



Slavery and Manumission: British Policy in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in the First Half of the 20th Century

Jerzy Zdanowski

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"I am a free-born woman, and not a slave of anyone." - Manuy bint Khalfan, a female slave who was sold and mortgaged several times, speaking to a British agency in Sharjah on October 24, 1938.

Many books have been written about slavery, but what makes this book unique is that it highlights the issue of slavery using the statements and life stories of individual slaves, such as Manuy bint Khalfan. The book is dedicated to her memory, and to the memory of all the other slaves who have had the will to escape.

Manumission procedures, applied in the Persian Gulf, required that applicants produced written statements describing the circumstances of their enslavement and their reasons for having run away from their masters. Therefore, British agencies have at their disposal the life stories of almost 1,000 slaves, named and speaking in their own voices. Their statements are published for the first time in this book. The analysis of these statements sheds light on various aspects of social, religious, and political life in the Gulf in this period, and the way in which slaves were treated. The book assists in understanding the history of Persian Gulf societies in the first half of the 20th century - particularly the role of slave labor in the pearl industry, the conformity of social practice with religious norms concerning slavery, the position of the British government in regard to slavery in the Gulf, and the role of the British system of manumission in the eradication of slavery.

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