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Running in Jamaica: A Slavery Ecosystem

Hilary McD Beckles

IN 1655 an English army invading Jamaica defeated and ran Spanish occupiers off the island. On the run, settlers found refuge in neighboring Cuba, still under Spain's imperial control. Unable in the conflict to exercise effective control over their enslaved Africans, the Spanish had little choice but to bid their chattels farewell. Happy to be rid of their enslavers and unwilling to fall into the legal and military grip of English conquistadors, enslaved blacks ran to the Blue Mountains. High above the site of their enslavement, they constituted themselves into a maroon community out of sight of whites.¹

In the century that followed, English occupiers converted the valleys under their control into their largest Caribbean slave plantation complex. More than four hundred thousand enslaved Africans were imported to work and die in the sugar fields and cattle pens. But each annual cohort of imported chattels supplied a steady stream of runners who multiplied by the thousands in the deep recesses of mountain ranges. An endemic war between mountain runners and valley enslavers defined social relations in the colony until treaties were signed calling for peace. The provisions of each agreement sought to nullify the benefits of running. Old runners agreed to return imitators to the valley in return for the right to walk about the plantations unmolested. This strategy was only partly successful. New runners formed new maroon communities, and the flight out of sight remained the norm in the political culture.²

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¹ Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655–89," *Economic History Review* 39, no. 2, (May 1986): 205–22; Trevor Burnard, "European Migration to Jamaica, 1655–1780," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 53, no. 4 (October 1996): 769–96; Hilary McD. Beckles, *The First Black Slave Society: Britain's "Barbarity Time" in Barbados, 1636–1876* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2016).

² Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (New York, 1973); Michael Craton, "Forms of Resistance to Slavery," in *General History of the Caribbean*, vol. 3, *The Slave Societies of the Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight (London, 1997), 222–70; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000).

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Running was resistance. It evolved as a social strategy that sustained a way of life. Uphill and across valleys, flights were methodologies of movement in which the spirit of the sprint defined daily life and defied institutional power. Fight and flight were as Jamaican as pirates and planters. But as the frontier gave way to the proliferation of creole communities during the second half of the eighteenth century, the running culture and its corresponding consciousness were diversified and incorporated into a more accommodating ontology of town and village living. Flight along the byways and highways that connected urban ecologies increasingly defined forms of movement. The sprint to freedom was accompanied by the silence of slipping out of sight downtown. Everywhere runners could be seen and not heard. An ecosystem of freedom emerged in which runners walked about freely and survived in plain sight of those with military might.³

Simon P. Newman's pathbreaking essay, "Hidden in Plain Sight," takes this evolved Jamaican colonial reality as a starting point. He traverses the movement of enslaved Jamaicans as recorded in the local archives and seeks to present them as enslaved subjects without chains and obvious ownership claims. The process of enslavement was demeaning and degrading for the Africans. Their strategies of resistance were designed to be uplifting and fulfilling. Not everyone could run and keep up the fight; not everyone possessed the body and spirit to spill blood in battle. Most had the desire for more space and full control over their bodies and time. In this sense, then, running was not simply a physical action but a process with multiple phases that was undergirded by a state of mind that understood periods of stillness to be as significant as persistent running.⁴

Newman's essay, furthermore, is a critical contribution to the booming literature on Jamaica's slavery enterprise. Its focus is the British perception of the social and cultural performance and production of the enslaved as revealed through the gaze of prominent enslavers and stakeholder narrators. The eye of the English, and the brutality of Britishness, are set in motion as analytic tools in order to display how chattel slavery was constructed and sustained as a profitable part of the colonial project, and how the enslaved excavated a culture committed to freedom within the constricted bowels of bondage.⁵

British colonists produced an enormous and diverse archive of racial opinion and belief that has long been the primary source of "histories." The

³ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (London, 1967); E. V. Goveia, *The West Indian Slave Laws of the 18th Century* (Barbados, 1970); Sidney W. Mintz, "Was the Plantation Slave a Proletarian?," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1978): 81–98.

⁴ Hilary Beckles, "The 200 Years War: Slave Resistance in the British West Indies: An Overview of the Historiography," *Jamaican Historical Review* 13 (1982): 1–10; Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "The Slave Rebellion in the Great River Valley of St. James—1831/32," *Jamaican Historical Review* 13 (1982): 11–30.

⁵ Hilary McDonald Beckles, "The Wilberforce Song: How Enslaved Caribbean Blacks Heard British Abolitionists," in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh, 2007), 113–26.

considerable historiography that depicts Jamaica in slavery is a main artery of Atlantic colonial imagination and (mis)understanding. More so than for any other British Caribbean colony, the Jamaican documentation has enabled deep analytic journeys into the cosmologies and epistemologies of the enslaved Africans. The text, considered by a generation of scholars as authoritative, was written primarily by colonial officials, slave merchants, plantation managers and owners, and visitors who observed with disdain or participated as cultural consumers in the orgy of vulgarity that constituted slavery as a crime against humanity. The tenacity of the text sought to provide solace to the community of slavers; only a small stream of writing ran through the valley of the archive that condemned slavery as immoral and criminal.⁶

The proslavery British narrative did not transition from a perception of the enslaved African as different and hence inferior. Indeed, it began and ended with the core rationalization that Africans were subhuman and possessed of a popular culture lacking in ethical sophistication and tenets of caring humanity. The gall of this genre originated in the conception that corporate-wealth accumulation justified all forms and patterns of enslavement. With whiteness set apart as the ticket for travel, the movement of black runners symbolized financial ruin for the investor. Whiteness, furthermore, represented the embodiment of freedom. A black body in flight was therefore a red flag for white political governance and social comfort. Newman uses the parameters of these perspectives to frame a new narrative that takes us on a journey into the African existential realities that typified the dialectic of stillness and movement.⁷

Human nature, to the extent that there is such a thing, is unveiled in many aspects of the evidence shared by Newman. To live in peace while being at war is the trick that has long eluded communities. Elites pursue pillage and plunder while seeking restful nights and blissful days. The oppressed rebel celebrates resistance while seeking to have loving and caring relationships without the pain of violent rupture. The need to express compassion in relationships riddled with conflict resonated with many, even within armies trained and mobilized for death. The mass enslavement of blacks was not without a sense of diminished freedom for whites who lived between thin lines blacks had drawn for them that they crossed at their peril. The data from the slavery archives, then, were and still are the richest empirical sources for the assessment and review of what it meant to be human in the deepest horror of modern history.⁸

⁶ [Edward Long], *The History of Jamaica*. . . . , 3 vols. (London, 1774); Thomas Cooper, *Facts Illustrative of the Conditions of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica: With Notes and an Appendix* (London, 1824).

⁷ Henry Nelson Coleridge, *Six Months in the West Indies, in 1825*, 3d ed. (London, 1832).

⁸ A Professional Planter [Dr. Collins], *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves, in the Sugar Colonies* (London, 1803).

The task set for us by Newman is to understand how and why very large numbers of enslaved Jamaicans succeeded in both removing themselves from the narrow physical confines of their bondage and living a degree of “freedom in flight” that the complex body of laws and the ever-growing military machinery were established to recognize and prevent. That thousands of runners walked about in plain sight of white enslavers is now established and speaks to two seemingly noncontradictory concepts: the creativity of the enslaved and the flexibility of enslavers.⁹

Africans in Jamaica, more than in most colonies, developed a sophisticated and sustained culture of running and walking. Walking about freely while on the run was common, particularly in towns where strangers multiplied and old friends found fellowship under the canopy of constables. The effective, mutually rewarding deal struck by mountain maroons with British officials to return new mountain runners in exchange for their own right to freely roam valleys, for example, represented but a minor part of the context in which walking ultimately might have superseded running as the dominant form of antislavery mobility.

The solidarity habit of harboring runners was critical. Bonding with allies broke through the fear of being found. Companionship and solidarity conquered solitude and individualism. Subverting law and order required the power and passion to stand in support of social ideals slavery denied: the longing for love and family, and the virtues of friendship and personal loyalties. This circumstance served to reveal an obvious truth—that humans, in the face of overwhelming opposition, have always risked life and limb for love and loyalty.¹⁰

Town blacks, from everything we have read and heard, had more “tongue” than their rural counterparts. They seemed less bound by the fears of reprisals resulting from the paranoia of white rural insecurity. The laws were applied to them with greater flexibility and lesser ferocity. Much of this had to do with an undeveloped and difficult-to-discern ownership structure and identity. It was no simple matter to distinguish between runners and the legally freed. Neither could it be assumed that the hundreds of hucksters who plied their commerce within the law were not runners from the law. Everyone tried to blend in and to stand out in plain sight as though not in flight. The social apparatus that supported this ecology within urban and rural contexts evolved over time and with an obvious sophistication that ensured sustainability.¹¹

⁹ David Geggus, “The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: New Light on the Causes of Slave Rebellions,” *WMQ* 44, no. 2 (April 1987): 274–99.

¹⁰ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787–1834* (Urbana, Ill., 1982); J. R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750–1834: The Process of Amelioration* (Oxford, 1988).

¹¹ B. W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807–1834* (Cambridge, 1976); Pedro L. V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680–1834* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2003).

Physical invisibility was not always the objective. It was identity obscurity that was the enduring asset of every runner. To be seen and not recognized, known but unidentified, was the preferred pattern of social existence. In some instances slavers preferred this circumstance as well. Not knowing was an acceptable excuse in custom, if not under law, for not acting, because in general the lawmakers were also the lawbreakers. Living in multiple realities required the capacity for shifting consciousness to meet the needs of each ecology. Both the enslaver and the enslaved had come to “master” this matrix of meaning. The runner from the plantation who became the walker in plain sight was in some instances acknowledged as a blessing. Taking the propensity for rebellion to the hills or downtown was to transfer potential explosions beyond the boundary.¹²

Enslavers, Newman shows, built alternate worlds that involved sexual and family bonds with the enslaved. These relations were more likely to be brutal than humane. But they required flexibility on the edges of authority in order to be sustained. The enslaved knew that enslavers could not easily endure the sheer exhaustion that comes from controlling others. The evidence ranged from moments of deranged reprisals to a circumstance of social indifference to the presence of some enslaved persons living in flight. Power was never monopolized by the enslaver. Newman rejects notions that point to the apparent powerless of the enslaved, and he calls for the thesis of passivity to be set aside as a myth in order to explore the deeper truths of the African reality.¹³

New methodological ground has been broken along this terrain. Newman treats us to a multidisciplinary approach that features orality along with an imaginary itinerary of narrators, one of whom is Dr. John Quier, a surgeon who experienced a great deal of the worlds of Africans. In Newman’s article, we hear the voices of colonial administrators, rural enslavers, urban managers, travelers, and the enslaved themselves. They observed, overheard, and wrote what they understood—much of it colorful and ruthlessly imaginary as befits constructs of their scarred and corroded consciousness. Many were the memoirs of the enslavers who built and dwelled in the killing fields of Jamaica, Britain’s primary source of external wealth, which consumed the lives of generation after generation of imported Africans.¹⁴

The interjection of voices within the historian’s script as a method of empowering the reader with greater access and immediacy is a unique way to (re)write this history of terror. The primary advantage of this approach, of reading and hearing, is that it serves to humanize the narrative while simultaneously suppressing the objectification of perceptions of the chattel

¹² Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford, 1971).

¹³ Trevor Burnard, “‘The Countrie Continues Sicklie’: White Mortality in Jamaica, 1655–1780,” *Social History of Medicine* 12, no. 1 (April 1999): 45–72. See also Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1876* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹⁴ B. W. Higman, *Writing West Indian Histories* (London, 1999).

who are subject to the gaze. Though it does not change the assumptions of the historiography, and in some ways it deepens and consolidates them, it does create an opportunity for the listener, no longer a passive reader, to internalize the experience in a different way.

The placing of voice, music, and script on a level field of interpretation and narration breaks new ground and serves as a historiographical heist that students especially will welcome. To hear the text that represents the mind of Thomas Thistlewood of western Jamaica, for example—the diary of his mid-eighteenth-century years managing and owning enslaved persons—changes the complexion of simply reading his script. The retexturing of the experience enables the reader/listener to explore tone and texture and to feel geography more intimately than in the hitherto-silent subtext.¹⁵

The opportunity to explore the cultural cosmology of black Jamaica by opening the curtains on the consciousness of white Britishers can be considered another event in the Eurocentric approach to writing Caribbean history, but it would be unfair to end there. The object of Newman's essay is not to open a new conceptual approach to the writing of the history of the enslaved but to use communications technology to (re)situate the reader more immediately into the world of colonial relationships.¹⁶

Although the selection of texts for this oral treatment can in itself be considered an item for critical review, what matters most is that the author seeks to move the voices of the dead to a new level of living and vitality. This methodological development will be experienced by some as an intervention more irritating than enlightening, but that is an emotion that ought to be subject to review. History is being given a chance to be heard, and Newman's choice of Jamaica, a slave society at its height in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, is a more exciting laboratory than most.¹⁷

Newman's narrative is, finally, a stimulating text because it is courageous and skillfully written. Its digital format enhances what is in essence a creative and innovative social history that calls for a new way of reasoning and writing. It should attract the attention of scholars and students and, in their captive state, provoke them to break free of traditions of methodological bondage. In so doing they will come to see more than ever the power of enslaved blacks to define new boundaries in old binaries and to attain meaningful relief from the sorrow of the horror imposed upon them.¹⁸

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, 1993).

¹⁶ Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750–86* (London, 1989).

¹⁷ Michael Craton, "Slave Culture, Resistance, and the Achievement of Emancipation in the British West Indies, 1783–1838," in *Slavery and British Slave Society, 1776–1846*, ed. James Walvin (London, 1982), 100–122.

¹⁸ Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2, *The Origins of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (London, 1997); David Lambert, *White Creole Culture: Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, 2005).

The Hidden Costs of Labour on the Cocoa Plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe, 1875-1914

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The Hidden Costs of Labour on the Cocoa Plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe, 1875–1914

W. G. CLARENCE-SMITH

A great deal of confusion has been caused in the study of economic development in Africa by the propagation of the misleading idea that mines and plantations have always and everywhere relied on great masses of 'cheap labour'. 'Cheapness' is defined in terms of the low or non-existent wages received by workers, whether because of the prevalence of slavery and forced labour, or because the costs of reproducing labour power are borne not by the employer but by pre-capitalist rural societies.¹ One of the weaknesses of this theory lies in a lack of consideration of the high recruitment costs involved in such labour systems. The second problem is that a large and expensive supervisory labour force is often required to keep the primary workers under control. But probably the most serious drawback of the 'cheap labour' hypothesis is that it fails to consider the abysmally low productivity of poorly motivated and often sick and malnourished workers, who lack even the most rudimentary skills. When extremely low output per labourer, together with high recruitment and supervisory costs, are weighed up against the wages received, African unskilled labour can often turn out to be surprisingly expensive in comparison to that in other parts of the world.²

Intimately related with the argument concerning the real costs of labour is another debate concerning the relative efficiency of plantations and small-holders, particularly as producers of cash crops for exports.³ As unskilled labour is the major expenditure for both planters and peasants, their relative labour costs are at the centre of this debate. However, other costs are involved, notably those of land, capital, skilled labour and technologies of production. These other costs are considered briefly at the end of this paper, the main focus of which lies on the issue of how much the planters of São Tomé and Príncipe actually paid for their workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

For the São Tomé cocoa planters, the cost of unskilled labour was chiefly determined by a labour system closely akin to slavery. As the cocoa boom

¹ For one particularly influential article, see Harold Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa', *Economy and Society*, 1 (1972).

² For one specific calculation of comparative costs, see N. Saraiva Bravo, *A Cultura Algodoeira na Economia do Norte de Moçambique* (Lisbon, 1963), p. 84.

³ For two opposing views, see George Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World*, second edition (London, 1983); Edgar Graham and Ingrid Floering, *The Modern Plantation in the Third World* (London, 1984).

developed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the planters feverishly bought slaves, mainly from Angola. The planters or their agents made the slaves acquiesce to a contract, and then compelled them to remain in the islands for their whole lives. The labourers were legally freed, were paid a small wage, and were comparatively well treated, but this did not make up for the fact that they were brought to the islands against their will and were never repatriated. As a result, British and German chocolate manufacturers began a boycott of São Tomé cocoa in 1909. A year later the Republicans swept to power in Lisbon, committed to reforming colonial abuses, and by the outbreak of the First World War they had stamped out the 'modern slavery' denounced by British humanitarians.⁴

While ex-slaves subjected to perpetual indenture formed the great bulk of the labour force in these years, there were also indentured labourers in the usual sense of the term, who were repatriated at the end of their contracts. In the immediate aftermath of the legal abolition of slavery in 1875, some 3,000 men were procured from Liberia and British West Africa under these terms. But the costs were considerable and the British were intensely suspicious that a new slave trade was in the making. Moreover, these workers disliked agricultural labour and were furious at delays in repatriation.⁵ Once it became clear that Lisbon would authorize the continuation of the Angolan slave trade under another name, the importation of labourers from British West Africa and Liberia dwindled to an insignificant trickle.⁶

However, as international criticism of the quasi-slave trade intensified in the 1900s, short-term indentured labour was once more sought by the planters, but this time almost exclusively from within the Portuguese empire. Recruitment in all Portuguese colonies was thus officially sanctioned in 1903.⁷ The most numerous contingent initially came from the Cape Verde Islands, destined mainly for the island of Príncipe. Cape Verdean figures, which are considerably higher than those registered in São Tomé, show nearly 14,000 contracted labourers going to São Tomé and Príncipe from 1903 to 1915 inclusive.⁸ A handful of men were also

⁴ James Duffy, *A Question of Slavery: Labour Policies in Portuguese Africa and the British Protest, 1850–1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

⁵ Arquivo Histórico de São Tomé e Príncipe, São Tomé (henceforth AHSTP), 1-a-C, fol. 1, Ministro do Ultramar, 5.2.1876, and fols 8–13, Direcção Geral do Ultramar to Governador, 20.12.1877; Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios do Banco Nacional Ultramarino Desde o Anno de 1865 a 1889* (Lisbon, 1890): 1875, pp. 368–69; 1876, pp. 386 and 409–10; 1877, pp. 437–43 and 463; 1878, p. 486.

⁶ Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*, 1883, p. 712; Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa* (London, 1989), p. 53, note 36; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 181.

⁷ Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 176.

⁸ António Carreira, *The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration* (London, 1982), Chapter 4 and statistical annexes, tables 6 and 7; F. de Paula Cid, *La main d'oeuvre aux îles de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon, 1914), p. 15.

recruited in Portuguese Guinea, mainly for police duties.⁹ As the international labour crisis deepened in the late 1900s and early 1910s, Mozambique became the chief supplier of labour to the islands.¹⁰ One set of figures shows some 33,000 Mozambicans being sent to São Tomé and Príncipe from 1908 to 1915 inclusive.¹¹ Contracted Angolans began to return to the islands in 1912, and about 7,500 workers came from this source in the three years 1913–15.¹² They came under the strict condition that they be promptly repatriated.¹³

This said, the most numerous workers were those bought as slaves, with some 70,000 *serviçaes*, as these workers were usually called, being imported between 1880 and 1908.¹⁴ These figures may not seem all that large compared to the nearly 60,000 short-term indentured labourers just referred to, but one has to bear in mind that those bought as slaves stayed for the rest of their lives, whereas the short-term workers were repatriated after one to three years. The great bulk of Angolan slaves for São Tomé were purchased in Novo Redondo, Catumbela and Benguela, but quite a few also came from the Luanda region.¹⁵ In addition, several hundred slaves from Dahomey were imported in the second half of the 1880s.¹⁶ A trickle of slaves also came illegally from Gabon until at least 1887, and probably until around the turn of the century.¹⁷ Moreover, the 300 or so Chinese workers imported in 1895 from Macao appear to have been brought in under the same system, although more research is needed on this episode.¹⁸

The first kind of labour cost which needs to be considered is thus the price of slaves. In the 1870s, an adult slave on the Angolan coast fetched between

⁹ Sociedade de Emigração para São Tomé e Príncipe, *Relatório da Direcção, Parecer do Conselho Fiscal, Lista dos Accionistas, Segundo Anno, 1914* (henceforth, Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório, 1914*), p. 12; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 316, Pasta 3, Delegado no Príncipe to Curador Geral, 7.5.1904.

¹⁰ Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique* (London, 1980), pp. 166, 184–85; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório, 1914*, p. 11; Great Britain, Foreign Office, Historical Section, *San Thomé and Príncipe* (London, 1920), pp. 21–22.

¹¹ Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, pp. 209–10, 220–21.

¹² AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 441, Pasta 2, Governador de Benguela to Governador de São Tomé e Príncipe, 25.4.1912; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 211.

¹³ Arquivo Histórico de Angola, Centro Nacional de Documentação e Investigação Histórica, Luanda, Códices (uncatalogued), Negócios Indígenas, Correspondência Expedida, 1913, Governador Geral de Angola to Governador de São Tomé e Príncipe, 27.5.1913, and Chefe dos Serviços dos Negócios Indígenas to Governador de Benguela, 19.9.1913.

¹⁴ F. F. Dias da Costa, *Relatório do Ministro e Secretário d'Estado dos Negócios da Marinha e Ultramar* (Lisbon, 1898), p. 47; J. A. Alves Roçadas, *La main d'oeuvre indigène à [sic] Angola* (Lisbon, 1914), p. 33.

¹⁵ Richard Hammond, *Portugal and Africa, 1815–1910* (Stanford, 1966), p. 137, citing British consular report of 1882; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, pp. 98, 137, and passim.

¹⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-C, Pasta 2A; A. F. Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, second edition (Lisbon, 1893), pp. 95–96; Colin Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers* (Oxford, 1961), p. 130 and note 4.

¹⁷ K. D. Patterson, *The Northern Gabon Coast to 1875* (London, 1975), pp. 134–35.

¹⁸ *Portugal em Africa*, 3 (1896), 35–36; 5 (1898), 286; 7 (1900), 154; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 423, Pasta 2, Trabalhadores Repatriados. For the Chinese slave trade through Macao in general, see Gervase Clarence-Smith, 'The Portuguese Contribution to the Cuban Slave and Coolie Trades in the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery and Abolition*, 5, no. 1 (1984), 29–30.

£4 and £6 sterling.¹⁹ These prices rose gradually during the 1880s and 1890s, as far as one can tell from scattered figures.²⁰ However, average prices on the coast of Angola remained lower than those obtaining on the coast of Dahomey, being about £10 in Angola compared to £17 in Dahomey in 1886.²¹ This in part accounted for Portugal's failure to press for the continuation of her short-lived protectorate over coastal Dahomey between 1885 and 1887.²² Prices continued to rise as slave raiding was slowly curtailed in the backlands of Angola, and by 1908, on the eve of the cessation of the Angolan slave trade to São Tomé, William Cadbury reported that an adult slave sold for around £16 in Benguela.²³

Once the initial purchase had been concluded, there were what can broadly be described as recruitment expenses. These involved drawing up five-year obligatory contracts, clothing and vaccinating the *serviçaes*, feeding them on the coast, shipping them to the islands by the regular steamers of the *Empreza Nacional de Navegação*, having them and their contracts inspected by the *curadoria* (labour bureau) in São Tomé or in Príncipe, paying various intermediaries, and transporting the workers from the port to the plantations. The most blatantly illegal aspect of the whole system came later, with the 'automatic re-contracting' of *serviçaes* by the *curadoria* every five years, and this also had to be paid for.²⁴

It is difficult to calculate each of these expenditures separately, so that one has to rely on the scattered figures cited for the total cost of a *serviçal* on the islands, even though it is often far from clear exactly what payments are included in these statistics. Before the coffee boom of the 1860s, it was apparently possible to obtain an adult slave on the islands for a down-payment of only £5 sterling, but prices in the 1860s were already between £12 and £20, and by 1899, with the onset of the cocoa boom, had reached £25.²⁵ For the mid-1900s, the figure usually quoted was between £30 and £35, although prices as low as £25 and as high as £40 were also cited.²⁶

¹⁹ Marquês de Sá da Bandeira, *O Trabalho Rural Africano e a Administração Colonial* (Lisbon, 1873), p. 31; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 96.

²⁰ W. G. Clarence-Smith, *Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola, 1840–1926* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 31; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, pp. 122, 169.

²¹ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 2A, fols 12–14, A. D. C. de Silva Azevedo, 26.1.1886.

²² A. Marques Esparteiro, *Portugal no Daomé, 1471–1961* (Lisbon, 1962).

²³ University of Birmingham Library, Cadbury Papers (henceforth, UBL, CP), 308, W. Cadbury, *Diary 1908–09*.

²⁴ UBL, CP, 4–7, 197–98, 294–301, 308 for an overview. Much of this was published as William Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa* (London, 1910). See Clarence-Smith, *Slaves*, pp. 30–31, for the mechanics and politics of perpetual indenture.

²⁵ Patterson, *The Northern Gabon Coast*, p. 132; Sá da Bandeira, *O Trabalho Rural*, p. 30; Hammond, *Portugal and Africa*, p. 319.

²⁶ *Der Gordian, Zeitschrift für die Kakao- Schokoladen- und Zuckerwarenindustrie* (Hamburg, 1895–) (henceforth, *Der Gordian*), 11 (1905–06), 229, citing Strunk; *Correio de Mossamedes*, 27 (January 1905); H. Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, second edition (London, 1963), p. 162; UBL, CP, 5, J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 12.2.1906. For higher and lower figures, UBL, CP, 198, J. Burt, Report 1907; R. Mesnier de Ponsard, *Plantation Roça Porto Alegre* (Lisbon, 1912), p. 23.

Adult men and women cost roughly the same, for both were employed as field labour, whereas a child was obtainable for under £8 in the 1900s.²⁷

With slave prices reaching such levels, the cost of recruiting temporary indentured labour seemed to become truly competitive, but appearances were somewhat deceptive. In 1912–13, Levy's figures for the total cost of recruiting and repatriating Mozambicans on three-year contracts worked out at around £16 per man.²⁸ This was about half the price paid for Angolan slaves in the late 1900s. But workers from Mozambique had to be repatriated after one to three years, whereas the cost of a slave had been amortized over his or her whole working life.

Moreover, the extra bonus of the quasi-slave system was that the children of those bought as slaves were themselves born into perpetual indenture, making the whole system even more akin to straight slavery.²⁹ However, birth rates were low and infant mortality rates high, so that the planters never even came close to being able to do without fresh imports of labour.³⁰ Between 1900 and 1910, only 1,680 persons born on São Tomé island signed contracts, and in 1910 there were only 44 such persons on Príncipe island.³¹ As local creoles only signed contracts in extremely rare circumstances, these persons would nearly all have been children 'born to indenture'.³²

The expenses incurred in importing immigrant labourers were greatly amplified by the incidence of adult mortality on the islands, especially as deaths were heavily concentrated within the first year or two of a labourer's arrival. All the initial expenditures were frequently lost before much or anything had been obtained in the way of labour services. In 1882, the Banco Nacional Ultramarino reported an astounding death rate of 19% for men and 28% for women among recently-arrived labourers.³³ And reports of very high mortality afflicting newly-arrived *serviçaes* occur again and again in the sources.³⁴ As late as 1905, mortality during the first few months of new workers' sojourn on the islands was said to reach 20%.³⁵

²⁷ UBL, CP, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

²⁸ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 26, 106–07, and passim. The total for Mozambique is my calculation.

²⁹ UBL, CP, 4/20, W. Cadbury to Cadbury Bros. Ltd, 17.3.1903; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 40–41, 60.

³⁰ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

³¹ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 410, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 8.1.1910 and 12.1.1910.

³² For creoles and contracts, see AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 162, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Governador, 23.4.1889, and annexes; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 3, fols 11–24, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 19.7.1890; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 8.

³³ Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*, 1882, p. 669.

³⁴ See for instance, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Potsdam, Reichskolonialamt (henceforth, ZStA, RKA), 3223, fols 133–34, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing a São Tomé source; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Governador, 18.9.1902; UBL, CP, 6, W. Cadbury to The Proprietors of Cocoa Estates of S. Thomé and Príncipe, 28.11.1907; António A. Corrêa Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena nas Ilhas de S. Tomé e Príncipe* (São Tomé, 1919), p. 38.

³⁵ UBL, CP, 4/182, W. Cadbury to A. Stollwerck, 1.1.1906.

General mortality statistics, indicated in the table below, were erratically kept until the advent of the Republic in 1910, although they improve from about 1905. The figures for São Tomé island in the early 1900s seem particularly suspect.³⁶ One source suggested in 1903 that the real mortality rate on that island was around 12%.³⁷ The figures, such as they are, reveal a major difference between mortality on São Tomé and that on the smaller and less developed island of Príncipe, as can be seen in the table below. In the latter island, the ravages of sleeping sickness led to appallingly high death rates and contributed not a little to the lower profitability of plantations there. However, sleeping sickness was eliminated by 1914, after a vigorous sanitary campaign, and death rates then fell markedly.³⁸

Table 1: Mortality Rates on the Plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe, 1900–1918³⁹

	Príncipe	São Tomé
1900–01	20.67%	6.67%
1901		4.1%
1902	22%	4.1%
1903	20.7%	3.4%
1904		3.6%
1905	11%	8%
1906	12.5%	
1907	10.5%	
1908	13.16%	8%
1909	16.4%	
1910	13.1%	
1911–12	12.3%	
1912–13	6.95%	
1914		
1915	4.21%	5.86%
1916	3.77%	7.53%
1917	2.51%	4.3%
1918	5.34%	3.74%

When one turns to the second main set of labour costs, recurrent expenses on labour, the low level of wages might well give the initial impression that this was ‘cheap labour’. Salaries did have to be paid after the legal abolition of slavery in 1875, but the 1880 regulations specified that men should get a minimum of only 700 *reis* a month in the first two years of a contract, while women should receive 500 *reis*. After the first two years, this was to rise to

³⁶ UBL, CP, 7 (vi), Cadbury Bros. to Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 23.4.1908.

³⁷ UBL, CP, 4/53, A. Ceffala to Cadbury Bros., 6.6.1903.

³⁸ Great Britain, F.O., *San Thomé*, p. 3. For the campaign, see AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 463, Pasta 5, Relatório, Bruto da Costa, June 1913.

³⁹ UBL, CP, 222, Annual series, 2922, Dec. 1902 (S.T. and P. 1900–01); UBL, CP, 7 (vi), L. Mallet to Cadbury Bros., 16.4.1908 (S.T. 1901–04); Antonio de Mantero Velarde, *L'espansione politica e coloniale Portoghese con speciale riguardo alle isole di São Thomé e Príncipe* (Rome, 1924), p. 109 (P. 1902–03); UBL, CP, 197, Burt Report 1906 (1905); AHSTP, 1-a-C, 7, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 23.11.1908 (P. 1906–07); UBL, CP, 225, Map (S.T. 1908); AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 379, Pasta 1, Governador to Governador Geral de Angola, 26.6.1913 (P. 1908–10 and 1911–13); Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena*, pp. 12–14 (S.T. and P. 1915–1918).

1,400 for men and 1,000 for women, but no provision was made for a wage increase at the time of the 'automatic re-contracting' every five years. Minors were paid 500 *reis* a month, however many years they had been on the islands.

The reforms of January 1903 abolished the initial two-year period of low wages, instituted a mandatory minimum pay increase of 10% each time a labourer was re-contracted, and raised minimum salary levels for all newly-contracted workers to 2,500 *reis* a month for men and 1,800 for women. However, three-fifths of the new salary were to be withheld from the workers and paid into a 'repatriation fund'. And it was not till 1909 that re-contracted workers whose original contract dated from before 1903 received the new salary scales.⁴⁰ The value of Portuguese currency fluctuated between around 4,500 and 7,000 *reis* to the pound sterling in this period, with rapid depreciation in the 1890s followed by a partial recovery in the years before the First World War, complicating calculations of the real level of wages.⁴¹

Some planters managed to reduce the level of wages even further. Fines and compensation for damages were regularly docked from wages, and pay was stopped while a labourer was off sick.⁴² Wages were paid late, and promissory notes were used instead of currency.⁴³ Salaries were at times paid below the minimum level, or in goods and alcohol, or even not paid at all in the case of some small and struggling creole planters on Príncipe.⁴⁴ Many planters refused to pay the new wage scales after 1903, alleging that it would cause resentment among those contracted before 1903. Other planters simply pocketed the three-fifths of salary intended for the repatriation fund.⁴⁵

However, the authorities increasingly checked illegal reductions in wages, while the planters themselves were gradually forced for economic reasons into paying salaries above the legal minimum, as supplies of labour became ever more problematical and worries about productivity grew. Planters would entice labourers away from other employers by promising higher salaries, in one case about three times the minimum wage.⁴⁶ Some planters

⁴⁰ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 410, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 27.6.1910; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 158, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 30.10.1888; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 316, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 13.7.1903.

⁴¹ Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825-1975* (Manchester, 1985), Annex 2, pp. 226-27, for yearly values.

⁴² AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 209, Pasta 4, Maço 3, Contracto 30.8.1895; UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burr to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906; UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório, 1914*, p. 19.

⁴³ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Petition, Joanna Baptista do Amaral de Mata, 16.7.1903; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 217, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 23.9.1896.

⁴⁴ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 7, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 6.4.1907 (payment of 500 *reis*); *Der Gordian*, 3 (1897-98), 1169, citing Max Esser (wages in kind); AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 410, Pasta 1, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 20.6.1910 (non-payment).

⁴⁵ Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 192, citing Consul Nightingale, 1906.

⁴⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Príncipe planters to Curador Geral, 23.7.1904.

regularly paid all their labourers above the minimum salary levels, and Cape Verdeans were usually paid higher wages than other workers.⁴⁷ In 1908, the labour inspector showed William Cadbury registers which indicated that quite a few *serviçaes* received about double the minimum wage, and that a small number got up to six times the minimum.⁴⁸ Extra pay often took the form of bonuses. Thus a *serviçal* who picked more than ten baskets of cocoa a day would receive ten *reis* for every basket above that number. Bonuses were also paid if workers killed more rats than their set quota, as rodents caused considerable damage in the plantations. Bonuses were sometimes paid at the evening line-up of workers, to encourage the work-force to greater efforts, and at other times they were added to the monthly pay package.⁴⁹

The Portuguese government further argued that wages were not as low as they seemed, because by law the planters had to meet all the expenses of feeding, clothing, and housing their workers, as well as medical and miscellaneous outlays. There were some cases of poor conditions, but international pressures, the rising prices of slaves, and growing planter concerns about high mortality and low productivity led most employers to finance considerable and costly improvements in the living standards of their workers by the 1900s.⁵⁰ Some Portuguese officials also made commendable efforts to check abuses and enforce legislation.⁵¹ Foreign observers, including those most critical of the perpetual indenture system, were united in their claim that the workers on the islands were relatively well treated, even in comparison to labourers in Europe.⁵² High rates of mortality and sickness were due mainly to factors outside the employers' control, although brutality and overwork inflicted on labourers by the agents of absentee planters did at times contribute to poor health.⁵³

Medical expenses were growing rapidly in the 1900s, as many plantations came to be equipped with spacious hospitals run by a European doctor and a number of white and black nurses.⁵⁴ In 1889, one set of detailed calculations already put medical expenditure at 8.7% of total labour costs.⁵⁵ By the 1900s, they almost certainly constituted a higher proportion. New hospitals

⁴⁷ UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burtt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

⁴⁸ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 7, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 18.11.1908.

⁴⁹ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 19, citing 1908 text.

⁵⁰ UBL, CP, 4/53, A. Ceffala to Cadbury Bros., 6.6.1903; UBL, CP, 5 (IV), W. Cadbury to H. R. Fox-Bourne, 6.2.1906.

⁵¹ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 20.9.1903, and annexes; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 8, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 20.2.1909.

⁵² Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, pp. 96, 122 and passim.

⁵³ Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, pp. 25, 37-38; UBL, CP, 197, Burtt Report 1906. For a particularly bad incident, AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 14.7.1902.

⁵⁴ *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905-06), 229, citing Strunk; UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burtt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

⁵⁵ ZStA, RKA, 3223, fols 133-34, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing a São Tomé source.

were reckoned to cost 'several thousand pounds'.⁵⁶ In 1908, the Pedroma plantation was building a hospital for £5,000, while that on the Uba Budo estate was estimated to cost £20,000 when completed, and would be the largest on São Tomé. William Cadbury reported that 'sixty-five white artisans were at work' on a hospital and that 'materials were of the best'. A kind of ostentatious competition to build the biggest and best hospitals appears to have gripped the plantocracy in these years.⁵⁷ Spending on water supplies and general sanitation was much lower, although it would probably have done more to cut mortality rates than building hospitals. However, some planters did install piped water at considerable cost.⁵⁸

Expenditure on housing was closely related to that on hospitals and sanitation, and appears to have risen sharply in the 1900s. In 1890, the governor of Príncipe reported that on small plantations housing for the labourers consisted of 'a little damp cubicle, with an earthen floor, no light, no air, and a roof of palm leaves or thatch'.⁵⁹ In the second half of the 1900s, older housing for families on São Tomé still consisted of small wooden sheds with corrugated iron roofs.⁶⁰ As for single male and female labourers, they were separately housed in large barracks.⁶¹ But some of the new family houses going up in the 1900s were 4 by 3 metres in size, partitioned down the middle, sometimes built in brick or concrete rather than wood to avoid the risk of fire, with raised floors and tiled roofs.⁶² Some even had verandahs, and William Cadbury thought them equal and even superior to the best that he had seen in the British West Indies.⁶³ In 1914, reports from South Africa that it was more conducive to health to allow Africans to build their own huts in their own way led to a change in the law, which had previously banned this kind of family housing.⁶⁴ By 1920, some plantations thus had 'huts built in the native fashion'.⁶⁵

Food was an important item in labour costs, and the planters made efforts to produce rations on the plantations or buy them locally. The bread-fruit tree was introduced into the islands in the mid-nineteenth century, and plantains, beans, maize, yams, manioc and oil palms were locally cultivated to feed the labourers, some of these crops being planted between young cocoa and coffee trees. Plantains appear to have been the main starchy staple

⁵⁶ UBL, CP, 5 (iv), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

⁵⁷ UBL, CP, 308, W. Cadbury, Diary, 1908-09.

⁵⁸ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

⁵⁹ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 3, fols 11-24, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 19.7.1890.

⁶⁰ UBL, CP, 197, Burt report 1906.

⁶¹ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905-06), 229, citing Strunk.

⁶² UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 20, citing Masui 1900-01; *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905-06), 229, citing Strunk; Conde de Sousa e Faro, *A Ilha de S. Thomé e a Roça Agua-Izé* (Lisbon, 1908), p. 153 and photos; UBL, CP, 308, W. Cadbury, 1.11.1908.

⁶³ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

⁶⁴ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Great Britain, F.O., *San Thomé*, p. 22.

in the 1880s. According to geographical location and ecological conditions, some plantations sold foodstuffs to others. Labourers were also encouraged to gather fruit from wild or semi-wild trees.⁶⁶ Some fresh fish was of local origin and cattle were raised on certain plantations. Almost all plantations had some small stock and poultry, and many provided fresh meat for their labourers once a week.⁶⁷

However, the rapidly increasing numbers of labourers, the more intensive use of land for cocoa mono-cropping, and a chronic shortage of labour all pushed the planters towards a greater reliance on imports of foodstuffs. As early as 1896, rice was said to be the staple item in the diet of the *serviçães*.⁶⁸ Though most of this rice was re-exported from Europe, it seems to have been grown mainly in Burma and possibly other parts of South-East Asia.⁶⁹ Dried fish from southern Angola was the second staple, although it was of poor quality, full of sand, and often rotten.⁷⁰ Meat in tins and barrels from the Americas, beans and maize from Angola and live cattle from southern Angola were other significant imports to feed the labour force.⁷¹ In the 1900s, the Agua-Izé estate annually imported 450 tons of rice, 280 tons of beans, 180 tons of dried and salted fish and 80 tons of tinned meat a year for its workers.⁷² By 1914, it was estimated, on the basis of customs statistics, that the average monthly worker's ration in imported goods was 15 kilos of rice, 6.5 kilos of dried and salted fish, 3.5 kilos of beans, 1.5 kilos of preserved meat, and 1 kilo of maize meal. By this stage, the only local products of importance in the diet of the *serviçães* were said to be fruit, and some maize, cassava and palm oil.⁷³

Clothing formed a smaller item of expenditure, but clothes were important, both as a protection against snakes and insects, and for warmth on the plantations at higher altitude.⁷⁴ By law, two sets of clothes had to be distributed to the labourers every six months.⁷⁵ How well this was complied with is not entirely clear. There were certainly complaints as to insufficient

⁶⁶ Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, pp. 29–30, 69–70, 168 (note 2); Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S. Thomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências* (Lisbon, 1877), pp. 438, 590–91, 601–02; Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*, 1873, p. 282; Faro, *A Ilha*, p. 164; ZStA, RKA, 3223, fols 133–34, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing a São Tomé source.

⁶⁷ Faro, *A Ilha*, pp. 163–64; *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905–06), 229–30, citing Strunk; UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

⁶⁸ *Der Gordian*, 3 (1897–98), 1169, citing Max Esser.

⁶⁹ Francisco Mantero, *A Mão d'Obra em S. Thomé e Príncipe* (Lisbon, 1910), and annexes, for 1905 statistics.

⁷⁰ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 3, fols 11–24, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 19.7.1890; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 379, Pasta 1, series of documents; Clarence-Smith, *Slaves*, Chapter 3.

⁷¹ Faro, *A Ilha*, p. 164; UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906; *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905–06), 228, citing Strunk; Clarence-Smith, *Slaves*, Chapter 3; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 20 (note 1).

⁷² Faro, *A Ilha*, pp. 163–64.

⁷³ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Tony Hodges and Malyn Newitt, *São Tomé and Príncipe: From Plantation Colony to Microstate* (Boulder, Colo., 1988), p. 14 (snakes); AHSTP, 1-a-C, 3, fols 11–24, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 19.7.1890 (cold).

⁷⁵ UBL, CP, 6 (V), A. Mendes da Silva *et al.* to W. Cadbury, 24.12.1907.

clothing, and on the Uba Budo estate in the early 1920s a visitor noted that only a small piece of sacking was worn.⁷⁶ However, William Cadbury reported that although the workers bought extra cloth at the plantation store, they were well provided with cotton cloth imported from Portugal, usually in blue and white patterns and designs.⁷⁷ And the numerous photographs taken in the islands in these years show well-clothed labourers, even if these were photographs of the *serviçaes* in their 'Sunday best'.

From 1878, Portuguese laws also laid down that the planters should provide education, religious instruction and child care facilities for their workers, but these provisions were patchily enforced and did not add much to labour costs.⁷⁸ Crêches run by black nurses were quite often provided, in order to release mothers for labouring duties, but most education for the children of *serviçaes* was confined to selecting the brighter boys for training as artisans. Boys were also occasionally sent to one of the twelve primary village schools provided by the state for the free creole population. As for religious instruction, many estate owners or managers were anti-clericals who tolerated no religious activity whatsoever on their plantations. On other estates, a priest would come once a year to baptize children and recently-arrived labourers, and to recite mass in the open air.⁷⁹ Even on the Monte Café estate owned by a deeply pious lady, where weekly church services were held, 'the preaching of the priest was pithily summed up by a native: "He tells us to multiply, and eat well, and sleep well, that we may work well for Dona Claudina"'.⁸⁰ Quite substantial schools and chapels can be seen today on some estates, but they do not appear to date from the period before 1914.⁸¹

In aggregate, labour costs were rising, and appear to have been high relative to Europe and to plantation areas elsewhere in the world by the mid-1900s. It is impossible to reconstruct the changes in the total cost of unskilled labour from incidental information under all the headings listed above, but planters and officials made occasional attempts to work out overall expenditures. The figures in the table below include initial costs of purchase as well as current costs. Converting the sums into pounds sterling makes it possible to eliminate the distortions arising from fluctuations in the value of Portuguese currency.⁸² However, these sources all seem to underestimate the losses of labour caused by death and flight, and the amounts should thus be treated as minimum rather than average figures. In comparative terms, Hall noted that the cost of labour in São Tomé was about 20%

⁷⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 162, Pasta 3, Auto T. da Costa, 9.5.1899; Pedro Muralha, *Terras de Africa, S. Tomé e Angola* (Lisbon, c. 1925), p. 26.

⁷⁷ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

⁷⁸ Valentim Alexandre, *Origens do Colonialismo Português Moderno* (Lisbon, 1979), p. 160.

⁷⁹ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

⁸⁰ UBL, CP, 5 (iv), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

⁸¹ Personal observation, August 1988.

⁸² Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, table, p. 227, for pound-reis exchange.

higher than that in the cocoa plantations of Surinam.⁸³ The total cost of a worker in São Tomé in 1914 was also said to be above the wages paid to casual daily rural labour in Portugal.⁸⁴

Table 2: Monthly Average Total Cost of Unskilled Labour, São Tomé e Príncipe, 1882–1913⁸⁵

Year	Monthly cost in <i>reis</i>	Monthly cost in sterling
1882	4\$451	£0.98
1889	6\$165	£1.37
c. 1905	7\$424	£1.60
1909	10\$138	£1.95
1913	11\$443	£2.18

The third component in real labour costs was productivity, although unfortunately this is the most difficult aspect to quantify. The planters gained some advantages from the perpetual indenture system. The workers bought as slaves, if they survived, stayed long enough to acquire basic skills in plantation work.⁸⁶ Sex ratios among labourers coming from Angola for the plantations were roughly even by the end of the 1890s, and detailed statistics show only a slight preponderance of men over women in the overall population and among new arrivals in the early 1900s. Equal sex ratios were desired by the planters, who also favoured and arranged marriages.⁸⁷ Stable families made for a more motivated labour force and facilitated social control.

That this stabilized labour force was nevertheless characterized by very low productivity was due largely to the terrible health situation on the islands. Disease not only killed people but also lowered the productivity of those who remained alive. While typhoid, amoebic dysentery, smallpox, sleeping sickness (on Príncipe), tetanus, tuberculosis, pneumonia and meningitis were widespread killer diseases, other illnesses were of a chronic and enfeebling nature.⁸⁸ Malaria and filariasis were not a problem on plantations above a certain altitude, but they were widespread in low-lying areas, particularly on Príncipe island.⁸⁹ Hookworm was an acute problem all over São Tomé island, and syphilis and other forms of venereal disease began to

⁸³ C. J. J. van Hall, *Cocoa* (London, 1914), p. 317.

⁸⁴ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 15–16, note 1.

⁸⁵ These figures are calculated by me from: Alexandre, *Origens*, pp. 173–74, citing Almada (1882); ZStA, RKA, 3223, fols 133–34, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing a São Tomé source (1889); Hall, *Cocoa*, p. 317, citing Chevalier (c. 1905); Ponsard, *Plantation Roça Porto Alegre* (1909); Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 106–07 (1913).

⁸⁶ *Der Gordian*, 11 (1905–06), 228, citing Strunk.

⁸⁷ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 226, Pasta 2, Director das Obras Públicas to Secretário Geral, 7.5.1897; UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; UBL, CP, 222, Annual Series, 2922; Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 181, note 24.

⁸⁸ Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena*, provides the best survey.

⁸⁹ Ribeiro, *A Província*, pp. 540–43; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 8, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 8.3.1909; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 463, Pasta 5, Relatório Bruto da Costa, June 1913; *Boletim Oficial de São Tomé e Príncipe*, 19.9.1911.

increase in both islands at the end of this period.⁹⁰ In addition, there were many minor respiratory diseases, enhanced by rapid changes in temperature at high altitude, as well as intestinal problems, often related to worm infestations and poor drinking water supplies.⁹¹

The exact impact of illness on productivity remains to be determined, but it tended to be worst among new arrivals. Many labourers landed in poor shape, traumatized by enslavement and the march to the coast, disoriented by the unaccustomed diet and climate, and often sick.⁹² One employer complained in the late 1880s that about a quarter of new arrivals were completely unfit for work, and that some of them were cripples.⁹³ On one plantation in São Tomé in the late 1900s, William Cadbury noted that there were some 80 labourers off sick out of a total labour force of about 900, and yet he considered this to be better than average. Cripples were allocated light work, such as processing cocoa beans.⁹⁴

The other major reason for the low productivity of labour was that the workers hated the system of perpetual indenture, and fought back with all possible means at their disposal. While the employers repeated endlessly to anyone who would listen to them that plantations were like one big happy family, Nogueira cited a refrain sung by the labourers which summed up their main grievance: 'In São Tomé, there is a door to go in, but none to come out.'⁹⁵ And the archives are full of examples of desperate and determined action on the part of labourers against their servitude, and of the often brutal attempts by the planters to keep the lid on these simmering grievances.

Resistance took many forms, and the most prevalent involved informal action by individuals or small groups. Slacking, malingering, absenteeism, drinking, suicide, sabotage and theft were rife.⁹⁶ Unspecified 'insubordination' was reported with monotonous regularity. Flight was a persistent problem for planters, whether to the forests and mountains, or across the sea in stolen boats.⁹⁷ In 1889, one planter calculated losses of labour by flight at 6% per year, and a decade later nearly 10% of the labourers on the large Agua-Izé estate were reported to have fled.⁹⁸ Escapes were usually abortive, and fugitives were frequently re-captured or starved into submission after a

⁹⁰ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 379, Pasta 1, Chefe da missão de estudo to Secretário Geral, 17.11.1908; Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena*, pp. 45–47 and appendices.

⁹¹ Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena*, passim, provides the best survey.

⁹² Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*, 1882, pp. 667–68; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 410, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 8.7.1910; Aguiar, *O Trabalho Indígena*, p. 38.

⁹³ ZStA, RKA, 3223, fols 133–34, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing a São Tomé source.

⁹⁴ UBL, CP, 308, W. Cadbury, Diary, 1908–09.

⁹⁵ Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, p. 97.

⁹⁶ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 9–10, 19, 67; Faro, *A Ilha*, pp. 164–67; UBL, CP, 4/21, W. Cadbury to Cadbury Bros., 19.3.1903.

⁹⁷ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 162, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Governador, 20.6.1888; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 162, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Governador, 14.5.1889, for two examples.

⁹⁸ ZStA, RKA, Soden to Bismarck, 4.2.1889, citing São Tomé source; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 239, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Governador, 24.2.1898.

few weeks.⁹⁹ However, this did not prevent them from trying again. In 1901 a certain Kingungo came into hospital, seriously ill and wrapped in a stolen blanket, having escaped from his plantation for the third time.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, planters regularly 'poached' labourers from one another by promising better conditions. This had the advantage of providing the *serviçaes* who moved with powerful protection from their new masters. However it was illegal, and planters were fined if the offence could be proved.¹⁰¹

Collective resistance, sometimes of a violent nature, also occurred. General strikes, mass desertions and small-scale rebellions broke out whenever rumours of imminent liberation spread to the workers, as in the years after 1875, 1903, and 1909–10.¹⁰² Hunger strikes, partial work stoppages, localized disturbances, and attacks on planters and overseers were sparked off by more particular and local problems, often to do with the forced renewal of contracts or harsh treatment by employers.¹⁰³ Those who took to the mountains set up maroon settlements and returned to harass the planters, as they had done for centuries in the islands.¹⁰⁴ However, the violence of these raids appears to have been exaggerated by the planters, in order to obtain permission from the governor to mount counter-attacks against the fugitives and re-capture lost labourers.¹⁰⁵

The *serviçaes* were able to choose legal options to gain redress, but these were limited in scope and efficacy. Individuals at times complained to the labour inspectors, other officials, and to the courts, or refused to sign new contracts.¹⁰⁶ However, this kind of action was hampered by the authoritarian framework of plantation life, for the labourers could not leave the estates without permission.¹⁰⁷ In law, the one exception was that workers

⁹⁹ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁰⁰ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 282, Pasta 3, Sub-Chefe Interino do Serviço da Saúde to Curador Geral, 23.2.1901.

¹⁰¹ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 158, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Governador, 20.6.1888 and 19.9.1888 and annexes; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 255, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 13.12.1899.

¹⁰² Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*, 1875, pp. 368–69; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 1, fols 14–16 Direção Geral do Ultramar to Governador, 24.12.1877; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 316, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 13.7.1903; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 423, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Governador, 10.11.1911; Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 39.

¹⁰³ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 184, Pasta 2, Maço 3, Secretário da Direção to Curador Geral, 12.7.1892; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 5, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 20.11.1902; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Presidente do Conselho do Governo, 23.7.1902; UBL, CP, 4/21, W. Cadbury to Cadbury Bros., 19.3.1903; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 7, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 18.7.1907.

¹⁰⁴ R. Garfield, 'A History of São Tomé Island, 1470–1655' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1971); AHSTP, 1-a-C, 3, Administrador do Concelho to Secretário Geral, 18.3.1896, and annexes; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 5, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 20.11.1902, and Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 19.7.1902; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 380, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 26.9.1907; UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁰⁵ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 226, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 27.8.1897, and subsequent correspondence.

¹⁰⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 184, Pasta 2, Maço 3, Secretário da Direção to Curador Geral, 12.7.1892; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 391, Pasta 4, Governador Cabo Verde to Governador, 4.8.1908; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 459, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 7.7.1913.

¹⁰⁷ UBL, CP, 5 (iv), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906

had the right to leave to make a complaint, but it seems that this provision was rarely enforced.¹⁰⁸ Even if the labourers managed to get away to put their case before the authorities, they found that most of the local representatives of the state colluded with the plantocracy, whether because of close social relations, or because of outright bribery or threats.¹⁰⁹ Workers who complained could be singled out for punishment for 'disobedience'.¹¹⁰ Even those officials who were at all sympathetic to the *serviçaes* often lacked competent interpreters.¹¹¹ However, the Cape Verdean indentured labourers spoke fairly good Portuguese, were accustomed to Western legal processes, and had free compatriots on the islands of high social standing. They were thus better able to use legal channels of protest than workers fresh from the African bush.¹¹²

To dampen down worker resistance, the employers not only relied on the ameliorative measures noted above in the context of reducing mortality and disease, but also attempted to establish rigorous social control over the self-contained little world of the plantation. Workers were confined to the estates, locked up at night, and subjected to a disciplined daily routine, punctuated by the tolling of a loud bell. Fines were imposed for losses and injuries caused to the planter. At the same time, rations of rum and permission to celebrate a funeral or to hold a dance were judiciously manipulated. The first Sunday of the month, when wages were handed out, was often a time for a major dance lasting late into the night.¹¹³ Labourers were sometimes allocated small plots of land, on which they could grow extra food, and this privilege was much sought after.¹¹⁴ Most plantations also had shops, one of the functions of which was to maintain labourers in debt to their employers.¹¹⁵ Another major purpose of the plantation shops was to prevent the workers sneaking off to the taverns, run by creoles and Chinese ex-labourers, which were said to be centres of uncontrolled alcoholism and illicit buying of stolen cocoa.¹¹⁶ As commercial propositions, the plantation shops appear to have been of no interest to the employers, who may even have lost money on them.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 209, Pasta 4, Maço 3, Contracto 30.8.1895, for law; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 209, Pasta 4, Maço 3, Adelina, Petition to Governador, 24.11.1895, for lack of enforcement.

¹⁰⁹ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 239, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 12.12.1898; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 18.9.1902.

¹¹⁰ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 209, Pasta 4, Maço 3, Adelina, Petition to Governador, 24.11.1895; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 12.6.1902.

¹¹¹ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 322, Pasta 3, Delegado no Príncipe to Curador Geral, 7.5.1904.

¹¹² AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 391, Pasta 4, Governador Cabo Verde to Governador, 4.8.1908; AHSTP, 1-a-C, 8, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 10.3.1909.

¹¹³ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 19, 69; UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹¹⁴ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 7, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 30.4.1907; UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹¹⁵ UBL, CP, 4/20, A. Ceffala to W. Cadbury, 20.4.1904.

¹¹⁶ UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; Faro, *A Ilha*, pp. 164-67.

¹¹⁷ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 69; UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

Divide and rule tactics were also tried. In one case, a subservient labourer who lied to the authorities to protect his master was promoted to the position of foreman and paid extra wages.¹¹⁸ Ethnic divisions were exploited, for instance by appointing Dahomeyans as foremen over the Angolans.¹¹⁹ Workers were housed on ethnic lines, or according to the ship in which they had come, although ethnic and ship-mate solidarity may have been as much a source of strength for the workers as an effective means of social control.¹²⁰ And the planters certainly did not approve of the violent faction fighting which at times flared up between Angolans and Cape Verdeans.¹²¹

Corporal punishment, though illegal, was another major strategy used to control the labourers.¹²² Beating the hands of workers to shreds, whipping, wounding with firearms, imprisonment, and the use of chains were reported on the Roça Infante Dom Henrique on Príncipe island in 1903. On this estate, a slave who had been re-captured after trying to escape was whipped till he was unconscious, and he later died in the plantation hospital.¹²³ According to Burt, kicks and blows were the most frequent daily form of violence. The *palmatória*, 'a piece of thick, hard wood with a flat circular end ... used for beating the hand', was the normal utensil for more formal punishments, and the whip (*chicote*) was reserved for really serious cases.¹²⁴ Beatings with the *palmatória* and the *chicote* were often administered at the general evening line-up of all workers at sunset, to serve as an example to the others.¹²⁵

Violence was very general in the islands, in spite of its deleterious effects on the already poor health of the labourers, and the plantocracy lived in perpetual fear of mass uprisings.¹²⁶ White foremen, who had less personal interest in maintaining the productivity of labourers than the planters, were reputed to be particularly brutal.¹²⁷ But planters or managers themselves at times inflicted revoltingly cruel punishments for quite minor misdemeanours. In 1902, the labour inspector reported on a man and a child brutally tortured in a private prison on the Roça Laranjeiro, the man for having laughed behind his boss's back and the child for drinking a few mouthfuls of

¹¹⁸ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Auto de declarações, 30.8.1903.

¹¹⁹ Revista Portuguesa Colonial e Marítima, *A Ilha de São Tomé e o Trabalho Indígena* (Lisbon, 1907), p. 54.

¹²⁰ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 68.

¹²¹ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Petition by Príncipe planters to Curador Geral, 23.7.1904; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 423, Pasta 2, Curador Geral to Governador, 10.11.1911.

¹²² Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, 2a Secção-Angola, Repartição 2, Pasta 4, F. Costa, Note 27.4.1880, for illegality of corporal punishment; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 459, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 11.7.1913, referring to 1895–1901 period.

¹²³ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Auto de declarações, 30.8.1903.

¹²⁴ UBL, CP, 5 (IV), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906.

¹²⁵ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 19, citing Chevalier.

¹²⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 6, Príncipe planters to Curador Geral, 23.7.1904.

¹²⁷ Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, pp. 25, 37–38; UBL, CP, 197, Burt Report 1906.

stolen gin and port.¹²⁸ In 1913, the reforming labour inspector appointed by the Republicans commented on the numerous scars caused by corporal punishment, a mute testimony to decades of violence.¹²⁹

For all the prevalence of corporal punishment by planters, workers were increasingly handed over to the state for punishment. Beatings by planters were illegal, and denunciation by a worker or by a neighbouring planter keen to get his or her hands on additional labourers could lead to a court case and the transfer of labour to another master.¹³⁰ And as the international outcry against the São Tomé planters intensified, the authorities began to crack down more systematically on planter violence.¹³¹ For serious crimes, the penalty imposed by the authorities on labourers handed over to them for punishment was usually deportation to another Portuguese colony, often to serve as soldiers.¹³² The death penalty was never imposed, even for cases involving the murder of planters and foremen, for Portugal had abolished capital punishment in the late 1860s.¹³³ Nor is there any record of corporal punishment being officially imposed by the state. Imprisonment in the fortress was at first prescribed, but this was denounced as a waste of money and labour.¹³⁴ The usual punishment then came to be unpaid labour for the public works department or the municipal council, even though doubts occasionally surfaced as to the legality of not paying such labourers.¹³⁵

The constant struggles of the *serviçaes* not only lowered the productivity of unskilled labour but also contributed to heavy expenditure on supervisory labour. Thus, in the late 1900s on the Roça Porto Alegre, two white '*chefs de service*' and six black '*surveillants*' were needed to supervise just over a hundred labourers moving fermented cocoa beans to the drying installations.¹³⁶ The uneconomic organization of the work process noted by William Cadbury probably derived from the fact that security was more important than the optimum deployment of labour, although Cadbury unfortunately failed to specify in what ways the labour process was defective.¹³⁷

¹²⁸ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 298, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 14.7.1902 and annexes.

¹²⁹ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 459, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 11.7.1913.

¹³⁰ UBL, CP, 5 (iv), J. Burt to W. Cadbury, 3.1.1906; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 177, Pasta 4, Maço 1, Curador Geral to Governador, 23.1.1891.

¹³¹ Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 197, citing British consular report of 1907.

¹³² AHSTP, 1-a-C, 1, fols 14-16, Direcção Geral do Ultramar to Governador, 24.12.1877; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 239, Pasta 2, Secretário Geral, Informação, 27.1.1898; AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 316, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 6.8.1903.

¹³³ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 4, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 4.12.1900.

¹³⁴ AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 316, Pasta 3, Curador Geral to Presidente do Conselho Governativo, 29.11.1894.

¹³⁵ For instance AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 209, Pasta 4, Maço 3, Adelina, Petition to Governador, 24.11.1895. The archives are full of bursting with condemnations to 'Obras da Fortaleza' and similar punishments.

¹³⁶ Raoul Mesnier de Ponsard, *Plantation Roça Porto Alegre* (Lisbon, 1912), p. 18.

¹³⁷ Calculated from UBL, CP, 299-300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909, and Mantero, *A Mão d'obra*, annexes.

Supervisory costs were further increased by the employment of relatively numerous whites, instead of cheaper black supervisors, although the exact racial division of labour is hard to recover from the sources. There seems to have been an overall ratio of around 1 white to 20 blacks on the plantations in the late 1900s, which was about four times the ratio on the plantations in German Cameroon at the same date.¹³⁸ Foremen (*capatazes*) appear almost always to have been black contract labourers, although it is possible that whites were sometimes used even in these most humble tasks.¹³⁹ The *empregados do mato* (bush employees) who directed the work gangs in the field were generally white.¹⁴⁰ However, there appears to have been some substitution of whites by Cape Verdeans towards the end of the 1900s.¹⁴¹ The administrators of whole estates and of the blocks of roughly 500 hectares into which the large estates were divided were apparently all Europeans by the 1900s.¹⁴² However, some were reported to have been non-Europeans, probably local creoles, in the early 1890s.¹⁴³ Considerations of security appear to have overridden more narrowly economic calculations, especially in the appointment of white *empregados do mato*.

To be sure, Portuguese overseers came relatively cheap compared to other Europeans, but their productivity was low and they remained more expensive than Africans. Although the settlement of Portuguese convicts (*degradados*) was banned from 1882, overseers continued to be drawn from those already on the islands for many years.¹⁴⁴ And in the 1900s, William Cadbury commented on the large numbers of white 'gangers', often illiterate, who came from the poorest strata of rural Portugal.¹⁴⁵ In Príncipe island, poor white *empregados do mato* who fell ill had to be sent home through private charitable donations.¹⁴⁶ Cadbury commented on the appalling death rate among these people, which he blamed on unsatisfactory hygienic conditions, boredom and overwork. He even went so far as to say: 'There can be no doubt that the man who suffers most is the white overseer.'¹⁴⁷

The overall cost of white labour compared to that of black labour was remarkably high. In the early 1880s, white personnel were estimated to account for nearly half the total labour costs on a 10,000 hectare estate. The figures provided for black labour are clearly an underestimate, but even if one adopts more plausible estimates for black workers, the expenditures on

¹³⁸ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; K. Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika* (Zürich, 1970), p. 220.

¹³⁹ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 17, citing Masui; UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909; Muralha, *Terras*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁰ Velarde, *L'expansion politique*, p. 131.

¹⁴¹ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁴² UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁴³ Nogueira, *A Ilha*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁴ Nogueira, *A Ilha*, pp. 37, 95.

¹⁴⁵ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁴⁶ AHSTP, 1-a-C, 8, Governador Príncipe to Governador, 8.3.1909.

¹⁴⁷ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

white labour still came to about a third of the total expenses on labour.¹⁴⁸ By 1912–13, the detailed figures provided by Salvador Levy reveal about the same proportion spent on white labour. However, the whites on the plantations included not just overseers and administrators, but also skilled workers.¹⁴⁹ The problem of skilled labour is somewhat different from that of supervisory labour, and is briefly considered below.

During the inter-war years, there was a drastic decline in exports of cocoa from São Tomé and Príncipe and a contraction of the planted area, but there is considerable controversy over the precise role of high labour costs in this process. Explanations for the decline can be grouped under two headings, natural disasters and the relative inefficiency of plantations in a situation of falling world prices for cocoa.¹⁵⁰ The high real cost of labour was a crucial ingredient in this last explanation, but it was not the only one.

Natural disasters were often blamed for the decline of the cocoa plantations of São Tomé, but the argument is not very convincing. An insect known as the cocoa thrips devastated the plantations from 1916–19. The thrips proved more difficult to deal with on the islands than on the African mainland, where other organisms weakened the insect and controlled its ravages.¹⁵¹ Moreover, soil exhaustion was taking its toll by the First World War, contradicting earlier optimistic forecasts as to the inexhaustible fertility of the rich volcanic soils of the islands.¹⁵² But it was quite possible to find technical remedies to all these problems, and it is far from clear that they actually caused the decline of cocoa planting in São Tomé and Príncipe.¹⁵³

Growing competition from more efficient smallholders in a situation of steeply falling cocoa prices appears better to explain São Tomé's decline, as African smallholders in the Gold Coast (Ghana) and South-Western Nigeria conquered the world cocoa market.¹⁵⁴ The full extent of the collapse of cocoa prices was masked by the world-wide inflation caused by the First World War, but in real terms British import prices for raw cocoa by the mid-1920s were only just over a third of what they had been in 1900.¹⁵⁵ The plantation economy of São Tomé and Príncipe suffered from costs which were too high to be able to sustain competition from African smallholders.

¹⁴⁸ Nogueira, *A Ilha de S. Thomé*, p. 168. For better estimates of black labour costs, see Alexandre, *Origens*, pp. 173–74.

¹⁴⁹ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 106–07; my calculations.

¹⁵⁰ Portugal, Ministério das Colónias, *Primeira Conferência Económica do Império Colonial Português, Pareceres, Projectos de Decreto e Votos* (Lisbon, 1936), I, 126; M. Nunes Dias, 'O Cacau Luso-Brasileiro na Economia Mundial: Subsídios para a sua História', *Studia*, 8 (1961), 7–93.

¹⁵¹ C. J. J. van Hall, *Cacao* (London, 1932, second ed. of 1914 volume entitled *Cocoa*), p. 465; D. H. Urquhart, *Cocoa*, third edition (London, 1956), pp. 126–27.

¹⁵² Hall, *Cacao*, pp. 458–59.

¹⁵³ Velarde, *L'espansione politica*, pp. 139–43.

¹⁵⁴ Dias, 'O Cacau Luso-Brasileiro', *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization, *Cacao: A Review of Current Trends in Production, Prices and Consumption*, Commodity Series, Bulletin no. 27 (Rome, 1955), Table p. 93, for deflated prices.

Although the high real cost of unskilled labour lay at the heart of this lack of ability to compete, there were other factors in play, notably a reliance on large amounts of expensive credit.¹⁵⁶ In part, this was because the planters' labour costs were very 'front-ended' compared to those of smallholders, that is to say that large amounts of money had to be paid out before any cash was earned from the exertions of the labourers obtained. Much debt was thus contracted to secure a labour supply.¹⁵⁷ This was a particular problem for a planter laying out a new cocoa plantation, as cocoa takes such a long time to come into full production.¹⁵⁸ In addition, the price of land was pushed up by the small size of the islands and by land speculation, and these costs were also almost entirely 'front-ended'.¹⁵⁹

Over-mechanization and inappropriate technology contributed to high borrowing, and also led to the importation of expensive skilled labour. The wealth of machinery on the plantations was in stark contrast to the simplicity of smallholder production of cocoa on the African mainland. This was compounded by ill-adapted planting and processing techniques, notably the wide spacing of trees and mechanical drying, which raised inputs of both capital and labour markedly above those of African smallholders.¹⁶⁰ Substantial numbers of skilled white workers had to be paid high wages to be enticed out to these insalubrious islands to keep the machines going.¹⁶¹ The planters tried to find cheaper sources of skilled labour, but with little success. They turned first to Indians rather than to Africans, but the Indians were decimated by disease, and the experiment does not appear to have been repeated.¹⁶² The planters also tried to train more of their *serviçaes* as artisans, especially the children who were born on the plantations.¹⁶³

This is not to say that plantation production of cocoa is always and inherently less efficient than smallholder production, as some have alleged, but rather that coerced labour is fundamentally inefficient. The experience of Brazil in the 1930s and Malaysia in the 1980s shows that cocoa plantations can flourish when world market prices are at their lowest.¹⁶⁴ It was the specific way in which the Portuguese ran their plantations in São Tomé and Príncipe which made them uncompetitive. Mistakes in equipment

¹⁵⁶ UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁵⁷ Alexandre, *Origens*, pp. 172–73, citing Almada.

¹⁵⁸ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 99–100, 200.

¹⁵⁹ For the rise in price of Monte Café estate, *Commercio e Industria*, 18, 202, 1907; for land prices in general, Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 111.

¹⁶⁰ Hall, *passim*, for details.

¹⁶¹ Muralha, *Terras*, pp. 31–32, 52, 72.

¹⁶² AHSTP, 1-a-A, Caixa 348, Pasta 1, Curador Geral to Secretário Geral, 11.11.1905, and annexes. For white artisans' wages, Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, pp. 106–07.

¹⁶³ Sociedade de Emigração, *Relatório*, 1914, p. 70; UBL, CP, 299–300, W. Cadbury, Notebook 1909.

¹⁶⁴ C. Caldeira, *Fazendas de Cacau na Bahia* (Rio de Janeiro, 1954), pp. 29–30; W. Senftleben, *Die Kakaowirtschaft und Kakaopolitik in Malaysia* (Hamburg, 1988).

and technology, and the high cost of land and credit played a part in this, but it is argued here that the root cause of the inefficiency of the Portuguese plantations lay in their coercive labour system. Adam Smith may have been right after all to argue that free labour is always cheaper than slave labour.¹⁶⁵

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¹⁶⁵ For a general discussion, see D. Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987), Part I.