



University of Bonn, Bonn Centre on Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS)

Interdisciplinary Workshop  
**Punishment, Labour and the Legitimation of Power**

Heinz Heinen Center for Advanced Study, Bonn, 24-25<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Call for papers

The [Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies](#) (BCDSS) aims to analyse personal, social, and spatial dependency from a global, long-term, and trans-disciplinary perspective. Within the BCDSS, the Research Group „[Punishment, Labour, Dependency](#)“ addresses the ways in which the entanglements of punitive and labour regimes impact the production and reproduction of dependency.

The International Workshop „Punishment, Labour and the Legitimation of Power“, organized by the BCDSS Research Group „Punishment, Labour, Dependency“, seeks to investigate how, within specific historical contexts, various forms and sources of punishment have impacted multiple labour regimes. Moreover, we aim to analyse the practices and discourses of different historical (elite and non-elite) actors that have constructed and contested the legitimation of punishment and labour regimes. Finally, we wish to understand how and under which circumstances the interactions between punishment and labour have resulted in the creation of personal, social and spatial dependencies.

The participants are asked to engage with four broad theoretical arguments that will be discussed during the International Workshop:

1. The perspectives of the performer, the victim, and the witness all differ, and the definition of what constitutes a legitimate act of punishment or violence is a social construct and therefore can be continuously contested socially (Riches, 1988; Coleman et al., 2009). Moreover, multiple legitimations of violence co-exist and conflict connected to power

asymmetries in society. Therefore, the study of punitive regimes cannot be separated from the analysis of the ways power is exercised, legitimized and contested by various actors.

2. Punishment has historically played multiple functions vis-a-vis the production and reproduction of labour coercion. Among others, it has legitimized coercive regimes of labour extraction, enhanced the direct control of workers imbricated in multiple labour relations, and contributed to the production of convict labour. Potential papers relating to broader themes concerning anti-vagrancy laws (of any period) are particularly welcome.
3. We need to pluralize both punishment and labour in order to study their entanglements. Indeed, multiple labour relations, and various sources and forms of punishment, have co-existed within each historical context. Thus: we should study the simultaneous and connected roles played by various labour relations (wage labour, slavery, serfdom, indentured servitude, etc.) (Brass and van der Linden, 1997; van der Linden, 2008); we need to recognize that normative regimes leading to punishment have stemmed from multiple sources, including various state and religious institutions, kinship, individuals („legal pluralism“: Tamanaha, 2008; Benton and Ross, 2013; Duve, 2017); and we should write entangled histories of various punitive regimes (imprisonment, transportation, exile, capital punishment, etc.: Sherman, 2009).
4. Changes in labour and punitive regimes have usually implied transitions from one to another combination of multiple labour and punitive regimes, rather than linear shifts towards single labour relations and punitive regimes (De Vito, 2018). This invites us to move beyond the traditional approach that has seen wage labour and imprisonment as the prospective points of the whole history of labour and punishment.

We welcome proposals on any geographical contexts from the ancient to the modern period. Scholars from all over the world, at all career levels (PhD students, post-doc researchers, professors) and from various disciplinary background (history, archaeology, criminology, sociology, etc.) are welcome to apply. The working language of the workshop is English.

Please submit your paper proposal (title, approx. 250-words abstract, current affiliation and short bio) by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to: [afagbore@uni-bonn.de](mailto:afagbore@uni-bonn.de). The cluster will inform candidates of the outcome of their application by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

For further information and clarifications, please contact the International Workshop organizer: Adam Fagbore (University of Bonn): [afagbore@uni-bonn.de](mailto:afagbore@uni-bonn.de). Please inform us of your potential to cover the costs as The Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) may cover part of the travel and accommodation costs of the accepted speakers that cannot fund themselves through their own institutions.