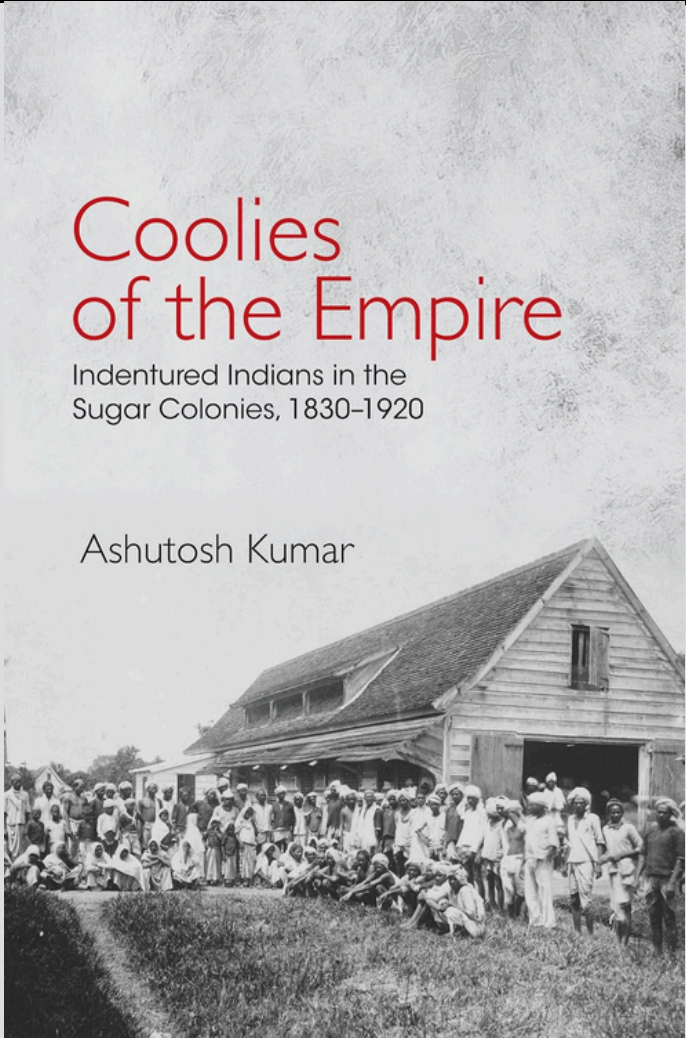
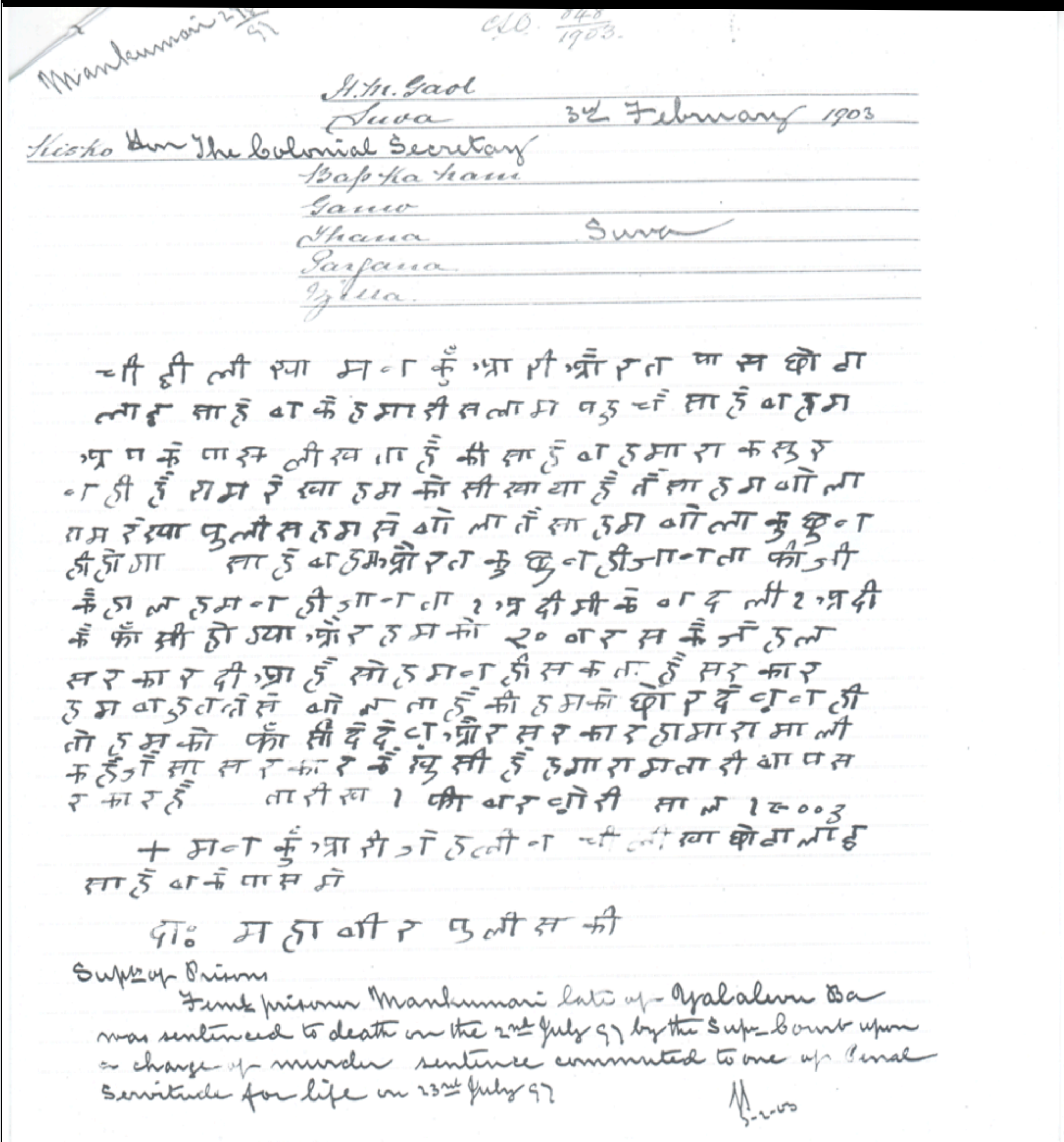


Petition of Laborers: Life of Workers under Indenture

Ashutosh Kumar

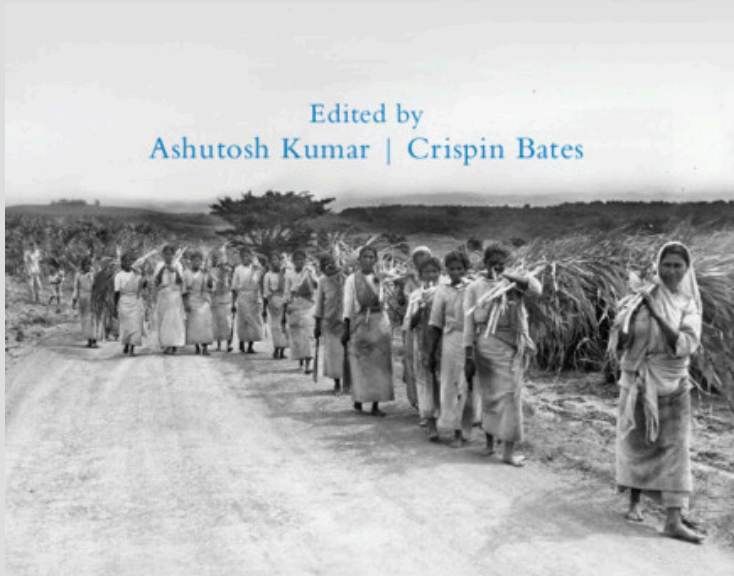
Professor of History at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

Discussant: Kalyani Ramnath (Columbia)



GLOBAL SOUTH ASIANS

Girmitiyas and the
Global Indian Diaspora
Origins, Memories, and Identity



This paper explores the gender relations among the Indian indentured workers on the colonial plantations of Fiji and Natal in order to understand the complexities of plantation life. Historians have studied the gender relations on the plantations either through official writings, notings or through observers' accounts and hence, it reveals the limitations of objective portrayal of the life of labourers on the plantations. This paper underscores such limitations and uses the labourers' petitions, depositions and letters written largely in Indian languages either by women or men, individually or collectively, to different authorities in order to understand the plantation regime in terms of gender relations. Through a close reading of these petitions and examination of the conditions of their production and their reception by the colonial authorities, the paper argues that plantation space became a sight of the struggle between women's agency and Indian patriarchy in which violence became an unavoidable consequence.

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

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