

Indian Ocean World Centre

Winter **Speaker Series**

The Role of British Political Agents and Missionaries in Perpetuating Slavery and Forced Labour in Nineteenth-Century Madagascar

Jan 22 - Rm 116, Peterson Hall

3:00 – 5:00, Refreshments served

In 1807, under mounting pressure from the growing anti-slavery lobby, Parliament in London banned the slave trade. In 1810, British forces seized the French Mascarene islands of Réunion and Mauritius, dominated by slave plantation economies. In 1815, Réunion was handed back to France, but Britain retained Mauritius because it safeguarded the maritime route to India, the “jewel” of the British Empire. As Madagascar was the closest and thus cheapest supplier of provisions and servile labour required by the Mascarenes, Farquhar, governor of Mauritius, sought to bring it under British informal domination. In 1820, Britain signed a treaty with Radama I (r. 1810-28) of Madagascar, central to which was the prohibition of slave exports in return for British aid – which included the establishment there of a permanent British political agent and LMS missionaries charged with ensuring the application by Radama of the anti-slave trade ban. However, while espousing anti-slavery sentiments, all British agents to Madagascar used unfree labour – something they did their utmost to keep secret from their political and religious backers in Britain. This paper explores the reasons for, and nature of, this clandestine exploitation of servile labour.



From William Ellis, 1858

Prof. Gwyn Campbell

IOWC, McGill

General Inquiries

www.indianoceanworldcentre.com

iowc@mcgill.ca

