in very different ways. Older Ghanaians continue to simply ignore or at least downplay that piece of Ghana's history all together. At home by minimizing the role played by their ancestors and in public, but avoiding the slave castles altogether.

Unlike their parents, younger Ghanaians must confront the history of the slave trade in school. Here is where the SRP has had its greatest effect. Through their education arm they have ensured that the history of the slave trade, warts and all, has been added to the curriculum. In addition to reading about the slave trade, they go on school field trips to visit the forts. However, Holsey argues that they integrate the information in their own way. They do it by "breaking the silence" and integrating it into a narrative of progress in which the slave trade may have been bad, but it propelled Ghanaians into the modern world. For them the focus is on unity with the African diaspora.

They and many of their teachers take the view of at least one African American psychologist and frequent visitor to Ghana, Leonard Jeffries. In an article on the relationship between Ghana and the African American diaspora, Tom McKaskie recounts Jeffries' pronouncement on Asante responsibility in the Atlantic slave trade:

Jeffries said he did not want to hear about Africans selling other Africans, for Asante 'slave traders' were 'victims themselves', and 'the real villains' were in Amsterdam, London, Nantes, etc. He then demanded 'reparations' for the Atlantic slave trade and linked this to the present condition of Africa. Whites today, he stated, still controlled 'minds and mines', and all of Africa's oil, gold, diamonds and other wealth were the objects of 'recolonisation'. He ended by declaring Ghana, with its tangible reminders of the Atlantic slave trade, 'sacred ground to all Africans worldwide'.⁹

⁹ McKaskie, "African American Psychologists, the Atlantic Slave Trade and Ghana: a history of the present " 49.

Authenticity: History vs. Memory, La maison des esclaves on Gorée Island, Senegal

The second of our two cases is that of *La maison des esclaves* (the House of Slaves), a house that once belonged to an Afro-European trader on the island of Gorée off the west coast of Senegal. To be fair to the SRP, *La maison des esclaves* and the controversy that it provoked was begun long before the slaver route initiative began. As we will see, it was UNESCO's World Heritage project that initiated it. However, for some time in its formative years, photographs of *La maison* graced reports and public presentations of the SRP. Although I have not found any documentary evidence to support it, it may be that the controversy around the authenticity of the House of Slaves as a site where large numbers of slaves passed on their way to the Caribbean and the Americas was a factor in formulating program one, the program that insists upon the scientific study of slave route sites. Moreover, it has implications for and resonances with other sites, especially, as we will see below, for Zanzibar.

The *La maison des esclaves* most certainly "broke the silence" in 1995 when Philip Curtin, a senior member of the U.S. academic establishment, called the project a hoax and a scam on an internet discussion list. Nicholas Pepin's house, according to Curtin, had never been used to house slaves in transit and based on statistical work he had done and on that of other scholars, there was no indication that Goreé had ever played an important role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Soon after, a French journalist writing for *Le Monde* picked up the story and the debate expanded from the merely academic to a public one. A conference was called in Dakar to decide whether or not the project was indeed a hoax and a scam. Mark Hinchman who was in Goreé working on his dissertation at the time reported that while academics and government officials were debating the issues at their colloquium, a parallel debate broke out in several newspapers and on the island, a cross section of the populace from judges to fishermen could be heard

debating the issues of truth and falsehood, “myth” (defined as emotion and memory) and “reality” (the “unadulterated truth which the public demands but which no historian can really provide”).¹⁰ In the end, at least publicly the Senegalese decided in favour of N’Diaye.

Not long after the Dakar colloquium, Ralph Austen, an Africanist who works primarily in Cameroon, organized another conference on the subject at the University of Chicago in conjunction with the release of a digitized archive of slave ship records compiled under the supervision of David Eltis. The outcome of that conference was a series of papers in one of which Austen recounts the Goreé debate. The conference members apparently decided that a compromise of a sort was called for and allowed that while works like Eltis’ were important to the “history” of the slave trade, “places of memory” were also important to the descendants of former slaves. Goreé would remain that place for the slave trade.¹¹

Apparently, UNESCO agrees as a “virtual tour” of *la Maison des Esclaves* remains on their website. Moreover, under its listings of world heritage sites, the following entry remains for Gorée in spite of the debates that have surrounded N’Diaye’s claims:

The island of Gorée lies off the coast of Senegal, opposite Dakar. *From the 15th to the 19th century, it was the largest slave-trading centre on the African coast.* Ruled in succession by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, its architecture is characterized by the contrast between the grim slave-quarters and the elegant houses of the slave traders. Today it continues to serve as a reminder of human exploitation and as a sanctuary for reconciliation.

At the same time the site appears to ameliorate such claims by the following statement:

¹⁰ Mark Alan Hinchman, "African Rococo: House and portrait in eighteenth-century Senegal." (The University of Chicago, 2000), 321.

¹¹ Ralph A. Austen, "The Slave Trade as History and Memory: Confrontations of Slaving Voyage Documents and Communal Traditions," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001).

The Island of Gorée is an exceptional testimony to one of the greatest tragedies in the history of human societies: the slave trade. The various elements of this “memory island” – fortresses, buildings, streets, squares, etc. – recount, each in its own way, the *history of Gorée which, from the 15th to the 19th century, was the largest slave-trading centre of the African coast.*¹²

*Although in its early days the SRP used images of La maison des esclaves in its promotional materials, to its credit it has for the most part stayed out of the debate.*¹³ *However, there is no evidence that its mandate for scientific study has influenced the presentation of the House of Slaves on UNESCO's website. Joseph N'Diaye died 2009, but the House of Slaves lives on with new video tours and a new director.*

Embracing Slavery and Dark Tourism in Zanzibar?

Zanzibar in embracing tourism has had to face both issues of contested histories and authenticity where its past history with slavery is concerned. In 2007, the OECD reported that tourism was the second most important economic sector in Tanzania after Agriculture. It estimated direct foreign exchange earnings of US\$ 786 million, more than 25 percent of total export earnings. Tourism provided direct employment to 300,000 people and in 2003 constituted 16 percent GDP. The study goes on to “indicate that the tourism industry was recording a multiplier effect of between 1.5 to 1.8 for every tourist dollar spent in the country. According to the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study of 2005, households that are involved in tourism have lower poverty rates than food crop producers, fish producers and mining sector households.”¹⁴ Although the study did not break down the impact of tourism to Tanzania's various regions, it can be assumed that it was similar if not greater for Zanzibar, whose economy depends much more than the mainland upon tourism.

¹² UNESCO, "Island of Gorée," <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/26>.

¹³ Department of Intercultural Dialogue and Pluralism for a Culture of Peace, "The Slave Route Project Newsletter," ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 2000).

¹⁴ Valentine Marc Nkwame, "Tourism marketing study to provide sound strategies " *Arusha Times* 2007.

Tourists were certainly known in colonial times, but tourism in independent Zanzibar is a relatively new phenomenon. Following the 1964 revolution, Zanzibar was closed to all outsiders with the exception of some foreign (Chinese and Russian) advisors. Tourists were not welcome from anywhere. It was only in the 1990s that it opened up again to outsiders and it could be said it was opened out of necessity. Tourism seemed a way out of economic difficulties, but it was not an easy process. As late as the early part of twenty-first century, conflict between the cultural practices of visitors and those of Zanzibar's residents can be seen in efforts to enforce dress codes in Zanzibar city and to confine westerners wearing "immodest" bathing suits to restricted beach areas away from populated areas of the island. During Ramadan, elaborate measures are still taken to hide tourists who continue eat during the day from locals who are fasting. Restaurants put up canvas sheeting around dining areas. Many shops that usually sell food are closed. The worry for officials and locals alike is that the tourists may begin to "pollute" Zanzibari's traditional ways of living with western, non-Muslim practices.¹⁵ Added to these issues is that of the history of slavery on the island.

UNESCO in its evaluation of the SRP from inception in 1994 to 2004 declared that its goal was

the identification, restoration and promotion of sites and places of memory of the slave trade and slavery in Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. In the area of culture, events and tourism, there was a vision in Mozambique to have a museum of slavery on the Isle of Mozambique (the country's first capital in the North) where slaves were kept. The Isle is already a World Heritage Site; not because of slavery but due to its historical and trade significance and the confluence of many cultures and religions over the years:

¹⁵ This is only one of the conflict tourism creates for Zanzibar. Water and power use by tourists as well as environmental damage from over-fishing to feed tourists are only a few of the many problems Zanzibar faces.

African, Arab, India, Portuguese and their related religions. But there is no memorial at all on the Isle regarding slavery. *The same could actually be said of Zanzibar, where the stone town is also a world heritage site. The old slave market is still there, and there is a church built on the place with several memorials to people who fought against the slave trade. But the World Heritage Site does not refer to this aspect of the past. These appear to be missed opportunities for collaboration between the Slave Route Project and UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.*¹⁶

Around 2004-5, Zanzibar was in the SRP's sights as a place for a memorial to slaves and for the development of related tourism. Since that time, it is not clear where the SRP's ideas have taken them in Zanzibar, but there are hints. As late as 2008, although Zanzibar was not mentioned as one of the participants in the project to develop or even register memorial sites, the sculpture by Clare Sarnos displayed on the grounds of the nineteenth-century Anglican Church was used on the SRP's web pages related to the slave trade in the Indian Ocean. While discussing the slave trade by Europeans to various islands in the southwest Indian Ocean, Mauritius, the Comoros, the Seychelles and other, it was that sculpture, or parts of it, that was used to represent the Indian Ocean slave trade.

Today (2012), the memory of slavery on the island has been completely erased from the SRP's web pages. No mention is made of Zanzibar at all. The photographs of the memorial are gone from its web pages. As it was at the time of the SRP's evaluation, the only mention of slavery on the island is a paragraph on the Stone Town page in UNESCO's Cultural Heritage site section, which refers to the Portuguese slave trade of the 19th century. One has to assume that neither Zanzibaris nor Tanzanians found registering or promoting slave memorials through UNESCO particularly appealing. The question is why; the answer is complicated.

¹⁶ Forss et al., "Evaluation of the Slave Route Project 1994 – 2004," 35. Emphasis mine.

Slavery was an important part of the islands' economy under the Sultans from the late eighteenth century. According to Burton by the mid-nineteenth century they numbered about three quarters of the population of Unguja and many also worked plantations on the adjacent coast.¹⁷ They were used on the island's clove plantations and on the coast to grow grains to feed the population and for export. Slaves originated on the African mainland; though some were of Arab origin, many through intermarriage and concubinage, many masters were a mixture of Arab and African with a few other groups in the mix. Slave sellers and traders were also a mixed lot, including mainland groups like the Yao and Nyamwesi, along with some Arab and/or Swahili as the trade became more lucrative in the 19th century. As a descendant of Hamed bin Mohammed el Murgebi, a Swahili trader (including slaves) based in Zanzibar, has said, "Back then, you could be only two things, a slaver or a slave."¹⁸ Everyone was involved. Thus, ferreting out the slaves and slavers would be difficult and one might expect that memorials to slaves might be one of those contested sites as with Gorée or Elmina though perhaps for different reasons. However, for Zanzibar the situation is far more volatile.

Jonathon Glassman in his recent book on the Time of Politics in Zanzibar has pointed out that in those years (the 1950s to 1960s) slavery, referred to as the "Arab Slave Trade" was one of the discourses of race that provoked violence, a violence that culminated revolution and mass murder on the island. Also, following the revolution, the teaching of history was banned for many years creating a larger space for memories, many of which have been contradictory as well as contested. And, during election periods since multi-party elections became the norm in the

¹⁷ Richard Francis Burton, *Zanzibar; city, island, and coast*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Tinsley Bros., 1872; repr., Elibron Classics, 2005).

¹⁸ Umami Mahsouda Alley Hammid, quoted in Jr. Gates, Henry Louis, *Wonders of the African World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). 189. Gates interview with Umami Hamid can also be seen in the film version of *Wonders*. See "The Swahili Coast," in *Wonders of the African World*, ed. Nicola Colton Helena Appio, Nick Godwin (USA: Public Broadcasting System, 1999).

1990s, violence has continued to be commonplace. Fears of invoking memories of both slavery and the revolution have been part of more recent political discourse. Shining a brighter light on Zanzibar's history of slavery through tourism could lead to a more open dialogue about Zanzibar's slave past and reduce the shame still attached to slave origins while at the same time increasing income for local people. However in the heat of elections, it could also revive the "revolutionary" debates and exacerbate already tense political relations on the island. That many Zanzibaris are "silent" on slavery may not be because slavery has been forgotten. Rather it might be seen as a way of dealing with its constant presence in the memories of everyone and its meaning in the foundation of the modern state.

The Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF) and Questions of Authenticity

For three years in a row, slavery and presentations by UNESCO on slavery in Zanzibar and its potential relationship with the SRP were prominent at the Zanzibar International Film Festival. In 2005, when I was a participant, slavery was the topic with scholars from Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, the United States, Canada and Europe speaking about various aspects of the trade not only in Zanzibar, but around the Indian Ocean. In 2006 and 2007, the topic was again an important topic of discussion both in film and on paper. In 2007, participants of the Film Festival and of the conference associated with it were encouraged to take tours to the slave sites on the island. The problem here is not so much the issue of whose memories of slavery are addressed as it is a lack of "authentic" sites and a question of audience.

Most of the sites now included in tours like those sponsored by ZIFF appear to have had little or no historical connection to slavery or the slave trade. As historian Jan Georg Deutsch points out in an article for the 2007 ZIFF Conference, there is no evidence that the so-called slave chambers

located under an old colonial hospital building near the Anglican Cathedral was ever used to house slaves as it was built long after slavery and the slave trade were abolished and had disappeared. Another structure at Mangapwani also referred to as slave chambers may or may not have been used for that purpose, but when it was built, slavery was legal and the need to hide slaves did not exist. However, that does not stop tour guides from repeating exaggerated tales similar to those I heard on my first visit to the island without any “scientific research” or reliable documentation for their stories. The sites have little or no information for visitors to read so it seems that anything goes.¹⁹

The situation is similar to that of *La maison des esclaves* on Gorée. And under different circumstances it might be treated in the same way. These sites could be seen simply as sites to memorialize the days of slavery without making any claims to authenticity. However, as we have already seen, the politics of slavery on Zanzibar are far different than on Gorée. Deutsch has argued and I concur, that in a politically unstable climate like Zanzibar the need for more accurate information and representation of slavery sites requires more than memorials and “lurid” tales about the days of slavery creatively embellished by tour guides.²⁰

Epilogue—Politics and Tourism in Post-Unity Zanzibar

Where the issue of slavery and tourism will go in Zanzibar is still an open question. Five years ago, the outlook was pessimistic. Elections in the 1990s and in the early 2000s were fraught with violence. When I was there in the summer of 2005 truckloads of soldiers from mainland Tanzania patrolled the streets of Stone Town passing my window morning and evening.

Tensions were high and news of killings on the island of Pemba was featured in daily

¹⁹ Jan Georg Deutsch, "Marketing the Slave Trade in Zanzibar," *ZIFF Journal Dhow Culture Dialogues*, no. 4 (2007): 113.

²⁰ Ibid.

newspapers. By September, visitors were strongly encouraged to leave as the elections neared. However, since 2010, the political scene has changed dramatically, at least on the surface. After years of political strife, in August 2010 preceding the next election, the government held a referendum to create a government of national unity that would see the two major political combatants, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (The Party of the Revolution) and the Civic United Front join forces. Election results between the two parties have generally been close (approximately one percent difference) and the outcome of elections hotly contested by the usually losing CUF. With the establishment of the new Unity Government, the 2010 elections passed with little or no violence. Though both parties and other minor parties are still waiting to see how this new arrangement works, most people seem to be optimistic.²¹

Perhaps the biggest change from the standpoint of slavery and tourism is the growth of tours to the slave sites. Where once only a handful of tour companies would take tourist to see these sites, today it is difficult to find a company that does not offer such a tour. The company whose owner would not take me to the slave sites now offers a full slate of such tours. Slave Route Tours are popping up all over the internet. The Serena Inn, one of the largest and most luxurious on the island last year offered to take its guests to Mangapwani to see the slave caves and slave chambers and then offered a lovely lunch on a nearby beach, presumably to recover from the harrowing sights. In 2012, the Serena Hotel chain has opened the Serena Mangapwani Beach Club, which features among its attractions a visit to the slave caves and chambers. The tourist industry, presumably unencumbered by political strife on the island, is doing what ZIFF and UNESCO have been trying to do for years and they are doing so quickly, perhaps too quickly.

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Comments:

-Needs better conclusion

would still like to see 'question' driving and shaping article more strongly articulated: what is the question (or 'are the questions') you're trying to answer?

-Lots of small issues, errors, typos etc.

-also reference to N'Diaye and his position (p.11) – nothing mentioned about it before this unanchored reference

Check 'McKaskie', don't think it's spelled correctly