

The Indentured Archipelago

The labour vacuum left on sugar plantations following the abolition of slavery created a dilemma for imperial European powers. A product now so craved had been left without a workforce to cultivate it. An answer was soon found in the shape of indentured labour. For over 90 years during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, over 1.3 million Indian men, women and children were recruited as indentured labourers to work on the plantations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean. This labour movement, global in scale, created an indentured archipelago, bringing geographically dispersed colonies into each other's orbit.

This book encourages an archipelagic reading of Indian indenture, revealing historical geographies within, and hidden connections between, the colonies of this figurative archipelago. The book reflects on the period 1871–1916 which saw the maturity and the beginnings of the end of the system. It focuses on four key aspects related to the labourer experience: space, agency, mobility and geography. Situating these within the context of two colonies of the archipelago – Mauritius, the largest, most experienced importer of labourers, and Fiji, the final colony to enter the system – the spatiality of indenture is highlighted by focusing on the personal experiences of administrative concepts that affected the everyday lives of labourers and their families. Previously unexplored facets of the Indian indenture story, including re-migration of labourers between colonies, their life geographies and the wider spheres of indenture, reveal an untold story of subaltern agency and trans-oceanic mobility across the indentured archipelago.

Reshaad Durgahee holds a PhD from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. His research focuses on the historical geography of Indian indenture in the Indo-Pacific. He also has interests in small island developing states, and international trade and investment.

GLOBAL SOUTH ASIANS

Throughout the modern era, South Asia and South Asians have been entangled with global flows of goods, people and ideas. In the context of these globalised conditions, migrants from the subcontinent of India created some of the world's most extensive and influential transnational networks. While operating within the constraints of imperial systems, they nevertheless made distinctive and important contributions to international trade, global cultures and transnational circuits of knowledge. This series seeks to explore these phenomena, placing labourers, traders, thinkers and activists at the centre of the analysis. Beginning with volumes that seek to radically reappraise indenture, the series will continue with books on the mobility of elite actors, including intellectuals, and their contributions to the global circulation of ideas and the evolution of political practice. It will highlight the creativity and agency of diasporic South Asians and illuminate the crucial role they played in the making of global histories. As such it sets out to challenge popular misconceptions and established scholarly narratives that too often cast South Asians as passive observers.

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Mauritius and Fiji, 1871–1916

Reshaad Durgahee



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For my parents
The Dream Team

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Abbreviations

Sources

AREBFC	Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BP	Bengal Proceedings (British Library)
CO	Colonial Office
CRL	Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office
CVA	City of Vancouver Archives
IOR	India Office Records (British Library)
IP	India Proceedings (British Library)
MGI-IIA	Mahatma Gandhi Institute Indian Immigration Archives
NA	National Archives, Kew
NBA	Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University
NF	National Archives of Fiji
NLA	National Library of Australia
NLM	National Library of Mauritius
NM	National Archives of Mauritius
PP	Hansard UK Parliamentary Papers
<i>RCEICCP/II</i>	<i>Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates Part II – Minutes of Evidence</i>

RCEICCP/III Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates Part III – Papers Laid Before the Committee

People and Departments

AACS	Acting Assistant Colonial Secretary
AAGI	Acting Agent General of Immigration
ACMO	Acting Chief Medical Officer
ACS	Assistant Colonial Secretary
AcCS	Acting Colonial Secretary
AD	Acting Director
ADP	Adolphe de Plevitz
AGI	Agent General of Immigration
AHG	Arthur Hamilton Gordon
AIG	Acting Inspector General
AMI	Acting Medical Inspector
AMO	Acting Medical Officer
APOI	Acting Protector of Immigrants
BC	British Consul
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CS	Colonial Secretary
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
DM	District Magistrate
DMO	District Medical Officer
DRAC	Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce
EA	Emigration Agent
ED	Emigration Department
EI	Estate Inspector
EM	Estate Manager

Abbreviations		xix
FO	Foreign Office	
FS	Foreign Secretary	
GD	General Department	
GE	Government Entomologist	
GI	Government of India	
ID	Immigration Department	
II	Inspector of Immigrants	
IO	Immigration Office	
Ind.	India Office	
MO	Medical Officer	
PE	Protector of Emigrants	
PI	Provincial Inspector	
POI	Protector of Immigrants	
RI	Resident Inspector	
SI	Sanitary Inspector	
SM	Stipendiary Magistrate	
SSC	Secretary of State for the Colonies	
SSI	Secretary of State for India	
TC	Town Clerk	
USS	Under Secretary of State	
VBC	Vice British Consul	