Joint-Workshop on Global Enslavement  
29-30 December 2019

What is Global about Global Enslavement? 
Crossing Time-Space Divides  

Tel Aviv, 29-30 December 2019

The study of enslavement has acquired urgency over the last two decades. Social scientists, legal scholars, human rights activists, and historians, who study forms of enslavement in both modern and historical societies, seek — and often achieve — common conceptual grounds. This “turn” has also intensified awareness of enslavement as a global phenomenon, inviting a comparative, trans-regional approach across time-space divides.

But what does global enslavement mean? Does it mean that enslavement appears in most societies and periods, that is, transcends spatial and temporal boundaries? Is it enough to broaden the range of areas and periods studied to earn the title “global”? Or, does global mean that whenever and wherever enslavement existed it had a universal essence that can be defined in terms and concepts which are valid for all its occurrences and manifestations? Should we, in trying to study global enslavement, view enslavement beyond history? Or, should we adopt a historical approach, taking into consideration change, diversity, fluidity, and differentiation? In other words, is enslavement constant and applicable to any region and period, an aggregate of various forms, processes, and narratives? Alternatively, are these really “either-or” questions, or can they be reconciled as “both.”

These questions, which still concern contemporary scholarship, gave rise to several theories and models that aim at understanding enslavement as a world-wide institution. Societies may share common practices of bondage and enslavement but also diverge in their understanding of these phenomena. Whereas the ways and means by which such societies acquired and enslaved humans were often relatively similar, how enslaved persons were being exploited and treated was often historically different. Nevertheless, both the acquisition of enslaved persons and the maintenance of enslavement itself over time always included the use of various degrees of violence, and both connect and separate societies by applying economic and political powers and ideologies. The study of forced migration and human trafficking, as well as other features of enslavement, may bring closer different approaches to the study of enslavement as a global phenomenon. Demand for unfree labor often generated forced migration, with its local and global economic, political, and cultural implications. Gender, ethnicity/race, property, and domination also played a major role in the relationships formed within enslavement. These were being shaped by both the interests
of enslavers and the agency of the enslaved, as by the political, religious, and legal practices of enslaving societies around the globe.

This conference aims at bringing together scholars who work with different theoretical approaches and study the diverse manifestations of enslavement in various regions, periods, and aspects in both past and present societies in order to interrogate global enslavement and what was global about it.

**Organizing Committee** (in alphabetic order)

Professor Stephan Conermann, Bonn University  
Professor Youval Rotman, Jewish History, TAU  
Professor Ehud R. Toledano, Middle East History, TAU  
Professor Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, Classics, TAU

**Planned panels** *(might change according to paper topics)*

1. Coerced Migrations/demographics of enslavement (forced, or even voluntary but leading to bondage and unfreedom)

2. Local and global economies

3. Domestics and individual/family relations (is domestic enslavement different from, say, plantation slavery? in what ways and what needs [material, social, economic] it serves? enslaved bodies and minds into/crossing enslaving spaces; forced marriages)

4. Agency (what constitutes enslaved agency? how much and in what ways was agency under bondage a factor in shaping the enslaved condition? is there a difference between male agency and female agency?)

5. The business of transitioning from unfreedom to freedom (economic or other motives for manumitting slaves, ransoming slaves, the freed persons’ agency and 'peculium'/private money in obtaining freedom)

6. The culture of enslaved people (including religion and rituals) and processes of acculturation

7. Enslavement and the law (how legal processes determine/d forms of enslavement, emancipation, and the status of the enslaved)