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## When Cape Slavery Ended: Evidence from a New Slave Emancipation Dataset

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# When Cape Slavery Ended: Evidence from a New Slave Emancipation Dataset

African Economic History Working Paper Series

No. 53/2020

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# When Cape Slavery Ended:

## Evidence from a New Slave Emancipation Dataset

Kate Ekama<sup>1</sup>, Johan Fourie<sup>2</sup>, Hans Heese<sup>3</sup> and Lisa Martin<sup>4</sup>

The emancipation of the enslaved across the British Empire in 1834 is one of the major events in world history. Slave-owners received cash compensation for freeing the enslaved. In the Cape Colony, appraisers assigned a value to the former slaves which was later used to calculate the compensation. We transcribed 37,412 valuation records and matched them to compensation claims to compile a novel emancipation dataset. Our analysis of these individual-level records gives us a new picture of the enslaved population in the Cape at the time of the emancipation. We highlight the nature and distribution of the Cape valuations, noting differences between districts in the enslaved and slave-owner populations. This new dataset not only allows us to ask new questions about an understudied period in South African history, but can illuminate broader discussions about the impact of slavery on economic development, in South Africa and beyond.

JEL Codes: N37, N27

Keywords: slavery, slave valuation, emancipation, compensation, British Empire, Cape Colony

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On 1 December 1834 the British Cape Colony's enslaved people were formally manumitted. While this date was and continues to be of great import, historians have long agreed that emancipation at the Cape was a process rather than a specific moment.<sup>5</sup> For the enslaved at the Cape 'there was not one emancipation but two.'<sup>6</sup> The first, in 1834, the date on which the Emancipation Act of 1833 was implemented in the Colony, ended formal slavery and from that time they were ostensibly free. The period of apprenticeship which followed formal slavery, however, was hardly distinguishable from what had come before. From 1834 to 1838 the former slaves continued to labour for their former masters, with no pay. Apprenticeship 'contracts' could be bought and sold, in much the same way that slaves had been bought and sold.<sup>7</sup> The second emancipation came on 1 December 1838 with the end of the apprenticeship period. From then on, the former slaves could move at will – that is, away from their former masters if they wished – and sell their labour to whomever they chose. But, apart from those who moved to mission stations, most had few options for employment beyond the type of work they had done when enslaved, and there was little or no opportunity for former slaves to purchase land.<sup>8</sup>

Emancipation, of course, affected slave-owners too. The move towards emancipation began early. Substantial legislative alterations to slavery across the British Empire were introduced in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In 1807, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act came into effect, making it illegal to import slaves and increasing the value of the existing enslaved people since no replacements would now be available. During the 1820s, the office of 'Guardian of Slaves' was introduced to, inter alia, ensure the fair treatment of slaves, and various other ameliorative measures were put in place. The legislation to effect these measures was passed in London and implemented at the Cape over several years. Cape slave-owners viewed these measures as an undesirable public incursion into their private affairs, and the emancipation likewise.<sup>9</sup>

Slave-owner grievances, and particularly those of the Afrikaner slave-owners, have been treated as very significant in South African history. Historians argue that dissatisfaction with emancipation and compensation were among the causes of the Great Trek, the series of out-migrations that transformed

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<sup>5</sup> R. Ross, "'Rather Mental than Physical': Emancipations and the Cape Economy', in N. Worden and C. Crais (eds), *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its Legacy in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> N. Worden, 'Indian Ocean Slavery and its Demise in the Cape Colony', in G. Campbell (ed.), *Abolition and Its Aftermath in the Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London, Routledge, 2005), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> N. Worden, 'Between Slavery and Freedom: The Apprenticeship Period, 1834–8', in Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*, pp. 117–44.

<sup>8</sup> Worden, 'Indian Ocean Slavery', p. 43; Ross, "'Rather Mental than Physical'" in Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*, pp. 145–67; J. Fourie, R. Ross and R. Viljoen, 'Literacy at South Africa Mission Stations', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40, 4 (2014), pp. 781–800. See also Worden, 'Indian Ocean Slavery', pp. 43–5.

<sup>9</sup> J. Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa* (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia Press, 2003), Chs 1 and 2.

nineteenth-century southern Africa. Out-migration began in the early 1830s and increased as the day approached when slavery would be abolished in the Colony.<sup>10</sup> An estimation often repeated is that Afrikaner slave-owners lost four-fifths of the value of their slave property in the process of emancipation and compensation, causing much discontent among them.<sup>11</sup>

In the following we first explain how cash compensation was paid to the Cape slave-owners. We then present our analysis of the slave valuation records that were generated by the appraisers in the months following 1 December 1834, which we have transcribed over the past decade. The paper introduces the dataset and provides the first overview of 37,412 slave valuations. As a *de facto* census of both slave-owners and the enslaved, our results, first, expose the heterogeneity within both groups. Because we observe the personal characteristics of the enslaved – their gender, age, occupation, and origin – we provide, for the first time, a detailed view of the demographic composition of this subjugated group. Although we have less information about slave-owners, our results also provide new insights into the size and distribution of slave-ownership across and within the Colony's districts. The dataset further allows us to calculate the variation between the valuation and cash compensation amounts. This negative shock, we posit, had important consequences, not only for the slave-owners but for the nature of capitalism at the Cape.

### **Expropriation with Partial Compensation**

That the former slave-owners would be compensated for the loss of their 'property' was by no means a foregone conclusion in the lead-up to 1834. The decision to compensate the slave-owners was the result of long-running discussions and debates in the British Parliament. Draper, Butler and others have shown how fraught the decision to award compensation was, and how difficult it was to decide how much to award. The argument for compensation was won by conflating property in the form of land with property in the form of people: if property was expropriated without compensation, the property rights regime in its entirety would crumble.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> J. Peires, 'The British and the Cape 1814–1834', in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds), *The Shaping of South African Society 1652–1840* (Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 1989), p. 505; C. F. J. Muller, *Die Oorsprong van die Groot Trek* (Pretoria, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Peires, 'The British and the Cape', p. 505.

<sup>12</sup> N. Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010); K. M. Butler, *The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados 1823–1843* (Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 7–24.

How did the process play out in the Cape Colony? In a 1959 thesis, B. J. Liebenberg examined the correspondence between the Compensation Commissioners in London and the assistant commissioners at the Cape, and between the assistant commissioners and the local appraisers in particular, to discover how the compensation process at the Cape worked. And it did work. In spite of their grumbling, slave-owners did indeed receive compensation for the freed slaves. Much of the grumbling, according to Liebenberg, was the fault of the assistant commissioners, who mismanaged the slave-owners' expectations of the level of compensation they would be awarded.<sup>13</sup> One of the enduring stories of the ending of slavery in the Cape Colony has been that of the diddled slave-owners who received so little compensation, far less than they expected. Their dissatisfaction was at least in part a consequence of misunderstanding the compensation process. They may not have grasped that compensation at the Cape was paid out *ad valorem*, not *per capita*, as Liebenberg points out.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Process of Appraisal*

The laborious task of appraising the slaveholdings was conducted across all 11 districts of the Cape Colony. The process was managed by assistant commissioners appointed by the compensation commissioners in London. The Cape Board of Commissioners consisted of Governor D'Urban, Attorney-General A. Oliphant, and six unofficial members: prominent Cape merchants Ewan Christian, William Gadney, H. A. Sandenbergh and P. M. Brink, money-lender J. J. L. Smuts, and D. J. Kuys.<sup>15</sup> That these men all met London's criterion of possessing 'a practical knowledge of slaves', which, according to D'Urban, 'you will not find except amongst persons who are themselves interested in that species of property', is borne out by the fact that they all received compensation as owners or mortgage holders themselves.<sup>16</sup> In appointing appraisers, these assistant commissioners were warned against filling the positions with men who had conflicts of interests in the district to which they were assigned. The London Commissioners said the appraisers should have no 'interest or connexion as may tend to bias their minds'.<sup>17</sup>

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

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<sup>13</sup> B. J. Liebenberg, *Die Vrystelling van die Slawe in die Kaapkolonie en die Implikasies Daarvan* (MA thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1959), Ch. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> *Supplement to the Government Gazette*, 14 August 1835; J. L. Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce and the Role of John Fairbairn's *Advertiser* (1835–1859)' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989), p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley to D'Urban, cited in Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce', pp. 55–6. Mortgage holders, with slaves as collateral, were also eligible for cash compensation, as we discuss below.

<sup>17</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', p. 132.

During 1835, or even later, the appraisers collected information on each enslaved person in order to classify them and then assigned a value to each individual. Lists of these slave appraisals are stored in the Cape Archives. Figure 1 shows an example from the district Graaff-Reinet, where J. P. Meintjies and W. T. Brown travelled from farm to farm doing appraisals. All the appraisers were paid for the work of valuing the slaves; in fact, Meintjies and Brown were among those who asked for a raise in their salary, having underestimated the extent of the task they had been assigned. The two pairs of appraisers for the outlying district of Beaufort also asked for a raise, citing the challenges they faced in travelling to appraise the enslaved during the Sixth Frontier War.<sup>18</sup>

The enslaved were categorised according to a system designed for the West Indies plantation slavery but less applicable to the Cape. They were first divided into two categories, praedial and non-praedial, and then those categories were subdivided into task- or skill-based groups, called ‘classes’, ranked according to status.<sup>19</sup> Children under the age of six and the elderly or incapacitated made up the final two classes. Once classified, each enslaved individual was assigned a monetary value which was supposed to be based on the average sale value of slaves at auction in the eight years from 1823 to 1830.<sup>20</sup> These average values were calculated from all available data on private and public sales of slaves and, it seems, were district-specific. The appraisers were instructed to use that information as their guide, and not current market value.

This process generated two sets of data for each class: the number of enslaved people in that class and their individual values. This is clear in Figure 1. Yet the plan was never to pay the owner the specific, individual value of each of his slaves in compensation but to use average slave values, calculated per class, as the basis for each owners’ portion of the compensation sum designated for the Cape Colony. The complicated relationship between the individual values and compensation to be paid out was probably never explained as clearly as it could or should have been.

Individual valuations of the enslaved were used to estimate the total value of the enslaved population across the colony, which come to some £3m. The value of all the enslaved in each class was also calculated. The relationship between the total appraised value and the value of each class set the pattern for apportioning the compensation money to each slave-owner. Decisions made in London set the value of the total compensation award to be granted to each British colony. The Cape Colony was apportioned

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<sup>18</sup> Liebenberg, ‘Die Vrystelling’, pp. 135 n. 19, 136–7.

<sup>19</sup> The term ‘praedial’ refers to the cultivation of land.

<sup>20</sup> Abolition Act, Article XLV, reprinted in *Government Gazette*, 10 January 1834.

just over £1.2m of the £20m fund. The £1,247,000 was divided between the classes according to the relationship of the total valuations to the class values, and then the compensation per class was divided by the number of enslaved people in that class.<sup>21</sup> That is, each slave-owner was to receive in compensation for each slave the average award for all slaves in the assigned class, not even the average appraised value, let alone the specific appraised value assigned to each slave in the appraisers' lists. For van Blerk, in Figure 1, this meant that he received £178 in compensation for the seven enslaved he owned at emancipation, who had been valued at £569 by the Cape appraisers.

The method of calculation used, which Liebenberg frankly calls unfair, led to at least two perverse, surely unexpected, outcomes. The first was at the class level. In one class, those designated as 'head people on wharfs' were given a lower average value than 'inferior people on wharfs', which was surely an inversion of the logic behind the categorisation. This led to the compensation paid out for slaves in the 'inferior' class being higher than for those in the 'head' class.<sup>22</sup> The second perverse outcome was due to the use of averages to determine the amount to be paid out, which resulted in some slave-owners receiving *more* compensation than the specific, individual appraised value of their slaves. Liebenberg cites examples of complaints about the way owners of low-value slaves profited from the compensation process while owners of high-value slaves lost out.<sup>23</sup>

### *Claiming Compensation*

All those who were legal owners of enslaved people as of 1 December 1834 were entitled to claim compensation from the British Government. This required a fair amount of paperwork. Firstly, claims had to be submitted to the assistant commissioners with proof of ownership of the enslaved individuals for whom compensation was claimed. Staff at the offices helped claimants to complete the forms correctly, and some claimants hired attorneys to complete their claims on their behalf. Once claims had been submitted, the assistant commissioners published lists of claimants in the Government Gazette in order to give counter-claimants an opportunity to contest the claims. These lists were published by district beginning in April 1835.<sup>24</sup> The publication did not necessarily mean that conflict or dispute was expected; it was rather to give those who claimed a portion of the value of enslaved people they did not own the opportunity to make this known officially. Counter-claimants were generally mortgage holders who had offered credit to slave-owners on slave collateral. Both the contested and uncontested claims were forwarded to the commissioners in London for processing. There was a strong incentive for the

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<sup>21</sup> Draper, *The Price of Emancipation*, Ch 2; Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', p. 130–56; Abolition Act, Article XLV, *Government Gazette*, 10 January 1834.

<sup>22</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', p. 148–9. He shows that the difference in average value was over £2.

<sup>23</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> *Government Gazette* no 1530, 17 April 1835.



claimants to accept the counter-claims without dispute – those that were disputed went to the bottom of the pile, to be considered in London only when the uncontested claims had been processed.

All the claims that were collected in the colonies, including the Cape Colony, were processed by the National Debt Office in London, where payment had to be collected. This was convenient for the absentee slave-owners from the Caribbean colonies but frustrating for the Cape slave-owners, almost all of whom lived in the Colony.

Claiming compensation involved a number of costs, such as the fee for submitting the claim and the fees for agents to collect the money. Cape slave-owners employed agents both at the Cape and in London. The agents, who were either individuals or firms, could be used in three ways: to buy up claims; to work on commission, or to exchange claims for goods.<sup>25</sup> According to Hengherr, most slave-owners chose the first option, to sell their claims to agents, especially during 1836 when news reached the Cape that compensation would be paid in London only.<sup>26</sup> Slave-owners who engaged Cape agents on commission paid them approximately 2.5% of the value of the claim; London agents commanded a higher commission, in the region of 7 to 10% . When the various other costs were included, a slave-owner who used an agent faced spending a considerable portion of his potential payment just on making the claim. Those who sold their claims to agents probably lost between 5 and 25% of the estimated value of their slave property in costs.<sup>27</sup> These costs must have made claiming unfeasible for the many slave-owners who had only one or two slaves. They were more likely to sell their claims to agents, even at a discount, or exchange them for goods.

Slave-owners were not the only group entitled to compensation. Since creditors at the Cape had long accepted enslaved people as collateral on loans, mortgagees were entitled to compensation too. The practice of mortgaging slaves had existed from as early as the 1730s and continued into the nineteenth century. Mortgaging is sometimes considered an indicator of poverty, on the assumption that debt is undesirable and will be avoided if at all possible by those with the financial wherewithal to do so. This was not necessarily the case in the Cape Colony. Land and enslaved people at the Cape were used as collateral for loans, to help manage and develop credit networks in the Colony.<sup>28</sup> These networks were

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<sup>25</sup> E. Hengherr, 'Emancipation – And After: A Study of Cape Slavery and the Issues Arising from it, 1830–1843' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1953), p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Hengherr, 'Emancipation – And After', p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> H. Heese, *Van Amsterdam tot Zeeland: Slawestand tot Middestand? 'n Stellenbosse Slawegeschiedenis, 1697–1834* (Stellenbosch, SUN Press, 2016), p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> C. Swanepoel and J. Fourie, "'Impending Ruin" or "Remarkable Wealth"? The Role of Private Credit Markets in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Cape Colony', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 44, 1, (2018), pp.7–25. See also Hengherr, 'Emancipation – And After', and W. Dooling, *Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule in South Africa* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007).

not for the poor only; in fact, credit networks were strongest between those considered part of the landed elite. In 1834, slave mortgages were valued at £400,000.<sup>29</sup> The extent to which this practice had an impact after emancipation has not been studied in detail.<sup>30</sup>

## The Records

The compensation process generated vast quantities of records in the Cape Colony. These are preserved in the Cape Town Cape Archive and, to a lesser extent, in other repositories such as the National Library. These include valuation statements, mortgage rolls, official and personal correspondence, Government Gazette notices and newspaper articles.

Spreadsheet type records were drawn up in which the appraisers categorised all the slaves in the Colony, and assigned a value in pounds, shillings and pence to each one. These records tell us far more than the bare details might suggest. They are, in essence, a complete census of slave-ownership in 1834 and tell us much about the enslaved population of the time. Some records include details such as an enslaved person's place of origin, maternal lineage (for example, 'Sara, daughter of Dina van de Kaap'), precise date of birth if young and Cape-born, and occupation or skill.

Many letters were written about the process of valuation and compensation. Correspondence between commissioners and appraisers and between the commissioners at the Cape and their colleagues in London has been preserved. From the latter it is clear that the Cape Colony commissioners felt no sense of urgency about conducting the process on London's timeline, to the frustration of the commissioners in London.<sup>31</sup> The Cape Colony process was slow, in part because of the problems of appointing appraisers and the slowness and poor quality of their work.

The failure and corruption of the process in the district of George brings these issues to the fore. In George the field cornets (heads of the militia, with increasing civil functions) were appointed as appraisers. These prominent men in the district, who held civil office and were slave-owners themselves, inflated their valuations in the hope of benefiting their neighbours. It was Joseph Barry, a prominent figure appointed as an appraiser in Swellendam, who informed the assistant commissioners. The commissioners decided that a re-valuation was necessary, for which appraisers for the other districts who had already completed their task put in tenders, specifying their desired salary. Joseph Barry's

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<sup>29</sup> Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce'.

<sup>30</sup> Dooling (*Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule*), is one of the few who have done detailed analysis of mortgage records in the Cape Town deeds office.

<sup>31</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling'.

tender was refused. Two appraisers who had worked on the Stellenbosch valuations, Wykerd and Faure, were given the job of reappraising all the slaves in George, much to the anger of the George slave-owners.<sup>32</sup>

The whole abolition and compensation process, unsurprisingly, stirred up strong feelings in the Cape Colony and these were frequently expressed in the Cape newspaper articles and editorials. The *South African Commercial Advertiser*, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* and the *Graham's Town Journal* all recorded the voices of the people involved: opponents, proponents, aggrieved slave-owners, abolitionists, prophets of economic doom, compensation agents, and slave-owners offering rewards for the capture of runaways.<sup>33</sup> The weekly official *Government Gazette* was used by the Cape authorities to notify slave-owners of the processes they should follow to claim compensation, and to keep them informed of decisions made in London and locally that would affect them.<sup>34</sup> The *Gazette* was thus an important part of the process. Agents made use of it and the newspapers to solicit clients. There were at least a dozen firms offering services as middlemen.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Emancipation Dataset**

In 2010, Hans Heese, then archivist of Stellenbosch University, was appointed by the Stellenbosch Museum to transcribe the list of slave appraisals for the Stellenbosch district. The study that emerged from this project was published in 2016. The slave data, with 8,450 individual entries, were included in Excel format on a CD that formed an integral part of the report.<sup>36</sup>

He next transcribed the lists from the other districts of the Colony. Not all the lists had survived, so some had to be reconstructed from other series of documents in the Cape Archives, such as the slave registers of individual owners for the period 1816–1834. The slave appraisal lists and the slave registers complement each another. For example, the Stellenbosch appraisal list omits the place of origin but this can be found in the slave register. Conflating the information from the two sources produced a new, more complete, dataset.

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<sup>32</sup> Liebenberg, 'Die Vrystelling', pp. 142–5.

<sup>33</sup> For example, *Die Zuid Afrikaan*, 28 March 1834, pp. 5–6, and 23 May 1843, p. 5; *Government Gazette*, 25 January 1833; *Graham's Town Journal*, 4 August 1836, p. 1. On the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in particular see Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Commerce'.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance the *Supplement to the Government Gazette*, 14 August 1835, which explained how to claim compensation.

<sup>35</sup> K. Ekama, 'Profiting from Slavery after Abolition: Emancipation and the Business of Compensation in the Cape Colony' (unpublished paper, Stellenbosch, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Heese, *Van Amsterdam tot Zeeland*.

A major problem arose when it was found that the appraisal lists for two of the 11 Cape Colony districts – Clanwilliam and Swellendam – were either missing or wrongly filed in the Cape Archives. We thus had to search the slave registers to find all the slaves who were still alive and listed on the rolls in 1834. Comparing the information on individual slaves for the other nine districts from the two different datasets, we found that a reconstruction based only on the slave registers was indeed accurate. In our two reconstructed appraisal lists the values of the individual slaves are missing.

However, the total value of the compensation paid to the slave-owner, as recorded in the British Parliamentary papers in the University College London *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* online database, has been added to each slave-owner in the reconstructed appraisal list. These total compensation values cannot be disaggregated into individual slave valuations and therefore do not replace the missing values in our dataset.

Table 1 compares the number of enslaved people at emancipation as calculated by Liebenberg and by us. We counted more male slaves in the Cape district, and Liebenberg counted almost 2,000 more names. It is unclear why some of our numbers differ by 10%, as in the case of Stellenbosch. Our numbers were further reduced when we removed all the observations that lacked sufficient information to enable us to analyse them systematically. Our final total was 36,315 individual slave observations. Of those observations where gender was listed, 55% were male.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The UCL *Legacies* database, launched in 2013, contains the details of compensation paid to slave-owners across the entire British Empire, extracted from the contemporary records of Parliament in London.<sup>37</sup> Unsurprisingly, the *Legacies* database focuses on the slave-owners to whom compensation was paid; the enslaved themselves are invisible in the records, apart from the number of them in each claim. One drawback of this rich source of information, especially as far as the Cape Colony entries are concerned, is the British officials' misspelling of many Dutch names, which caused serious 'lost in translation' mistakes. Nevertheless, the *Legacies* database remains a reliable source for historians and offers a quick way to verify economic data about individual slave-owners and the number of slaves for whom they were compensated.

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<sup>37</sup> The database is available at [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs). *British Parliamentary Papers*, Slave Trade, Sessions 1837–1841, Volume 87, Irish University Press Series, Dublin, 1969.

In January 2018 another source became available when the Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City added to their genealogical website the Cape slave records they had photographed two decades earlier in Cape Town.<sup>38</sup> From this date onward we accessed all the relevant slave records via their website.

## The Evidence

By the end of 2019, compilation of the slave appraisal lists had been completed. The full dataset consists of 36,315 enslaved people who belonged to 6,087 slave-owners. In this section we provide the descriptive statistics of these populations of slaves and slave-owners.

The records include information about the name of each enslaved person, their gender and their age, and, for most districts, information about their origin and their occupation, and the value assigned to each slave. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the categories by district, showing the number of observations and, where applicable, the mean and median.

[INSERT TABLE 2A and 2B HERE]

The individual-level information made it possible to compare the distribution of various characteristics. Figure 2 shows the age pyramid of the enslaved, by sex. Although 45% of all the enslaved are female, they are heavily weighted at the bottom of the pyramid, demonstrating that a large proportion of them were girls and young women. The men are also weighted at the bottom, but also have a large proportion of 40- and 50-year olds. The medians also reflect youthfulness: the women have a median age of 18 and the men a median of 25. Shell notes that ‘until 1808 the Cape district, which included the port, still contained the imported (predominantly male) slaves, boosting the percentage of males in the slave population in that area’.<sup>39</sup> It could be that the larger number of older men in the dataset reflects the preference for male slave arrivals before the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, almost three decades before emancipation.

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<sup>38</sup> See for example the Swellendam District list of enslaved individuals by owner, 1834: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91S-RTD6?i=272>

<sup>39</sup> Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838* (Hanover, University Press of New England, 1994), p. 156.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Occupation is frequently recorded in the appraisal lists. We classified each of the 126 occupations into HISCO (historical international standard classification of occupations) codes which are designed to rank and compare occupations across time and space.<sup>40</sup> Despite concerns that the codes do not reflect the context accurately, they remain a valuable tool for documenting occupations, including in South Africa, where the codes have been used before.<sup>41</sup> We classified all the slave occupations into eight categories: labourer, transport, artisanal, agriculture, domestic service, clerical/sales, management, and invalids or children. Figure 3 shows the occupation codes for the eight districts that recorded slaves' occupations. Substantial differences between the districts are immediately noticeable. Clanwilliam, Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet, for example, recorded a higher proportion of labourers, and Albany, Uitenhage and the Cape district a higher proportion of domestic servants. This may reflect differences in the gender ratios of the districts or, perhaps, differences in urbanisation, with household duties being more important in the towns. Shell says male slaves 'were nearly always kept outside of the home in the early eighteenth century' but that 'this pattern had changed in the second half of the eighteenth century', and our data support this.<sup>42</sup> We find that 21.41% of those in domestic service were men, suggesting that domestic service had become less gendered by the time of emancipation than it had been a century earlier.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Of the other occupations, our dataset shows that 1,231 enslaved people were classified as artisans, 555 worked in clerical jobs and sales, and 102 were in management. The artisanal category includes tanners, brewers, shoemakers, seamstresses, sawyers and hatters, the clerical and sales category includes coachmen and fruit sellers, and the management category includes overseers. While the numbers in

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<sup>40</sup> M. H. Van Leeuwen, I. Maas and A. Miles, 'Creating a Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations: An Exercise in Multinational Interdisciplinary Cooperation', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 37, 4 (2004), pp. 186–97.

<sup>41</sup> J. Cilliers, and J. Fourie, 'Occupational Mobility during South Africa's Industrial Take-Off', *South African Journal of Economics* 86, 1 (2018), pp. 3–22.

<sup>42</sup> Shell, *Children of Bondage*, p. 161.

these occupations are small, they do suggest some upward social mobility was possible for a person who was still formally in bondage.

Finally, Figure 3 also shows that the Cape district and, in particular, Worcester recorded a high proportion of children or invalids. Why the number for Worcester was so much higher than that of the other rural districts is unclear.

The emancipation dataset also includes enslaved people's place of origin. Because the official, legally sanctioned, international slave trade ended in 1807, by 1834 most Cape slaves were Cape-born, that is, they were born to slave mothers and inherited their slave status from birth. Of the 29,269 enslaved people for whom origin was recorded, 15.08% were born outside the borders of the Colony. The four places of origin that appear most frequently in the appraisal lists are the Cape Colony (83.07%), Mozambique (12.06%), Madagascar (1.07%) and Bengal (0.86%). Figure 4 provides a map of these regions.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

Shell notes that there was a system of premiums based on the slaves' place of origin. He found that male slaves from Indonesia fetched the highest price, 'confirming the travellers' stereotype of the skilled Malay or Asian craftsperson', followed by creole slaves (those born at the Cape), slaves from the Eastern colonial possessions and then slaves from Madagascar.<sup>43</sup>

To test this finding using our dataset, we ran an ordinary least squares estimation with the logarithmic value of the enslaved as the dependent variable and the age, sex and origin as independent variables. Although there were several other factors we could have included, we chose to keep the estimation as simple as possible. The results are reported in Table 3.

We found the expected relationship between age and value, and also between gender and value: women were apparently considered 20% less valuable than men. Our finding for place of origin and value, however, was in sharp contrast to Shell's. We found that slaves from south-east Asia as valued in 1834 had the lowest value, conditional on gender and age. The three regional groups with a statistically significant coefficient were the south-east Asian slaves (40% less valuable than Cape-born slaves), south Asian slaves (21% less) and slaves from other parts of southern Africa (29% less). This finding may

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<sup>43</sup> Shell, *Children of Bondage*, p. 50.

point to a small-sample bias in the Shell sample or a large change over time in the underlying characteristics or attitudes between the date of the sample Shell analysed and the date of emancipation.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

One category that is often overlooked – but one that is often the most complete – is slave names. Shell contended that

one might think that naming slaves might have reflected conscious – if jocular and harmless – references to patriarchal or imperial patrician life-styles, which the slaves made possible, but there was actually a more sinister logic to the choice of Cape slave names. Naming slaves was a domestic ruse to diminish the dignity of slaves in daily life and to establish differences among slave groups.<sup>44</sup>

Hattingh, however, notes that many slaves may have received their Western names before arrival at the Cape.<sup>45</sup>

We improved on the nine types of names identified by Shell, classifying them instead into 12 categories. Shell identified Old Testament, Protestant, Catholic, Classical, Calendar, Toponym, Facetious, Muslim and Indigenous names; we have combined Shell's first three categories into one Biblical category; and have added Dutch, English and European categories; diminutive names; and occupation-related names, amongst others. Like Shell, we have identified Classical names such as Apollo, Toponym or geographical names such as Amsterdam and Afrika, and facetious names, for instance Geduld and Fortuin. Figure 5 shows all 12 categories, by district. There were no large variations across districts. Dutch names were the most popular, followed by either European or Biblical names. Shell said 25% of the names were 'classical', but we found only 3.8% were of this kind. This may be because of the difference in date and size between his sample and our dataset.

[INSERT FIGURE 5]

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<sup>44</sup> Shell, *Children of Bondage*, p. 240.

<sup>45</sup> J. L. Hattingh, 'Naamgewing aan Slawe, Vryswartes en Ander Gekleurdes', *Kronos*, 6 (1983), pp. 5–20.



### *Slave-Owners*

The appraisal lists were, of course, compiled for the purposes of compensating the slave-owners. For that reason, they also include the owner's personal information, including name and surname and, in most cases, their farm name. By matching these records to the *Legacies* database, we were able to determine the total amount of compensation each owner received. This information, available only per slave-owner and not per slave, enabled us to calculate the difference between the value of the slaves as determined by the appraiser and the amount of compensation paid out in London. Table 4 provides a summary.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

We calculate the total compensation across all 11 districts to be £1,070,891. That is 14% less than the £1,247,000 allocated to the Cape. Although the reasons for the discrepancy is unknown, we can imagine three plausible explanations. First, our dataset may not include all slave-owner compensations; as mentioned earlier, we report fewer names than Liebenberg. Second, the difference could be attributed to unclaimed compensation payments. Third, the difference may be the result of the fees accruing to the interlopers and agents in the process of compensation payments. We hope to explore the reasons for this sizeable shortfall in future work.

Table 4 also reveals large differences between districts in the appraised values. For example, the mean value of an enslaved person in Uitenhage was more than double the mean for Worcester. We also found large differences between districts in the discrepancy between the value and the compensation received. 157 Beaufort slave-owners received £1,531 less in compensation than the appraised value of the enslaved, whereas 949 slave-owners in Stellenbosch received £413,206 less, the latter representing far more extensive losses. Stellenbosch slave-owners' relative losses were also greater than Cape District slave-owners where the 1,935 owners received £311,491 in compensation for the enslaved who had been valued at £360,498, a difference of £49,007. One reason these differences are so large is because of the arbitrary taxonomy of slave categories that was largely based on the model of West Indian slave plantations.

The large differences between the appraised value of the slaves and the compensation received would inevitably have had different effects on the slave-owners' futures. Apart from land, slave wealth was the most important asset class for many at the Cape. Being a more liquid asset than land, the enslaved were frequently used as collateral, as the mortgage records show. Because enslaved people were so widely owned, their distribution across the Colony provides a useful indication of the wealth inequality in the Colony. Although this measure has been used for wealth inequality estimates in the eighteenth century, to the best of our knowledge it has not been used for the early nineteenth century.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

Figure 6 shows the Lorenz curve for slave-owners. The figure ranks slave-owners from poorest to richest in terms of slave valuations on the x-axis and shows the share of the total slave wealth on the y-axis. The figure shows the large variation across districts. A first observation is that slave wealth was unequally distributed; in all the districts, the richest 25% of slave-owners owned more than 50% of the slave wealth. The Lorenz curve also enables us to calculate a Gini coefficient for each district. The average Gini coefficient is 0.58, a number very much in line with the Gini coefficients calculated for wealth in the eighteenth century by Fourie and von Fintel.<sup>46</sup> The inequality of the early Cape Colony seems to have persisted into the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Both Figure 6 and Table 4 reveal large differences in slave valuation by district: in Uitenhage, for example, the Gini coefficient was a fairly low 0.47, while in Beaufort it was a high 0.69.

We also compared the inequality of the valuations with the inequality of the compensation. We found that the inequality of the latter was greater than that of the former. The effect was particularly felt by those at the bottom of the distribution, the poorest farmers. This not only supports recent work that documents the long-term negative consequences for slave-owners that resulted from the emancipation of the enslaved,<sup>48</sup> but alludes to the ways in which the Cape economy was transformed by the process of emancipation and payments of compensation. The largest capital owners before emancipation – the

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<sup>46</sup> J. Fourie and D. Von Fintel, 'The Dynamics of Inequality in a Newly Settled, Pre-Industrial Society: The Case of the Cape Colony', *Cliometrica*, 4, 3 (2010), pp. 229–67.

<sup>47</sup> J. Fourie and D. Von Fintel, 'A History with Evidence: Income Inequality in the Dutch Cape Colony', *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 26, 1 (2011), pp. 16–48.

<sup>48</sup> I. Martins, J. Cilliers and J. Fourie, 'Legacies of Loss: The Intergenerational Outcomes of Slaveholder Compensation in the British Cape Colony', Working Paper 197 (2019), Lund University, Department of Economic History.

slave-owners and the mortgage owners – lost substantial amounts as a result of the compensation payment system. The merchants of Cape Town, who facilitated the payment system, seem to have been the biggest beneficiaries. Emancipation and compensation of the 1830s shifted capitalism from the countryside to the city.

## Conclusion

The emancipation of the enslaved population of the Cape Colony in 1834 and, after the period of apprenticeship, finally in 1838, must be considered as one of the most important economic and social events in South African history. We present a new dataset of the enslaved and slave-owners at emancipation, the culmination of more than a decade's transcription effort. The slave emancipation records were not only fully transcribed but also matched to the cash compensation that was paid to slave-owners in London. By offering new evidence about the size, nature and diversity of the emancipation experience, such a rich dataset contributes to what has been described as the data revolution in African economic history and the cliometric turn in South African history.<sup>49</sup> It provides not just hard numbers, but also material for qualitative research into aspects of slavery at the Cape, such as naming conventions, gender relations, occupational structures and geographic origins.

There are at least three research directions worth pursuing in future. The first is to understand the financial repercussions of the compensation payments. The severe shortfall between the valuation and compensation amount received experienced by many former slave-owners must have resulted in bankruptcies, foreclosures and, consequently, output losses. What did farmers use the compensation for? Did they reinvest in productive assets like property and irrigation or spend it on consumables or luxuries? What were the effects on imports and exports?<sup>50</sup> What happened to exchange rates with so much specie flowing into the Colony? The economic consequences of emancipation, at a micro and macro level and in the short and long-run, remain poorly understood.

A second direction worth pursuing is to establish what these new facts tell us about Cape slavery. According to Shell,

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<sup>49</sup> Fourie, J. 'The data revolution in African economic history', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 47, 2 (2016), pp. 193-212; Fourie, J. 'Cliometrics in South Africa', *Studies in Economics and Econometrics*, 42, 2 (2018), pp. 1-13.

<sup>50</sup> D. Bijsterbosch and J. Fourie, 'Coffee, Slavery and a Tax Loophole: Explaining the Cape Colony's Trading Boom, 1834-1841', *South African Historical Journal* (2020), pp.1-23.

an important analytical point for understanding Cape slavery in this period is that the primary distinctions between slaveholdings were not only between urban and rural, but also among types of slaveholdings. The differing proportions of slaves from different origins within these types of holdings shows that the division of labour was based on gender, racial descent, creole status, and geographical origins. All Cape slaves were kept in small distributions, and slave women were in the domestic environment while slave men were outside. Patterns of domestic dependency, although they changed somewhat, remained highly gender-based. *Establishing distributions is the key to unlocking the secrets of any slave society.*<sup>51</sup>

We believe the rich, individual-level information available in this new dataset can help unlock these secrets.

The other, perhaps more important, research direction is to investigate life after slavery. The emancipation dataset records information of the enslaved that has not been available before. Matching these individual-level attributes with information from other post-emancipation records, like mission station censuses or city registers, could provide fascinating insights into the post-emancipation experience. We know, for example, little about the social mobility of the formerly enslaved beyond 1838. Where did they move to? Whom did they marry? What did they do and how did they adjust to their new freedom? Why, for example, did some even prosper, though bearing the scars of slavery? The emancipation dataset can help us to explain these divergent personal and social trajectories after enslavement.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Robert Ross and Di Kilpert for suggestions on earlier versions of this paper. We also acknowledge the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through the Biography of an Uncharted People project ([www.unchartedpeople.org](http://www.unchartedpeople.org)), the Stellenbosch University Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences' ELITE fund, and the South African National Research Foundation. These three funding sources have made transcription of archival records and compilation of the emancipation dataset possible.

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<sup>51</sup> Shell, *Children of Bondage*, p. 170. Our emphasis.

# Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Slave valuation record of slave-owner Petrus Jacobus van Blerk, of Graaff-Reinet

Name of Slave	Age and Sex	Physical condition							Remarks	Observations
		Head	Neck	Arms	Legs	Back	Stomach	Feet		
Anna	29								278	
20/10									180	Handsome, healthy
Adrianus	24	✓							180	Labourer
24/10									112	Handsome (10)
24/10									60	
24/10									1	7 30
24/10									1	7 22
24/10									1	7 5
24/10									349	
24/10									120	Handsome, healthy
24/10									140	Labourer
24/10									260	
24/10									232	Handsome (10)
24/10									130	Handsome
24/10									140	Labourer, healthy
24/10									1	37.10
24/10									1	28
24/10									1	22
24/10									649	Handsome, healthy
24/10									4102	

Source: Western Cape Archive and Record Service, Cape Town, Slave Office 20/10 Emancipation records for Graaff-Reinet.

Table 1: Comparison of statistics of slave population, by district, according to Liebenberg (1959) and the new dataset

	<b>Liebenberg</b>			<b>EFHM Emancipation Dataset</b>				
<b>District Name</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total (Cleaned)</b>	<b>Total (Original)</b>
<b>Albany</b>	95	118	213	101	116	217	221	221
<b>Beaufort</b>	299	290	589	264	249	513	530	530
<b>Cape</b>	6,965	5,252	12,217	7,122	5,220	12,342	12,371	12,372
<b>Clanwilliam</b>	679	630	1,309	773	724	1,497	1,502	1,502
<b>George</b>	1,207	1,161	2,368	1,171	995	2,166	2,186	2,186
<b>Graaff Reinet</b>	1,283	1,032	2,315	1,187	982	2,169	2,185	2,185
<b>Somerset</b>	925	892	1,817	869	799	1,668	1,668	1,681
<b>Stellenbosch</b>	5,465	3,985	9,450	4,442	3,344	7,786	8,061	8,451
<b>Swellendam</b>	1,978	1,754	3,732	1,942	1,740	3,682	3,704	3,704
<b>Uitenhage</b>	727	672	1,399	656	622	1,278	1,316	1,316
<b>Worcester</b>	1,990	1,622	3,612	1,625	1,372	2,997	3,264	3,264
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,613</b>	<b>17,408</b>	<b>39,021</b>	<b>20,152</b>	<b>16,163</b>	<b>36,315</b>	<b>37,008</b>	<b>37,412</b>

Table 2A: Summary statistics of enslaved population, by district

District Name	Number Male	Number Female	%F	Mean age (years)	Median age (years)	Range age (years)	Unique origins	Unique occupations	Mode HISCO
Albany	101	116	54	25,4	21	79	NA	19	5
Beaufort	264	249	49	27,0	24	86	8	NA	NA
Cape	7,122	5,220	42	29,2	26	97	43	110	0
Clanwilliam	773	724	48	20,7	16	102	10	24	5
George	1,171	995	46	23,5	19	95	3	NA	NA
Graaff Reinet	1,187	982	45	26,6	22	97	NA	41	5
Somerset	869	799	48	25,4	22	87	17	25	5
Stellenbosch	4,442	3,344	43	26,5	23	97	20	NA	NA
Swellendam	1,942	1,740	47	18,9	14	86	15	27	0
Uitenhage	656	622	49	25,0	22	86	16	25	5
Worcester	1,625	1,372	46	24,1	20	91	13	32	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,152</b>	<b>16,163</b>	<b>45</b>						

Table 2B: Summary statistics of enslaved valuations, by district

District Name	Mean value (£)	Median value (£)	Range value (£)
Albany	80,0	75,0	225,0
Beaufort	55,8	45,0	188,0
Cape	78,9	77,1	202,1
Clanwilliam	NA	NA	NA
George	93,3	97,1	262,1
Graaff Reinet	98,5	110,0	250,0
Somerset	96,4	105,0	210,0
Stellenbosch	86,9	90,0	259,8
Swellendam	NA	NA	NA
Uitenhage	109,7	120,0	225,0
Worcester	50,5	30,0	150,0

Figure 2: Age distribution, by gender, of Cape Colony enslaved population, 1834.

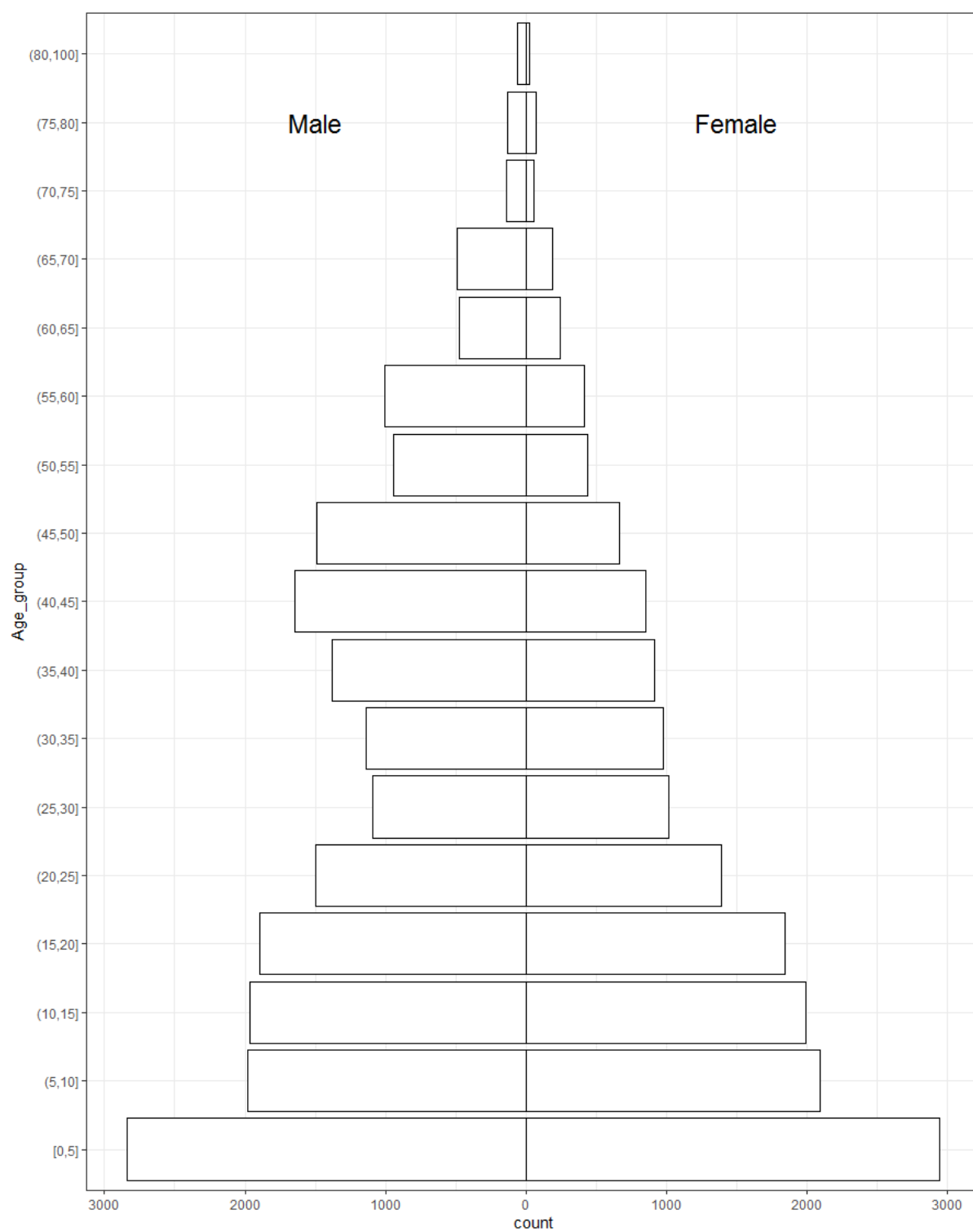
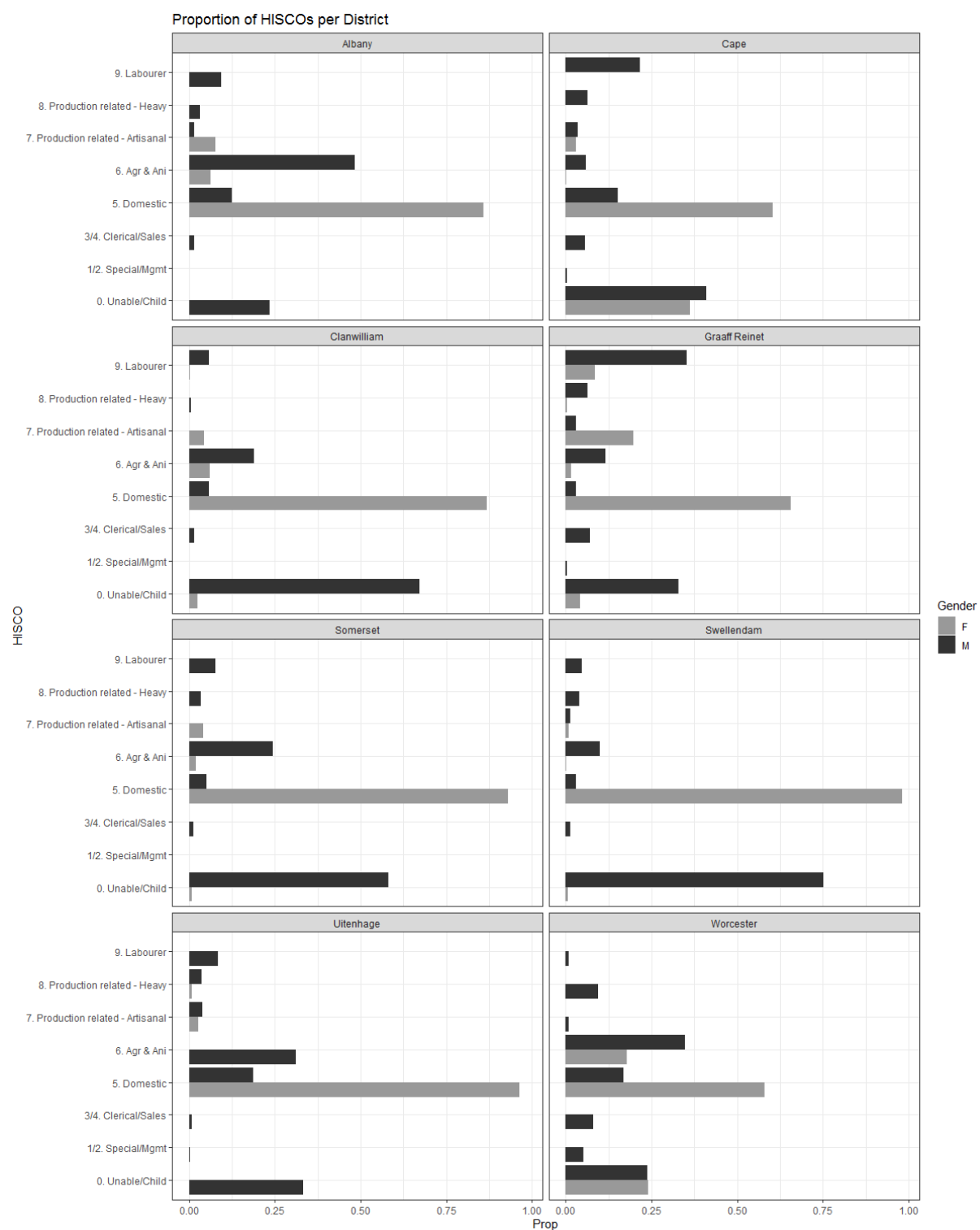


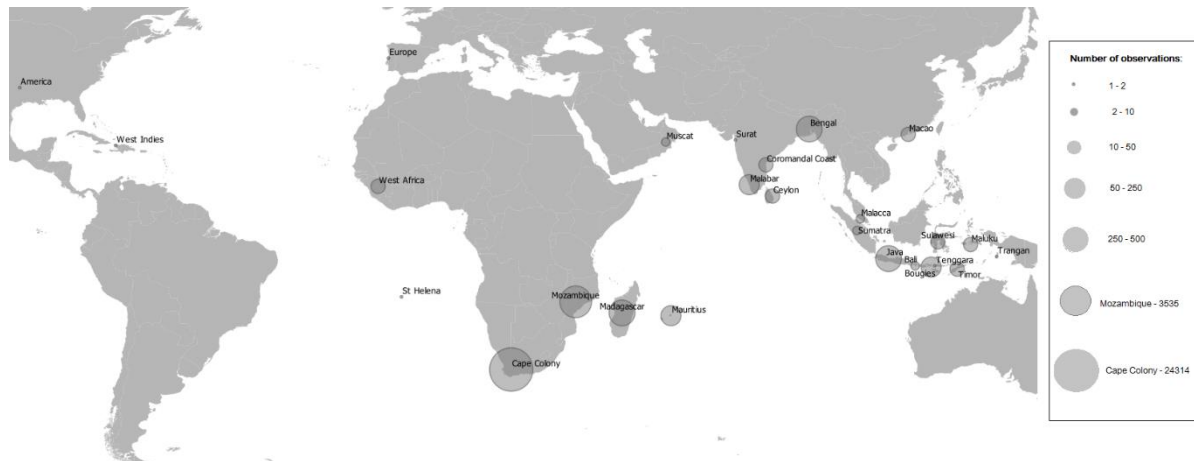


Figure 3: Breakdown of slave occupations, by district, 1834



Note: Beaufort, George and Stellenbosch valuation records did not include occupation.

Figure 4: Origins of the enslaved population at the Cape, 1834



Note: The size of the dots shows the relative size of the slave population at the Cape who originated from the labelled areas.

Table 3: OLS regression with the log valuation as dependent variable

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Sin_Valuation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Age	0.147*** (0.001)	0.148*** (0.001)	0.149*** (0.001)
Age_2	-0.002*** (0.00001)	-0.002*** (0.00001)	-0.002*** (0.00001)
Gender	-0.176*** (0.009)	-0.180*** (0.010)	-0.180*** (0.010)
Origin_SouthernAfricaCape		0.253*** (0.018)	
Origin_SouthernAfricaNonCape			-0.259*** (0.019)
Origin_WestAfrica			-0.470 (0.300)
Origin_EastAsia			-0.018 (0.212)
Origin_SouthAsia			-0.053 (0.050)
Origin_SouthEastAsia			-0.396*** (0.054)
Origin_Other			0.351 (0.424)
Constant	3.363*** (0.011)	3.056*** (0.022)	3.307*** (0.012)
Observations	21,219	14,315	14,315
R <sup>2</sup>	0.668	0.682	0.683
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.668	0.682	0.682
Residual Std. Error	0.611 (df = 21215)	0.600 (df = 14310)	0.599 (df = 14305)
F Statistic	14,227.090*** (df = 3; 21215)	7,672.734*** (df = 4; 14310)	3,419.823*** (df = 9; 14305)
<i>Note:</i>			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 5: Slave naming patterns by district, 1834



Note: Bars represent proportion of enslaved population on the x-axis and name categories on y-axis.

Table 4: Summary statistics of slave-owners, by district

District Name	Number of Owners	Male Enslaved	Female Enslaved	Gini	Total value (£)	Mean value (£)	Total compensation (£)	Mean compensation (£)	Difference (£)
Albany	65	101	116	0,50	15,114.4	80.0	5,998.5	105.2	9,115.8
Beaufort	157	264	249	0,69	14,574.9	55.8	13,043.1	130.4	1,531.7
Cape	1,935	7,122	5,220	0,87	360,498.2	78.9	311,491.1	364.7	49,007.1
Clanwilliam	217	773	724	1,00	NA	NA	38,605.0	202.1	NA
George	362	1,171	995	0,49	198,696.3	93.3	63,082.9	188.3	135,613.4
Graaff-Reinet	534	1,187	982	0,47	212,545.8	98.5	77,071.6	161.6	135,474.2
Somerset	402	869	799	0,45	157,920.5	96.4	59,057.2	153.4	98,863.3
Stellenbosch	949	4,442	3,344	0,54	673,658.6	86.9	260,451.9	298.3	413,206.7
Swellendam	756	1,942	1,740	0,99	NA	NA	88,195.7	175.0	NA
Worcester	418	1,625	1,372	0,67	189,098.2	50.5	111,651.3	287.8	77,446.9
Uitenhage	292	656	622	0,54	123,331.6	109.7	42,242.7	175.3	81,088.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,087</b>	<b>20,152</b>	<b>16,163</b>		<b>1,945,438.35</b>		<b>1,070,890.888</b>		<b>1,001,348.1</b>

Figure 6: Lorenz curve showing the inequality of slave valuations between districts

