THE MAGAZINE OF THE BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

DEPENDENT

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STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCY IN ASIA

BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

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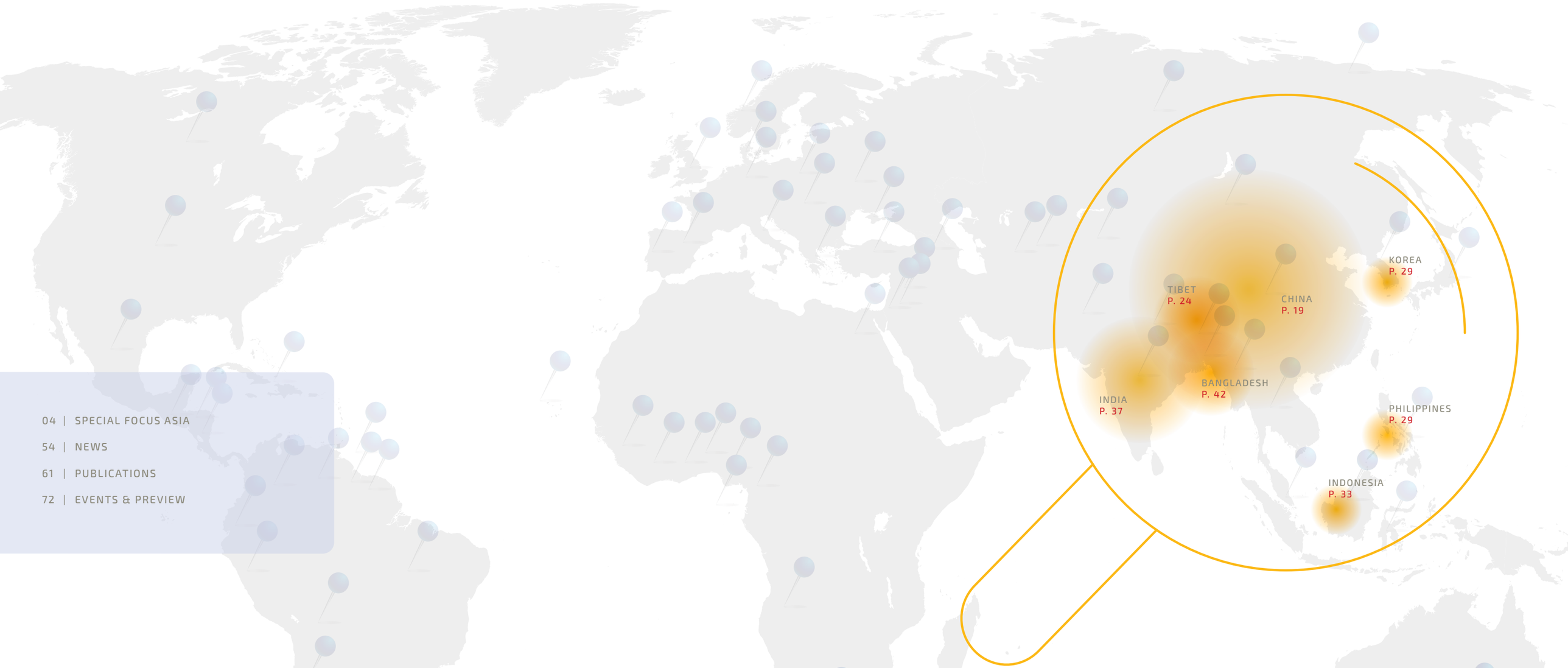


Dear Readers,
Welcome to the tenth issue of our Cluster Magazine DEPENDENT, an edition in which we explore the phenomena of strong asymmetrical dependency in and from within Asia. Research on Asia and the Indian Ocean world constitutes a major area of study at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. In this edition, eleven BCDSS scholars and cooperation partners will share some of their current research activities.

Spanning a large geographical area, from Indonesia to Tibet and from Korea to the Indian subcontinent, they will examine dependency in the literatures of Ancient China and Post-Imperial Tibet as well as in material culture that has been "preserved" in social stratification practices or temple architecture in India. A number of articles look at manifestations of modern-day dependency, yet always from a historically informed perspective, such as in the context of coal mining in Indonesia, or family structures in China.

This issue can only provide a glimpse into the work carried out by BCDSS scholars and collaboration partners. Last year saw the launch of the *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* (ESTA) project, a major collaborative effort by the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam, BCDSS, ENS Lyon, and Linnaeus University. It is designed to bring data and scholars together to advance research on the slave trade in the Indian Ocean world and in maritime Asia.

At the moment, nine BCDSS members – namely Anas Ansar, Jeannine Bischoff, Claude Chevaleyre, Emma Kalb, Christine Mae Sarito, Subin Nam, Lisa Phongsavath, Nabhojeet Sen & Elena Smolarz – are preparing a conference on "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past & Present", which will be held in Bonn from May 6-8, 2025. Save the date and watch out for more information!

As Claude Chevaleyre, one of the main organizers, says in the introductory article of this issue: "Although Asia and the Indian Ocean World are no longer the blind spots they once were in labor and slavery studies, these vast areas are still somewhat marginal and overwhelmingly studied through the lens of early modern European colonialism and imperialism."

Enjoy the read!

Cécile Jeblawei December 2024

Title according to Harvard catalogue: "Kidnapped girls, Foochow, found hidden in a junk by customs inspector. These girls would have been sold for slaves. Chinese characters on mount, left of image." Picture taken in Fuzhou in 1904. ©image public domain. Harvard-Yenching Library of the Harvard College Library, Harvard University.[1]

AN "ASIAN" PERSPECTIVE ON STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES

by Claude Chevaleyre

Over the past two decades, the fields of slavery and labor history have undergone profound and lasting reconfigurations; not only empirically, but also conceptually. Most historians now seem to agree that the study of slavery, bondage, coerced labor and other forms of asymmetrical dependency across time and space requires new and more dynamic analytical frameworks. Following the inspiring recommendations formulated by Joseph Miller in 2012 (*The Problem of Slavery as History*), historians are increasingly called upon to better historicize and contextualize strong asymmetrical dependencies, instead of relying on a limited set of static, sociologically defined and mutually excluding categories such as "slavery," "serfdom," etc. More precisely, they are called upon to better *situate* these phenomena: not only in time and space, but also in a more relational and connected way: in particular by investigating the coexistence of and the interactions between different regimes of labor coercion at the local, regional and global levels; and by paying renewed attention to trajectories of change, in order to better understand how forms of asymmetrical dependency were produced, reproduced, transformed and, ultimately, how their legacies contributed to shaping the power dynamics of our modern societies (see M. van Rossum, "Reflections on Comparing and Connecting Regimes of Slavery and Coerced Labour," in *Slavery and Bondage in Asia, 1550–1850*, 2023).

Within this trend of new research inspired by global slavery and global labor studies, investigations into slavery across early modern Asia recently developed at a steady pace. Compared to the handful of books available at the turn of the twenty-first century (some of which still emphasized the "mild", "non-economic" and "assimilative" nature of slavery and bondage across Asia as a whole), readers and researchers now have a larger number of monographs, edited books, articles, and even datasets at their disposal (thanks in great part to the network of historians formed less than ten years ago around the project "Exploring Slave Trade in Asia" supported by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam). However, although Asia and the Indian Ocean World are no longer the blind spots they once were in labor and slavery studies, these vast areas are still somewhat marginal and overwhelmingly studied through the lens of early modern European colonialism and imperialism. From the sixteenth century onward, the Europeans who first sailed to Asia in search of highly prized commodities indeed played a key role in the rapid expansion of the slave trade and other multidirectional flows of coerced labor across Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the wider world. While enslaved Africans reached Goa, Macau, Manila, Batavia and Japan in the second half of the sixteenth century, people born in Asia were also forcibly transported around the world. One example is a young man known as Diego, who claimed to have been enslaved in the Spanish territory of Liampo in China, transported to Mexico and from there to Sevilla, where he eventually attempted to contest the legality of his enslavement in 1572 (see Nancy E. van Deusen, "Indios on the Move in the Sixteenth-Century Iberian World", *The Journal of Global History*, 2015).

However, European slaving networks did not emerge out of a vacuum. Slaving warfare was already frequent across much of early modern South and Southeast Asia, from South China to the Shan states; enslaved people (in particular Korean women) were an integral part of the tributary exchanges between the Chinese Ming court and its neighboring "vassal" countries. Endogenous slavery was also on the rise in China (perhaps numbering in millions) at the time when the Portuguese established a settlement in Macau in the mid-sixteenth century; around thirty percent of the population of Chosŏn Korea was composed of private and public slaves (until the two Korean abolitions of the nineteenth century), while the Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598) produced significant numbers of captives, some of whom were transported to Japan before being funneled into the Portuguese slaving networks; the Manchu territorial expansion, from the mid-seventeenth century onward, not only put Manchu slavery in contact with Chinese slaving practices, but also produced more captives than the Manchu banners could absorb, resulting in the marketization of tens if not hundreds of thousands of people, in addition to those who regularly fell victims to traffickers or were sold for different purposes as a result of famines and environmental disasters. In other words, the Europeans inserted themselves into an environment where slaving practices had existed prior to their arrival, and where those practices persisted and evolved alongside and in connection with their activities across Asia.

Manchu-Chinese "licence" of the Board of Revenues acknowledging the sales of an enslaved person, 1705. Photo by Mr. Li Jihui 李集辉, 2011.

The problem, so to speak, is *not* that the recent and long overdue revision of the history of slaving and coerced labor across early modern Asia focuses on the European presence and has been written almost exclusively from the vast and rich sources produced by European actors – thereby reproducing European worldviews and omitting a wide array of local and regional practices. The problem, rather, is that this rapidly growing body of research is barely complemented by new studies of the ubiquitous forms of exploitation and forced displacement that existed before, alongside and beyond the European presence in Asia. What seems to be particularly lacking in current discussions is thus an *emic perspective from Asia*; that is to say, a more

[1] This is a typical photograph of the early 20th c. used, among other things, to mobilize Western charity, to illustrate the scope of trafficking in China, or the coolie trade. The context is quite unclear. The Chinese text on the left tells a different story than the one of the Harvard catalogue (which only mentions girls). Roughly translated: Junk of the Lin Qinglan company [related to the fleet of the Fuzhou arsenal] captured 23 traffickers at sea and [rescued] 41 male and female children, now dispatched to foster home and awaiting to be retrieved.

granular and accurate view of the practices and norms and their evolutions, from existing vernacular sources (written, oral and material) and from the actors' experiences, categories and worldviews. What also seems to be lacking is a genuine accounting of Asian historiographies, as well as a proper assessment of the legacies and memories of these diverse phenomena in the contemporary societies of Asia.

Deed of emancipation of a "household slave" (jianu 家奴), 1712. Photo by Mr. Li Jihui 李集辉, 2011.

This observation leads not only to the obvious conclusion that more research – in the form of situated case studies – is required: it also calls for a critical and open assessment of the impediments that have and still do affect this necessary development. The availability of source materials only partly explains the current state of the field. It is true that enslavement and coerced labor in early modern Asian societies left fewer and less systematic traces, at least compared to the very extensive paper trails produced by European colonists. But sources do exist, for instance, to document the scope of trafficking in early modern China and its broader ramifications, even though these sources are scattered and necessarily less complete due to the illegal nature of trafficking in the Ming and Qing eras. More importantly, historians of Asia also have to acknowledge and to reflect on the fact that the evocative force of the term "slavery," used as *the* central reference category by which all forms of coercion and dependency have to be evaluated, has made its usage highly contentious when applied to contexts where the word "slave" and all its variants in European languages were not known, and were not part of the language of the actors. In other words, translation and categorization matter because they are always sources of distortions (often unintended, but sometimes intentional) that can have ideological and political implications, which in turn can have an impact on how a specific phenomenon can be studied. The historiography of China, for instance, has generally avoided "slavery" as a category to characterize the forms of bondage that expanded in Ming times and persisted at least until their legal abolition in 1910. During the second half of the twentieth century, those forms of bondage were mainly regarded as manifestations of the general feudal exploitation which the Chinese working class in the making was subjected to (while slavery was considered to be incompatible with a feudal context). More recently, these forms of bondage have been re-qualified as a mere form of household "service," mostly under the growing influence of the "great divergence" framework, a development model that does not make room for the observation of high levels of coercion in China at the moment of its divergence from Europe (C. Chevaleyre, "What Happened to Coercion?", *Le movement social*, 2023).

Taking an "Asian perspective" on strong asymmetrical dependencies is therefore not only a matter of pluralization and geographic expansion of the field. It is also a way to explore broader connections and interactions, and to address a wider range of issues, such as the hegemonic domination of categories exclusively derived from the European past. These issues and many others will be central topics of discussion at the conference "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past and Present" that the team of scholars working on Asia at the BCDSS is organizing for May 2025.

SAVE THE DATE:
6-8 MAY 2025
CONFERENCE
„STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM ASIA"

Dr. Claude Chevaleyre holds a doctorate in history and civilizations (EHESS, 2015) and was an Ater at the Collège de France and a postdoctoral researcher at the EFEO and the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam) before joining the IAO as a research fellow (CNRS, 2018). Dedicated to the development of the history of slavery in premodern Asia, he led the Junior Research Group 'Dependency in Asian History' at the BCDSS (2019-2024). He is particularly interested in the history of forced labour, servitude and human trafficking in late imperial China.

'Dutch merchant with two enslaved men in hilly landscape' (presumably in Asia, 1700-1725). Oil on canvas; collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (SK-A-4988) ©public domain: http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.431082

'COUNTLESS STOLEN PEOPLE':

UNRAVELLING THE DYNAMICS OF WIDER INDIAN OCEAN SLAVE TRADING WITH THE ESTA DATABASE

by Pascal Konings

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE SLAVE TRADE IN THE WIDER INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

Since the 1980s, scholars have increasingly recognized that slavery and the slave trade were widely practiced across maritime Asia from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Re-evaluations of available data and previously overlooked sources have yielded new perspectives on the mechanics of the slave trade, particularly in regions like the Western Indian Ocean and South(east) Asia. In fact, recent research indicates that the scale of slave trading in the Indian Ocean and maritime Asia rivalled, or may even have surpassed, that of the Atlantic. Studies have produced new data, shedding light on the structural involvement of European colonial powers in a vast network of intra-Asian slave trading, such as the Dutch East India Company (Dutch: *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, usually shortened to VOC), the British East India Company (EIC), or the French *Compagnie des Indes orientales* (CdI). Other major European players active in Asia and the Indian Ocean were Spain and Portugal, whose early colonization practices in the Americas and Asia were quite influential and quickly adopted by other colonial powers. And although slave trading in Asia was widely established long before the presence of European colonizers, their participation and appropriation would thoroughly transform it, impacting many societies locally, regionally, and globally.

Nevertheless, despite the valuable insights offered by recent scholarship, source materials and data(sets) remain geographically, periodically, and thematically fragmented. This fragmentation hampers our ability to conduct comprehensive analyses of cross-regional and global structures, patterns, and connections. Particularly in the study of the slave trade, this issue is most critical; after all, slave trading functioned within a global network of interconnected coerced labour and relocation. Clearly, a crucial step towards advancing the field of Asian and global slave trade studies would be to establish a durable, co-operative infrastructure to gather, link, and curate both existing and new data. These quantifiable figures and reconstructions are essential for achieving a more thorough understanding of the size, structure, and patterns of the slave trade in Asia beyond rough estimates. One project with similar goals, albeit for a different geographic setting, must be mentioned in particular: the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, otherwise known as *SlaveVoyages.org.* This database, a collaborative digital initiative that compiles records of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and makes them publicly accessible, has proved to be widely influential and suitable for both research and education purposes.

DEALING WITH DIFFERENT DYNAMICS

However, the trans-Atlantic data model cannot be simply applied to a database on the Asian and Indian Ocean slave trade, as the characteristics of the trans-Atlantic slave trade with its infamous middle passage were very different to those of Asia. Slave trading in Asia was characterized by multi-directionality and interconnectedness, in other words: enslaved individuals were coercively transported from and to many distinctly different regions, creating a plethora of "middle passages" and, in the process, global connections. Also, unlike in the trans-Atlantic sphere, numerous private local and regional traders were active in the intra-Asian slave trade, in addition to the already mentioned European colonial powers. Moreover, while commodified slavery was in fact central to the slave trade in Asia, there were many different forms of coercive labour regimes and practices which therefore interacted continuously, such as contract migration, corvée labour, colonial deportation, debt bondage, or penal labour. These labour regimes led to the coexistence of diverse forms and patterns of slave trading. A wide range of actors participated, including enslaved persons from various ethnic groups, colonial and local enslavers, merchants, and authorities. The logistics also varied significantly, from local and European ships to land-based routes, reflecting the complexity of the slave trade's multi-directional nature. And, interestingly, despite the abundance of data on the historical slave trade and coerced mobilities in Asia and the Indian Ocean, the field lacks tools for detailed interregional and comparative quantitative analysis.

With these specific challenges in mind, the *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* (ESTA) project was conceived and developed through collaborative efforts at the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam, the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), ENS Lyon, and Linnaeus University from 2016 onwards. ESTA has since aimed to collect, connect, and curate existing data on the slave trade in the Indian Ocean world and in maritime Asia, to provide the public with quantitative research tools, and explore the many less overt, obscured sources in various archives, both colonial *and* colonized ones. The project also seeks to provide guidance on navigating these sources by offering background on colonial practices. It connects a network of scholars, historians, and the public, through conferences, newsletters, and open-access data on various online platforms.

Central to ESTA's efforts is the ESTA Database and its public component, the Database Viewer, which was launched at the BCDSS in November 2023. As a starting point, the database contains the datasets assembled by several field experts, such as Jane Hooper, Rafaël Thiébaut and the *Bookkeeper-General Batavia* (BGB) set that was published by the Huygens Institute. In general, the ESTA Database treats these experts' datasets as primary sources, including caveats and potential errors; this is to keep data(sets) as coherent as possible and keep interpretation out of (the first steps of) data curation. After multiple rounds of curation and standardization, we found the total (explicit) number of enslaved persons in the ESTA Database to be about 340,000, with implicit numbers ranging from 390,000 to 600,000. This number, which resulted from having combined and curated just five datasets, clearly shows the immense scale of the slave trade in Asia and the Indian Ocean World, and its impact on local and global societies.

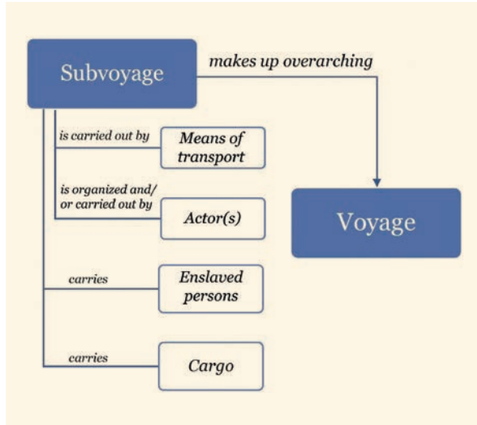
Dutch merchants buy enslaved Bengalese people in Arakan, modern-day Myanmar, around 1663. Originally published in: Wouter Schouten, Wouter Schoutens Oost-Indische voyagie (Amsterdam: 1676). ©public domain: https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Natives_of_Arrakan_sell_slaves_to_the_Dutch_East_India_Company_(1663).jpg

THE *SUBVOYAGE* AS A UNIT OF ANALYSIS

ESTA's relational database uses what we call the *subvoyage* as the primary unit of analysis. This allows for detailed records of each singular journey from one location to the next (see also Sint Nicolaas, Van Rossum and Bosma, 'Towards an Indian Ocean and Maritime Asia Slave Trade Database', 2020; Hids et al., 'Exploring Slave Trade in Asia', 2023). A subvoyage is defined as a single journey involving the transport of enslaved individuals for sale or exchange, whether the destination is final or incidental, or merely a brief stop *en route.* These subvoyages are then combined to form a chain of interlinked journeys, constituting a complete voyage. A voyage can consist of one or several subvoyages, with some comprising twelve or more individual journeys. This structure was designed to accommodate the multi-directional and interconnected nature of forced relocations in early modern Asia, which (again) differs significantly from the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The database captures information across several sections. The *Subvoyage* section includes data on the locations and dates of departure and arrival. The *Enslaved* section contains general information on the number of enslaved persons, types of forced relocation, and mortality rates. The *Enslaved Group* section focuses on group characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, age and other details. *Transport* gathers data on the mode of transport, such as by ship, train, or foot. *Agents* displays details about the non-enslaved actors, such as buyers, sellers, and captains. *Cargo* records non-human cargo; and, lastly, *Voyage* links multiple subvoyages, providing a summary of the overarching route and year. Importantly, the *Enslaved* section records data both at the supra-group level, when only the number of enslaved individuals is known, and at the group level for more specific details such as ethnicities, genders, and mortality rates. To accommodate the diversity of forced relocation types and ensure analytical accuracy, the subvoyage also specifies the type of forced relocation. The database includes fields to account for uncertainties in the source material, such as ambiguity regarding departure and arrival locations or dates, or the status of a voyage.

Although many of the datasets currently in the database focus on meso-level data, the system is designed to incorporate more detailed micro-level data, such as personal information on individuals. This could make the database a valuable tool for micro-historical studies, genealogical research, local histories, and case studies involving both enslaved persons and enslavers. This approach addresses the unique challenges of reconstructing slave trading voyages in the Indian Ocean World, where individuals and groups were forcibly relocated to many different places by many different means which involved a wide range of actors and methods, unlike the more linear trans-Atlantic slave trade.



The ESTA Database structure. ©image created by author. Also published in M. Hids, P. Konings, S.J. Miske, M. Tosun, M. van Rossum and H. de Korte, 'Exploring Slave Trade in Asia: First Steps towards an International Database', TSEG 20 (1), 160.

BROAD PATTERNS AND INDIVIDUAL STORIES

Major slave trade patterns and routes can be discerned by mapping and analyzing ESTA's voyages. And even though current data means a particular bias towards the areas that the Dutch East India Company was active in, the multi-directional and interconnected nature of this slave trade – and other forms of coerced mobilities – throughout the Wider Indian Ocean World is clear to see. Extensive slave trade hubs, such as the Malabar Coast in India, reveal a plethora of private, local, regional, and Company traders all buying and selling enslaved persons, and transporting them onwards to hubs like Colombo and Jakarta, then called Batavia. Commodification left enslaved people at the mercy of colonial demand and supply of labour. This is demonstrated by the case of Amelia van Cochim, an enslaved

girl. Forced to work as a housekeeper in the Malabar Coast city of Kochi, she was sold several times within a decade between VOC personnel (see National Archives The Hague, 1.04.02, 14763). In 1769, Amelia was taken to Jakarta, where she was put to work in the household of captain J.G. Englert. Ten years later, Englert was promoted to major of the Kochi militia, and Amelia returned to Kochi, where was sold soon after Englert's death. Her story underpins the interconnectedness and multi-directionality that enslaved people in this colonial sphere faced.

But the impact of the slave trade could be equally felt outside of major (colonial) hubs in Asia. In Lampung, the southernmost part of Sumatra that was part of the Sultanate of Bantam, *mardijker* Zacharias Jansz and his companions were forced into slavery. The colonial term *mardijker* referred to his ethnic status as a descendant of enslaved people who had often converted to (Roman Catholic) Christianity. The word itself derived from the word 'merdeka', meaning 'free' in modern Indonesian and Malay. However, these notions of freedom bitterly contrast with the fate that awaited Jansz. In May 1712, he set sail in his *perahu konting*, a local type of boat known for its triangular sail. On board were his sons Jacob and Israel, a fellow merchant named Domingo, and an enslaved person called Jan, owned by Jansz. After leaving Batavia for his hometown of Bantam, their ship was raided by slavers, and the group was taken to the Lampung settlement of Nibung, where they were sold.

The Bantam-to-Lampung route was favoured by local enslavers, demonstrating that the Sultanate's trade networks were extensively used. Company subjects regularly fell victim to this particular network. This was deeply frustrating for the VOC, which always strove to remain on the enslaving side. Domingo and Jan were taken further inland. Jansz lost track of his sons, and personally met or heard of 'countless stolen people, both freemen and enslaved persons'. (We know about Janzs' story in unusual detail because he later gave an account of it to VOC officials, see National Archives The Hague, 1.04.02, 7673). Once an enslaver and now an enslaved person himself, Jansz found himself caught in a vast network of slave trading. Within the space of four and a half years, he would be sold and bought no fewer than nine times.

Jansz ended up being taken to the coastal town of Putih, a strategically located slave trade hub. He heard many stories of enslavement there, recalling how he heard from other enslaved persons that 'two Dutch girls, being sisters, aged 12 and 13, whose parents were supposed to be living in Batavia' had been kidnapped and sold to a Javanese man from Bantam, who had taken them to Lampung Bawiaan. Jansz heard that the pair had been sold for 200 Spanish *reales*, which was three times the highest price that Lampung slave traders were willing to pay for him. Furthermore, Jansz witnessed that 'every year, fourteen or fifteen vessels set sail from Toelongbewa and Putih, [specifically] to kidnap in the eastern parts of Java', in similar ways that Jansz and his party had been enslaved. Miraculously, in Putih, Jansz encountered a Bantam acquaintance of his by chance, a ship captain by the name of Padaesra. This ethnic Malaysian captain agreed to buy Jansz's freedom back. So, after four years of enslavement, Jansz arrived back in Bantam a free man – but left behind his sons, Domingo, and Jan in Lampung.

Zacharias Jansz's enslaved voyage in Southern Sumatra between 1712 and 1716. ©image created by author.

Back in his hometown, Jansz envisioned a fitting VOC response to ensure that future generations of Mardijkers would avoid his fate, and even a rescue mission for his party. Because of Jansz's plea, the Company contacted the Sultan of Bantam, the official ruler of the Lampung area – even though the VOC *de facto* controlled Bantam politics. In response, the Sultan informed the VOC that he had put several servants to the task of inquiring after the missing members of Jansz's party in Lampung. Additionally, the Sultan promised to reimburse the 30 Spanish *reales* that were paid for Jansz's freedom, as well as 'to track down those who had transported him, to ensure their deserved punishment, […] and to give out the appropriate orders in the area under His Majesty's authority, either on land or along the entire shore, against the kidnapping and transporting of free people, whether enslaved or not, in line of the contracts between the Company and His Majesty'.

Although Jansz may have received some justice, this did not suffice in the Company's view. Company officials kept pressuring the Sultan, as there were still no clues of the whereabouts of Jansz's party. After being caught up in a maelstrom of either bureaucracy or unwillingness, Jansz made it known to Company officials that he was prepared to join the Sultan's men in Lampung and aid in the search. Here, the VOC stepped in and warned Jansz of the difficulties that he might face on returning to Lampung, even accompanied by the Sultan's men. Apparently in these areas, the risk of enslavement was never far away. This prospect probably discouraged Jansz, because the Company noted that he was not particularly keen on the endeavour. They concluded that 'he claims to be unable or unfit [to go to Lampung]'.

All in all, the level of detail in Jansz's account is extraordinary. For instance, he recalled the locations to which he was transported, the names of buyers and sellers, and even the prices they paid for him. Furthermore, Jansz's "value" as an enslaved person increased as he was bought and sold more often, indicating how enslaved people were also used as an investment strategy outside of colonial spheres. Above all, Jansz's account reflects the sheer complexity of slave trading routes, typical of Wider Indian Ocean slaving voyages. It also highlights the fragmentation of enslaved individuals into distinct trajectories, resulting in broken families and social isolation – not at all unlike the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

LOOKING AHEAD: EXPANDING DATA AND RESEARCH

As global approaches to studying the slave trade advance, the need for comprehensive data and tools for comparative, quantitative analysis becomes clear. Collecting more data on the Indian Ocean and maritime Asia is crucial to understand the scale, structures, and connections of local and regional slave trade systems and their global implications. The core of this effort involves accounting for regional variations in how the slave trade manifested, and the differing record-keeping practices throughout the region. The *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* project provides a framework for a collective database to record and analyze various slave trading activities, and aims to uncover new sources for further data collection. New methods of collecting data will also be employed; for example, the ESTA project will soon publicly launch a collective data entry portal called TIDES, into which users can add slave trade observations themselves. This will help to further expand the database. Crucially, users will always retain control of their data, have their work properly credited at all times, and be able to use the ESTA data template for their own analyses. Users will also be able to check whether the slave trade voyages they want to add are already in the ESTA Database, and if so can choose to notify the team of conflicting or supplementing data. At the International Institute for Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam, PhD researchers have already started entering data via TIDES, including slave trade references from the Portuguese, Spanish and French colonial archives.

ESTA will also focus on data extraction from colonial archives such as that of the VOC, which in coming years will be achieved automatically and systematically with the help of the GLOBALISE project at the Huygens Institute, which has handwritten text, optical character, and named entity recognition. Of course, the inclusiveness of other archives in the Wider Indian Ocean World is of major importance to the project and its aims. Especially non-European sources are crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of slavery and other coerced labour regimes in Asia, and ESTA is eager to learn from – and adapt to – these emic perspectives that Claude Chevaleyre rightly emphasizes in his article in this edition of the DEPENDENT. Directly after the conference "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past and Present" that will be organized at the BCDSS in May 2025, there will be an additional ESTA conference that focuses on coerced mobilities and shipping in Asia, emic perspectives, and methods from the digital humanities. You can find more information at exploringslavetradeinasia.com or esta.iisg.nl.

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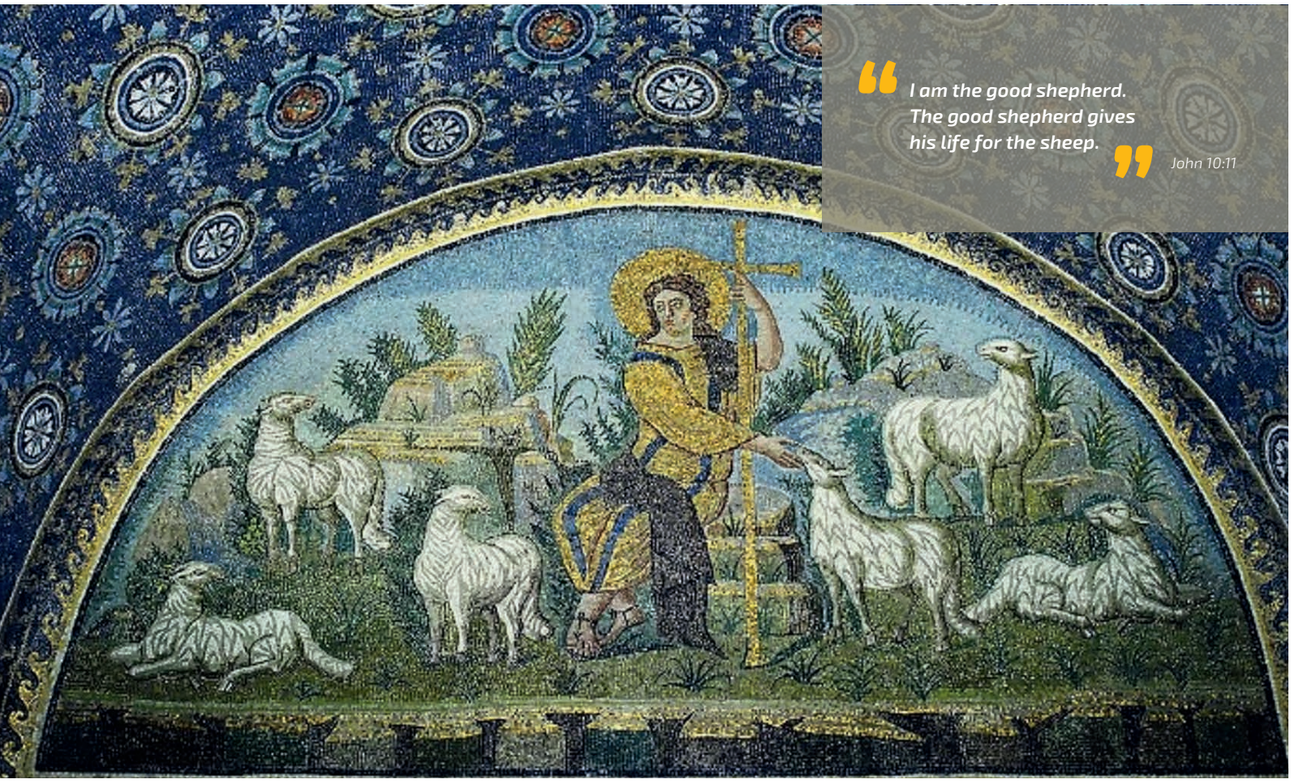
Contact: pascal.konings@iisg.nl.



Mosaic in the mausoleum of the Empress Galla Placidia (c. 390-450) in Ravenna, Italy, constructed between 424 and 450, showing the motif of the good shepherd and his sheep. ©Wikipedia, public domain C BY-SA 4.0

DO GOOD SHEPHERDS MAKE GENTLE LEADERS?

METAPHORS OF EXERCISING POWER IN CHINA AND EUROPE [1]

by Juliane Bienert,
Manfred Eikelmann,
Paul Fahr,
Christian Schwermann,
Anna Kristina Wand and
Maren Veronika Ziegler-Bellenberg

In Europe, the metaphor of the good shepherd, as it was first applied to Jesus in the Gospel of John, is seen as a role model for the actions and behaviour of Christian officials and rulers. The good shepherd is not a domineering ruler. Instead, he cares for his flock and is accountable for the welfare of each individual animal. He is even prepared to lay down his life for his sheep. The imagery of the good shepherd was already used for gods and rulers in writings from Mesopotamia and Israel dating to the third and second millennia BCE, but it only emerged as a leading metaphor and iconographic type in the early Christian period, exemplified by the late Roman mosaic in the mausoleum of the Empress Galla Placidia in Ravenna.

However, the imagery of the shepherd and his flock goes far beyond the Christian and western 'community of image fields' (*Bildfeldgemeinschaft*, a term coined by the German linguist Harald Weinreich [1927–2022]), although its global spread has not yet been studied empirically. While we know, for example, that in the ancient Near East the shepherd and his flock were a metaphor for the relationship between the divine and the faithful, and between the king and the people, shepherd imagery in East Asia, such as in ancient Chinese written culture, has been explored very little. For scholars working from a comparative cultural perspective, the question is whether we can compare the shepherd metaphors in Asia and Europe – in linguistic and visual cultures between which there is a great distance – in a way that is methodologically valid. After all, comparative analyses are usually made of languages, societies and cultures that are more closely related. On the other hand, it might actually be a methodological advantage that this metaphor developed largely independently in Eastern and Western cultures. The differences in the emergence and use of imagery thus make it possible to examine a key political metaphor under very different linguistic and socio-cultural conditions.

Given this situation, our approach assumes that there are no exact parallels between the various shepherd-and-flock concepts, but rather that we will find blurred boundaries (in the manner of Wittgenstein's 'family resemblances') and concepts standing at oblique angles. The shepherd metaphors derived from the various concepts are based on specific manifestations of 'certain general human conceptions and thought structures influenced by particular cultural, mental and socio-historical conditions' (Schwermann 2011: 219). Without assuming homogeneity of the shepherd metaphor, we hope to find out how concepts, developments and contexts converge and diverge in culturally specific ways.

Recent research on governmentality makes a good starting point. A relevant example is the collection of papers entitled *Gute Hirten führen sanft. Über Menschenregierungskünste ('Good Sheperds Make Gentle Leaders. On the Arts of Governing Humans')* by the German sociologist Ulrich Bröckling. In it, he examines practices of external leadership and self-leadership for which he uses the term *Menschenführung* (roughly translated a 'technique of leading people'), which denotes social forms of power (Bröckling 2019: 15–44) and which is based on Michel Foucault's (1926–1933) history of governmentality (Foucault 2007). Bröckling follows Foucault in viewing the concept of the relationship between shepherd and flock as ultimately deriving from the pastoral metaphor.

The shepherd metaphor is currently receiving renewed interest as a model for social relationships, not least because of its enduring persistence into the modern age. Foucault regarded it as a new form of exercising power, in which methodical leadership establishes a 'relationship of submission' (Foucault 2007: 175), in contrast with leadership through direct coercion. This is therefore not only a question of techniques of external leadership and self-leadership, but also of how the concepts of leadership address individual subjects, and 'how they understand themselves, care for themselves and work on themselves and, last but not least, which affective dispositions and which agency are attributed to them.' (Bröckling 2018: 32).

More fundamentally, there is an important difference between ruling and leading, which is seen as a 'gentle' form of power. While *ruling* involves constraints such as military orders or judicial decisions, the practices of pastoral care or psychological therapies are prime examples of *leading*. According to Foucault and Bröckling, this gives rise to the general profile of the metaphor: the figure of the shepherd who cares for and protects his flock emerges 'as a counter-concept to that of the sovereign' (Bröckling, 2019: 19), who rules without concerning themselves with the individual or the group. For us, there arises not only the question of how the metaphor of the good shepherd – or more widely of the *good herdsman*, who in other geographical contexts has animals other than sheep in his care – was rhetorically implemented as a model of human leadership, but more fundamentally also the problem of whether the distinction between leading and ruling can be applied across historical and cultural boundaries.

Let us look at Chinese herdsmen first. A passage from the *Guoyu* 國語 (*Texts [Sorted According to] the States*), a mirror of princes from the Warring States period (Zhanguo 戰國, fifth century–221 BCE), exemplifies the conventionalised use of the shepherd metaphor as part of its theory of governance. An official explains the monarch's function as a moral example to the prince of a regional state as follows:

> 且夫君也者，將牧民而正其邪者也，若君縱私回而棄民事，民旁有慝無由省之，益邪多矣。
> (*Guoyu* 1978: 4.182)
>
> Moreover a prince in the true sense of the word will herd/govern the people and correct their misbehaviour. But if a prince should indulge in his own selfish pursuits and neglect the affairs of the people, there will be misdeeds everywhere among the people and no way of investigating them, and there will be many more misdeeds accordingly.

One could think that this reference to the monarch's function as a moral example implies a gentle form of exercising power, but compare the following passage from chapter 30 of the *Shiji* 史記 (*The Grand Scribe's*

[1] The full version of this article is available in German under the title "Führen gute Hirten sanft? Zum Problem der Revitalisierung von Metaphern in historisch vergleichender Perspektive," *metaphorik.de* 35 (2024): 147–192.

Records), which was written at the imperial court by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–c. 86 BCE), who built on the preliminary work of his father and predecessor, Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE). It describes the career of a man named Bu Shi 卜式, said to have been a herdsman who attained the post of a senior administrative official thanks to his goat-herding skills, which he was able to transfer to the people in his district:

> 初，式不願為郎。上曰：「吾有羊上林中，欲令子牧之。」式乃拜為郎，布衣屩而牧羊。歲餘，羊肥息。上過見其羊，善之。式曰：「非獨羊也，治民亦猶是也。以時起居；惡者輒斥去，毋令敗羣。」上以式為奇，拜為緱氏令試之，緱氏便之。遷為成皋令，將漕最。上以為式朴忠，拜為齊王太傅。
> (*Shiji* 1959: 30.1432)
>
> At first [Bu] Shi did not want to be a palace servant. The emperor said to him: 'I have goats in Shanglin [Park]; I would like you to herd them.' So [Bu] Shi became a palace servant and, dressed in a simple linen robe and hempen shoes, he tended the goats. After something over a year, the goats had grown sleek and plentiful. The emperor passed by and saw them, and he was pleased. [Bu] Shi said, 'It does not only apply to goats: governing people is the same thing. You have them get up or rest at the right time, and you remove the bad ones before they can spoil the flock.' The emperor thought that [Bu] Shi was remarkable, so he made him a magistrate of [the district of] Goushi and had him try his hand there. The district benefited, and [the emperor] promoted him to magistrate of Cheng'gao, where he was in charge of grain transport and did excellent work. The emperor found [Bu] Shi to be sincere and loyal, and so he appointed him chief tutor to the titular king of Qi.

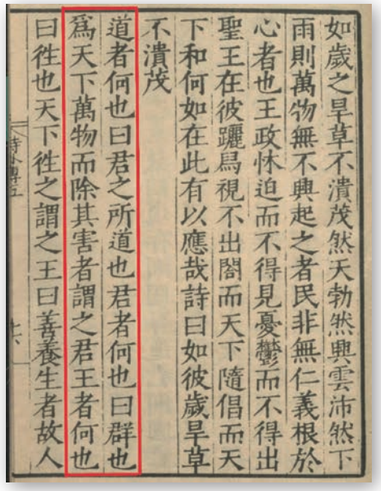
The anecdote uses the word *mu* 牧, 'to herd', but not in its figurative sense. The verb occurs twice, both times in relation to the goats herded by Bu Shi. It is applied to the governance of humans only by means of a comparison, which is emphasised by the marker *you* 猶, 'to be like': 'It not only applies to goats. Governing people is the same thing.' In contrast, the term *zhi min* 治民 is used to refer to the governing of people. The synonymy of the words *mu*, 'to shepherd', and *zhi* 治, 'to govern', is made explicit by their successive use.

The actual shepherd metaphor, however, is in the word *qun* 羣. Its basic meaning is 'flock' or 'herd', but at the time the text was written it had already been used for several centuries to denote a group of people. Only the explicit comparison of herding goats with governing people revitalises the metaphor. Linguistically speaking, the word *mu*, which occurs twice, functions as a carrier, i.e. as a linguistic element that bridges the semantic distance between the intended concept and the literal meaning of the metaphorical expression and thereby makes explicit the metaphor's change of meaning and conceptualisation. In this case, it makes the reader aware of the original meaning of *qun*, whereupon *zhi* draws attention to the metaphoric change in meaning from 'herd' to 'group'.

Early twentieth century print of *The Grand Scribe's Records (Shiji)* based on an 18th-century edition commissioned by Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1735–1796), scan of print edition at Ruhr University Bochum. This work comprises a comprehensive historical record spanning from the mythological origins of Chinese civilisation to the early Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). Quote framed in red.

The character 羊 (*yang*, 'goat'), is also a carrier. It represents the semantophore, i.e. the meaning-bearing component, of the character 羣 (*qun*) and thereby thus emphasises the basic meaning of the word *qun*, 'a herd of goats'. In fact, the metaphor for governance is literally encoded in the character, which is made up of the elements 羊 (*yang*, 'goat') and 君 (*jun*, 'prince'). While the meaning of a Chinese word cannot necessarily be deduced from the individual components of the character with which it is conventionally written, we may assume that authors who employed the metaphor of the herd in their texts made use of the way the character 羣 was written, by drawing attention to the polysemy of the word *qun* by means of carriers. As *jun* (pronounced *kwən in Old Chinese [OC]) and *qun* (OC pronounced *gwən) sounded almost alike both in antiquity and in modern Standard Chinese, except for the initial *k* or *g* (Schuessler 2009: 335), they lent themselves to puns and word play. One example is in *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (*The Outer Commentary to the Book of Songs by Master Han*):

> 「君者何也？」曰：「羣也。為天下萬物而除其害者謂之君。」
> (*Hanshi waizhuan jianshu* 2012: 5.506)
>
> What does it mean to be a prince? The answer is, To assemble (*qun*). They call him a prince (*jun*) who governs all the creatures in the world and removes the harmful ones among them.



Facsimile of a Ming dynasty (1368–1644) woodblock print of *The Outer Commentary to the Book of Songs by Master Han (Hanshi waizhuan)* attributed to the erudite official Han Ying 韓嬰 (second cent. BCE), scan of facsimile edition at Ruhr University Bochum. The work contains a collection of 360 anecdotes as well as interpretations and moral teachings elaborating on the *Book of Songs (Shijing* 詩經) in order to illuminate Confucian values and philosophical insights pertinent to the Han dynasty. Quote framed in red.

Qun can be taken here as a nominalised derivative verb with the meaning 'to assemble (a herd or flock)'. As in the anecdote about Bu Shi, this definition explains the concept of a monarch through his duty to protect his people (his flock) by eliminating harm. This latter element is a central aspect of the ancient Chinese shepherd or herdsman metaphor, and a marked difference to its European counterpart. While the definition of a monarch's function in the *Guoyu* spoke of 'correcting misbehaviour' (*zheng qi xie* 正其邪), the herdsman's art in its metaphorical sense in the examples quoted above consists of removing destructive members of the flock. The same idea is expressed in the related metaphor of the gardening state, in which the monarch is a gardener who removes the weeds from his plot. The concept of the gardening state was coined by the Polish–British sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) and taken up by the German Sinologist Heiner Roetz in his writings about the concept of a 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui* 和諧社會) in the People's Republic of China. Roetz defines the gardening state as a state 'that cultivates its territory like a crop, paying attention to the harmonious cohesion of the whole and removing disruptive weeds'. (Roetz 2016: 129). The idea behind this concept still guides the political leaders of the People's Republic of China. In 2015, the Communist Party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) published an article called 'Horses that Harm the Herd' ('*Hai qun zhi ma*' 害羣之馬; Zhongguo jijian jiancha bao 2015), in which the dismissal of several – unnamed – politicians is justified with reference to the metaphor of horse herding and the following passage from the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*The Master of Huainan*):

> 治國者若鎒田，去害苗者而已。
> (*Huainanzi jishi* 1998: 16.1165)
>
> Governing a country is like weeding a plot: all that matters is to remove what harms the sprouts.

Brick stone relief (c. third to fifth century CE) excavated in a tomb near the city of Jiayuguan, showing a herdsman with horses; currently preserved at the Gansu Provincial Museum.
Photo: Website Gansu Province Institute of Economic Research

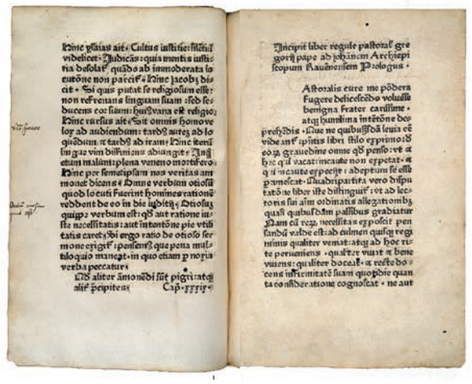
Both of these points support the thesis that, unlike its European counterpart, the ancient Chinese herdsman metaphor did not focus on the spiritual guidance and care of those governed, but rather visualised them as a resource to be cultivated as efficiently as possible. In comparative terms it should be emphasised that the metaphorical pastoral office was conceived as a secular office. Unlike medieval Europe, Ancient China had no institution comparable to the Christian church. The herdsman metaphor could therefore not be used to

draw a distinction between spiritual and secular rule, and to relate both types of governance to each other. For governance as compassionate leadership there were other metaphors, especially that of the family.

Let us look at Europe in comparison. The shepherd metaphor gained enormous currency in medieval Latin Europe with the emergence of the Christian church, and became an influential model of human leadership due to the Bible's culture-shaping effect. The dynamic relationship between scholarly Latin and the vernacular languages was fundamental to this rise and spread. The good shepherd is as familiar in English as *le bon pasteur* is in French, *der gute Hirte* in German or *el buen pastor* in Spanish. At the same time, the metaphor reflects a social and political reality that was essentially determined by the tense coexistence of ecclesiastical and secular power. These basic conditions alone explain why the imagery of the shepherd and his flock had a recognisably different conceptual structure in medieval Europe than in pre-modern China.

Painted wooden tablet by the Sienese painter Andrea di Bartolo (1358?–1428) from around 1397, depicting the Italian clergyman, theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274); currently preserved at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany.
Photo: Jeni Kirby History public domain archive

The traditional shepherd metaphor was reconceptualised in the fourth and the sixth centuries CE by two scholars of the early church, Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–390) and Gregory the Great (c. 540–604). They transformed the knowledge about human leadership that was associated with the metaphor, and shaped in a way that has endured into our own modern times. Gregory the Great wrote the *Liber Regulæ Pastoralis*,



***Regula Pastoralis*, a treatise on pastoral care, written by Pope Gregory I (590–604) in the sixth century, offering guidance for bishops on how to lead, instruct, and shepherd their flock in accordance with Christian teachings and moral responsibility. This edition was printed in brown ink in Basel before 1472 and is now housed in the University of Glasgow Library.**
Photo: Flickr, public domain C BY-NC-SA 2.0

the 'Book of Pastoral Rule', in Rome in 590. It provided a powerful foundation not only for the pastoral tasks of the church, but also for the secular practice of leadership. Gregory described the pastor's work as the 'art of arts' and, drawing on his late-Roman sources, compared it with the art of healing because, like medicine, it required experience (Müller 2021: 170–172). This is another instance of the divergence between European and Chinese herdsman metaphors: by using the analogy to the medical art of healing, Gregory explicitly conceptualised the pastoral office in a self-reflexive way as a superior art of human leadership, which required competence and was closely linked to the discourse of his time on physical healing, salvation and self-care (Eikelmann 2020). The concept of the good shepherd evolved to become an official title for the leading representatives of the church, while on a conceptual level the shepherd metaphor gave rise to a veritable 'art of governing' (Foucault 2007: 165) in both religious and political practice.

For the pastoral leadership concept, the word and the concept of the shepherd or herdsman provides an initial semantic point of departure. The Latin noun *pastor* as well as the Middle English *sheepherde* and Old English *scēaphyrde*, from *scēap* (sheep) and *hierde* (herdsman), occur both early and widely in the literal sense. This is confirmed by the figurative readings of the term as 'leader of a people', 'God as the good shepherd', 'shepherd of souls, pastor', which occurred widely and were conventionalised at an early stage through their use in the writings of the Church Fathers and ecclesiastical language, as well as in translations of the Bible both into Latin and the vernacular languages. A look at the word formation reveals the agentive semantics of

the term *shepherd*, i.e. the semantics relating to the subject that performs an action: the Latin term *pastor* is derived from the verb *pascere*, 'to pasture' and refers to the shepherd in his role as agent for providing the flock with food. *Shepherd*, like *pastor*, is also an agent noun; but it, and even more clearly the term *herdsman*, emphasises the affiliation to the herd or flock, which structures the term's metaphorical potential.

This is not to say that its word formation in a given language conceptually restricted the scope of the shepherd metaphor. For as much as the metaphor initially focused on the dependency between the herdsman and his flock, it nevertheless made it possible to re-dimension human leadership in terms of the actors' agency and the intersubjective dynamics of action. The ambivalence of the shepherd image contributes to this potential, which, as we saw, in European contexts always implies the herdman's position of power over his flock in addition to his care for it.

The political thinking of the High Middle Ages, which began with the scholastic reception of Aristotle, took the shepherd metaphor and developed from it an idealised concept of the just and good king, who was committed to the common good and knew no self-interest. Thomas Aquinas developed this idea in his political treatise 'On Kingship, to the King of Cyprus' (*De regno, ad regem Cypri*), which he wrote in the 1260s or 1270s. In the first chapter, Thomas cites shepherd metaphors from the Old Testament book of *Ezekiel* to define the concept of the king in more detail:

> *unde Dominus per Ezechielem dicit: 'Servus meus David rex super eos erit et pastor unus erit omnium eorum.' Ex quo manifeste ostenditur quod de ratione regis est quod sit unus qui presit, et quod sit pastor, bonum commune multitudinis et non suum quaerens.* (Chapter 2.12-13.)
>
> Wherefore the Lord says by the mouth of Ezekiel: 'My servant, David, shall be king over them and all of them shall have one shepherd.' From this it is clearly shown that the idea of king implies that he be one man who is chief and that he be a shepherd, seeking the common good of the multitude and not his own.

This annunciation of the reign of David to which Thomas refers is a *locus classicus* of the shepherd metaphor in the Old Testament. In an earlier passage, Thomas interprets the shepherd metaphor at Ezekiel 34:2 in relation to the common good: if shepherds had to seek the good of their flock, he writes, so should every leader or ruler (*rector*) seek the good of the people they rule. With this conclusion, Thomas links the ideal political order 'more directly than Aristotle to the condition of the common good' (Miethke 2016: 247). This is because 'people, who are by nature dependent on one another, require leadership. Leaders pursue the right path when they seek the "common good", but the wrong one when they pursue their private advantage.' (Ottmann 2004: 207). Thomas argues strongly in favour of monarchy, the superiority of which for him lies in the fact that the king's governance parallels the world governed by God. The concept of monarchy, exemplified by the image of the shepherd, is further contrasted with the tyrant, who is a bad ruler because he only thinks of his own advantage: he does not act rationally, but is self-centred and no different from a wild animal.

We saw from our comparison that the shepherd or herdsman metaphor was conceived quite differently in East and West in terms of semantic family resemblances. The readings of Foucault and Bröckling should not be generalised, especially as the relationship between the shepherd and his flock was already ambivalent and subject to criticism in the European-Christian context. But while shepherds in European thought lead gently but do not govern – this being the domain of political rulers –, it is one feature (among others) of Chinese herdsmen that they can and do use violence, if necessary, against their herd or individual members of it (the black sheep, as it were). As a result, the distinction between leading and governing becomes almost superfluous, as the boundaries between the two concepts blur and melt away.

Given the practical, economic and cultural significance of herding for pre-modern societies, it is hardly surprising that the shepherd metaphor was so widely used in ancient and medieval Chinese and European literatures. What is remarkable, however, are its divergent political implications in the context of the art of governing in East and West. Whether good shepherds lead gently is therefore a question of perspective. In the words of the Germanist Albrecht Schöne, we should 'be aware that "alterity" is not a quality inherent in the phenomena themselves, but a category of our own perception. However, every perception of otherness is based on an act of comparing: we only become aware of the "other" when it differs from the "self" or what we think of as "our own" – just as, conversely, we only become aware of the "self" insofar as it stands out from the "other". Interpersonal "foreignness" is therefore always a two-way thing.' (Schöne 1991: 5).

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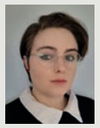

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DEPENDENCIES IN FAMILY STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES IN MODERN CHINA

INTERVIEW WITH JOHANNA S. RANSMEIER

BCDSS Professor Claudia Jarzebowski met up with social and legal historian Johanna S. Ransmeier, to discuss how the concept of strong asymmetrical dependency applies to family life in modern China.

CJ: **Johanna, here at the BCDSS we collaborate with a variety of scholars from all over the world, who bring in new questions and ideas. Of particular interest is how we find our topics and research interests. So, let me ask you for a start: How did your research interest on Modern China develop and why did you become so interested in structures and family practices?**

JR: I grew up in New Hampshire, known in the United States as the tiny northeastern state with the "live free or die" motto on the license plates and "first in the nation" to cast votes in national elections. As a small child, I remember believing that it was normal for presidential candidates to pass through town and personally shake hands with my neighbors. That is to say, my sense of political scale was highly distorted. The events of 1989; the democracy movement in China and the ensuing brutal June 4 crackdown, the fall of the Berlin Wall; though on opposite sides of the earth and far from home, seemed somehow immediate. The idea that young people could stand up and demand change felt reasonable, right, and pressing. After riding the democracy news-cycle roller-coaster of that year, I was hooked. I began reading a lot about political movements in China and especially the role of young people in those movements. It was bewildering to imagine how so many could become so intoxicated by ideas that proved capricious and deadly. I was disturbed by the Chinese Communist Party's demand that children denounce parents, and even more thrown off balance by memoirs in which former Red Guards described doing just that.

My interests in history or art might have pulled me in any number of directions, but they crystalized in classes with a wonderful Chinese history professor in college. Jerry Dennerline's approach to open-ended discussion and the fallibility of different types of sources set the standard for me for research integrity and creative approaches to historical thinking. Even so, it took me several years of working with Chinese artists and democracy activists in the human rights field to find my way to graduate studies.

At some point I realized how little attention historians previously paid to patterns of enslavement as they extended into the Qing period. In the China-based historiography, there was a very strong discursive habit of referring to slavery as part of a feudal ancient past. Western tendencies to view the Atlantic slave trade as a standard by which

all other slaveries are somehow assessed also revealed little. One China scholar in the mid-twentieth century even wrote that "slavery in Qing China was of a 'milder' form." I'd been a reading capital case file in which an enslaved girl was scalded to death by her mistress as punishment for a petty infraction, and wondered to myself: milder to whom? By what measure? And why measure at all? For that one girl, the experience of enslavement meant total obliteration. For any single enslaved or vulnerable and dependent person, the contingency of a system deemed mild by later historians with their own political agendas meant nothing. At one point, I had a respected senior classmate from China over for dinner. He warned me that my topic was non-existent, a non-starter, slavery in China happened only in the distant past. Moments later in a separate conversation, his wife whispered to me that her grandmother "was a sold person" (*shi beimaide ren* 是被賣的人). I kept encountering well-intentioned warnings, confronting a tension between a kind of historiographic blindness and a reality that I saw playing out example by example in both archives and family histories.

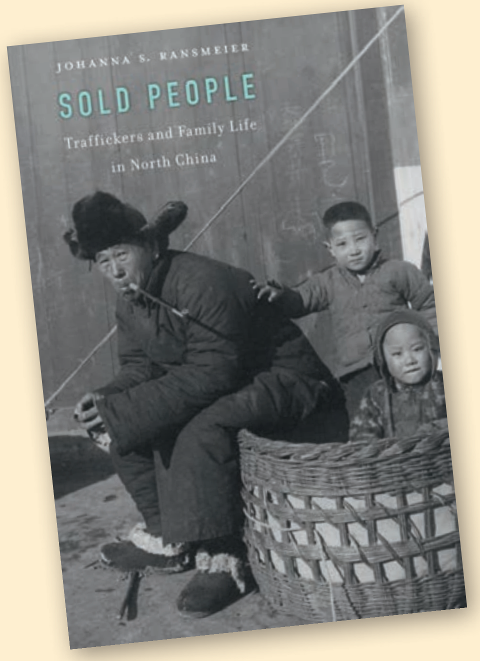
I can happily report that many of the historical misconceptions about Chinese forms of slavery in the Late Imperial Period have begun to change. The possibility of a rigorous history of enslavement in China no longer needs to be discussed in whispers. Claude Chevaleyre, who collaborates with the BCDSS (and wrote the opening article for this DEPENDENT issue) has played an important role in bringing this about.

CJ: **One of our concerns at the BCDSS is how slavery and dependency, strong asymmetrical dependency to be precise, belong together against the background of historical continuities and disruption. What I understand from your work is that you are interested in both: continuities and disruptions. So, my question is, how does dependency as a novel research paradigm help you to understand family structures and practices in modern China?**

JR: Understanding why slavery has persisted in so many cultures around the world requires more than studying the obvious exploitations, oppressions, and violent wrongs of slavery. While the powerful profit off the bodies of the enslaved, their net enrichment and broad privilege does not provide a sufficient explanation. The logic of *dependency*, however, reveals a system where both the free and the unfree, exploiter and exploited, mutually (though never equally) perpetuate their relationship. As a research paradigm, then, *strong asymmetrical dependency* permits the historian to raise an unspeakable question: What stake do the enslaved have in slavery? This perverse question helps us explore why certain forms prove so intractable; why, for so many, resistance could feel counter-productive. Under what conditions do people become participants in their own oppression? And, what does it mean to identify this kind of circumscribed and compromised "agency"? Furthermore, by broadening the category of people beyond binaries of free-unfree, this paradigm also allows historians consider the ways in which forms of dependency operated across diverse cultural contexts.

In China during the Late Qing and Republican period, family relationships and demands for filial loyalty undergirded relationships of dependency. While (as I mentioned above) many historians of China might still hesitate to use the language of slavery to discuss various transactions in people, the relationships evoked by "dependency" feel instantly familiar. Over time, evolving family formations and labor relationships allowed individuals to make self-sacrificing demands; especially taxing upon subordinate members of households. While the justification of survival threaded through many of the most exploitative relationships, other familial logics also permeated dependent relationships. Enslaved or indentured laborers serving a household might be legally beaten for their lapses, but they could also demand support from the household economy. Under successive Chinese governing regimes, the legality of forms of dependency and mechanisms to establishing dependent relationships shifted, but cultures of filiality, loyalty, and hierarchy (and even allegiance to the state) remained salient – often as they were simultaneously contested or even inverted.

In *Sold People*, my first book, I framed my investigation of these conditions around China's 1910 prohibition of the sale of people. Tracing "trafficking" in judicial archives and police files, I uncovered transactions in people embedded across many parts of Chinese family life. This evidence revealed the sale of people not only to be a survival tactic, or a form of exploitation or a manifestation of inequality, but, perhaps more surprisingly, to be a constitutive part of family construction. This remained the case decades after the nominal legislative prohibition. Much of the historiographical failure to recognize these patterns stemmed from adhering too strictly to abstract paradigms and or definitions borrowed from other contexts. But using a more open concept, like dependency, allows me to consider different kinds of relationships, especially those in which consent and complicity in trafficking played a vital role in the perpetuation of these practices.

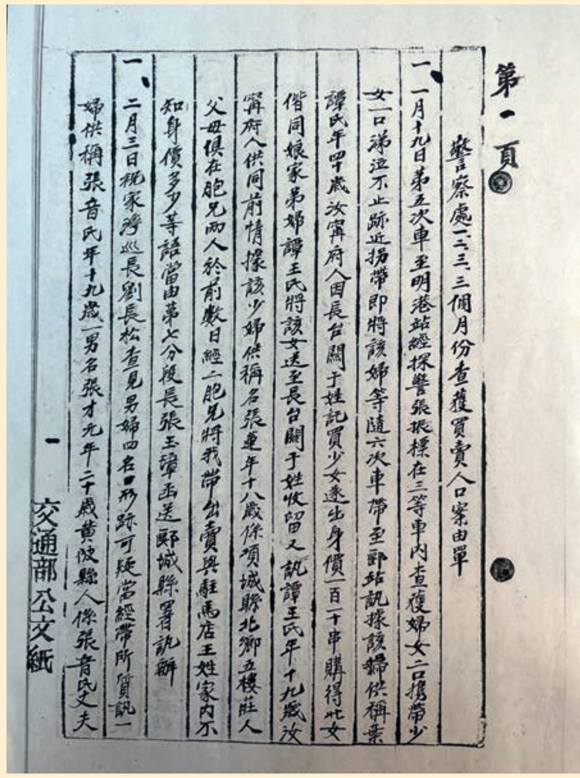


Johanna S. Ransmeier, *Sold People. Traffickers and Family Life in North China*, Harvard University Press, 2017.

China's legislation prohibiting trafficking coincided with a project to overhaul the country's legal codes, and, within a year, the fall of the last imperial dynasty. These events also coincided with conversations around the role of citizens in the Chinese Republic, the place of the individual in society and within the family, and new awareness around rights under the law. But expanding assertions of legal autonomy and individual rights troubled traditional structures of patronage and obligation. Freedom from shelter and freedom from sustenance meant little to a former dependent cast on into the street. Old contracts built upon the logic of sale needed to be redrawn for the new era, or were dispensed with altogether. This had the unpleasant side effect of shredding many of the limited protections extended to trafficked, indentured, or otherwise brokered people.

CJ: **As a historian of childhood, emotion, violence and gender, I have a distinct interest in agency and how to conceptualize "agency" from the standpoints and experiences of strongly dependent men, women, and children. I wonder whether you would share a few of your methodological tools in order to approach subalternized groups in history?**

JR: I am wary of claiming to know of special tools or to possess particular skills when trying to retrieve or retrace subaltern experiences, because merely by taking on the role of the historian and record keeper, we risk re-inscribing old or inventing new forms of historical disenfranchisement or textual violence. Perhaps the most important methodological tool, then, is transparency, whether that be about the sources explored or even the expectations researchers themselves bring. In my own writing, I also strive to be stylistically transparent; to use language to explicitly differentiate close reading from moments of speculation, and from other passages when I allow my imagination to help me empathize across the temporal gulf of history. I also try to look for incidental details that those in power may have recorded inadvertently. One way to do this is to stay alert to biology, (descriptions of childbirth, or of nursing a child, managing an illness, seasonal food supply), or to geography (the imperatives of traveling distances, the non-negotiable empirical realities of time, terrain, food supply). When researching "subalternized" groups, we must remain attentive to the agendas (both explicit and implicit) of the record keepers. In the early 1920s the Ministry of Internal Affairs called upon China's provinces to submit evidence demonstrating their efforts to curtail the sale of people. The Beijing-Hankou Railroad police compiled what records they could of arrests and detentions along the railway.


第一頁
警察處一二三三個月份查獲買賣人口案由單
一 一月十九日第五次車至明港站經探警張振標在三等車內查獲婦女二口攜帶少
女一口弟逕不止跡近拐帶即將該婦等隨六次車帶至鄭站訊據該婦供稱業
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寧府人供同前情據該少婦供稱名張重年十八歲係項城縣北鄉五樓莊人
父母俱在胞兄兩人於前數日經二胞兄將我帶出賣與駐馬店王姓家內不
知身價多少等語當由第七分段長張玉璋函送郾城縣署訊辦
一 二月三日稅家灣巡長劉長松查見男婦四名形跡可疑當經帶所質訊一
婦供稱張音氏年十九歲一男名張才元年二十歲黄陂縣人係張音氏丈夫
交通部公文紙

This is first page of a draft of a report from Beijing Hankou Railroad Police from the files of the Ministry of Transportation for the three months of January, February and March of 1922. This set of reports consist of observations made by detectives at the station platform. For example: One young girl's incessant crying aroused seemed suspicious. Further investigation revealed that the young girl had been purchased by the older woman who was accompanying her. The reports include descriptions and ages of people involved, amounts paid in cash, and other details of their circumstances. The reports were written in response to a request from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The file is from the Number Two Historical Archive in Nanjing, China (1001 3981).

The frequency of their reports suggests initial enthusiasm followed either by a decrease in incidents. There is little in the substance of their reports to suggest that this trajectory indicated fewer traffickers and sold people were on the move, however. What their reports do contain is remarkable detail about clothing, strategies traffickers used to cover their tracks when buying tickets, regional accents, hand-offs, and startling moments of resistance from trafficked people

who managed to escape. Many descriptions from railroad police also allow us to see individuals negotiating with their captors, in brief but important expressions of agency.

When I first read Ranajit Guha's "The Prose of Counter-insurgency" I remember being utterly intrigued by his strategies for using documents generated by the colonial state to read the experience of the subaltern. His simplistic inversions (when the state writes "religious fanatic" we read "devout practitioner") suddenly opened up a whole new way of approaching sources for me. Though flawed, permission to play with this way of reading seemed to allow whole groups of people to escape from imprisonment within the language of the powerful. The illiterate insurgent is not "defying the authority of the state," but "demanding self-determination." An illiterate servant who runs away to a shelter when she learns she may be resold is expressing legal knowledge: the laws have changed, and her gamble may be worth the risk.

CJ: Intersectionality – is a concept that has brought about change in the humanities. Historians have added to the classic set of gender, class, race categories such as age, (dis)-ability to name but a few. I wonder whether you as an expert of Asian History have suggestions how to rethink these categories. And: are there any categories that you miss in the debates on intersectionality?

JR: So, as we know, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined "intersectionality" to provide conceptual language to describe and animate the ways in which social oppression impacts individuals and groups with hybrid and multifaceted identities. People living at the intersection of different backgrounds do not simply experience an intensification of oppression, but rather must navigate the dynamic ways forms of exploitation interact. Intersectionality calls upon us to be attentive to multivalent forces of oppression, but it also relies heavily on defining identities as they intersect. The ways that this act of defining itself can create rigidity remains a weak point in the theory.

This image is from the Brief Daily News Pictorial 淺說日日新聞畫報, published in Beijing in 1909. The accompanying text describes the deadly mistreatment of a servant by a daughter in law, and decries the lax punishment of her abusers.

With regard to China, I do not feel that we have fully explored the way this rich term could be employed to consider the intersection of categories that have shaped exploitation across time. China's circumstances might also provide a way to constructively reconstitute intersectionality – not merely expanding the palette of selections available for identity politics– but also by demonstrating in a non-Euro-American context the double-edged nature of claiming and asserting intersectional identities. Non-China specialists often do not fully appreciate the vast linguistic diversity of China (home to over three hundred languages) or the ways in which not only ethnic categories but also regional identity comes into play as individuals navigate social-political space and face systematic discrimination. China's ethnic policy has long allocated affirmative-action type privileges (more lenient family planning laws, lower required test scores for college admission, allocated representation in certain governing bodies) to members of the country's 55 recognized minority ethnic groups. Although these privileges were offered by the state as modest compensation for discrepancies in resources and disparities in opportunities, the perception of unfairness has caused resentment among the dominant Han majority population. Backlash against these attempted remedies combined with a shifting national policy prioritizing a homogeneous Chinese national identity has amplified past discrimination.

In 2017 the full force of the CCPs campaign to dissolve the identities of Turkic Muslims through re-educational labor camps, mandatory vocational programing, surveillance, forced adoption and other forms of systematic disenfranchisement began to catch international attention. By 2018, concerned PRC citizens and overseas Chinese as well as allies in Taiwan met on a new social media space, on the Clubhouse app, for a real time conversation: "Are the Han Chinese the White People of China?" Although the stakes in raising the question of discrimination in PRC society, and of participating in such a conversation are high, it is clear that some in the PRC want to grapple with these oppressions.

Two additional factors complicate our sense of categories, and, if considered in light of intersectionality, force us to weigh the importance of inherited status and the dynamic role of history as a potential factor in intersectionality. Even today, the PRC's system of household registration (hukou 戶口) remains a significant restriction on where people can work, receive health care, or send their children to school. There is a clear demarcation between those with urban hukou and those with rural hukou, as well as distinctions between urban hukou in more or less desirable cities. While it is possible to change one's hukou status, the process involves many logistical and bureaucratic hurdles and is most feasible for "exceptional" individuals. This institutionalized discrimination reifies long-standing practices of disenfranchising rural people and remains a significant barrier to upward mobility for many. It has allowed for internal labor exploitation as legal migrant worker residency was often contingent on employment (and under most circumstances not extended to workers' offspring).

Just as hukou has been (and remains) a category of systematic discrimination, so does the second related factor of political class background. Class as an underappreciated component category of intersectionality means something more potent and more historically inflected in a country with a history of communist revolution, class struggle, and anti-rightist campaigns. To be sure, past class origin as a category of intersectional constraint may prove less relevant in the future, in an increasingly capitalist-oriented China, but if we are reading historical materials, family social class and political class must be appreciated as perhaps one of the most important factors shaping discrimination in the Mao and post-Mao period.

The case of the People's Republic of China offers a chance to think about intersectionality as a force that evolves over time. Appreciating the way these political and state-defined categories have shaped identity and exploitation in China over time, and have thwarted different groups ability to mobilize and advance, raises a new dynamic perspective on the exponential math of accumulated social pressure. The PRC example introduces questions about how the heavy hand of the state defines, redefines, magnifies, or erases identity for its own ends.

CJ: Thank you for the interview!

Johanna S. Ransmeier 任思梅
is a social and legal historian of modern China and an associate professor at the University of Chicago. She studies the surprising ways crime and the law intersect with family life in China. Her first book Sold People: Traffickers and Family Life in North China (Harvard University Press, 2017) exposed the transactional foundations of traditional family structures and the role of human trafficking in late Qing and Republican China. Her current research explores legal literacy and the development of a Chinese legal imagination. She received her doctorate in Chinese history from Yale University and is a graduate of Amherst College. She is a fellow with the National Committee on US China Relations Public Intellectuals Program (Cohort V) and was a visiting research fellow at the Institute of Modern History at Academia Sinica in Taiwan.

Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski
is BCDSS Professor for Early Modern History and Dependency Studies. She researches global and gender history of the early modern period, including the history of dependence and enslavement, as well as the genesis of bourgeois society. She currently focuses on trauma and violence in Dependency Studies and childhood and gender in Early Modern Global History. She has previously focused on the social and cultural history of the early modern period, the history of children and emotion during the period of 1450-1800, and on historical research into violence and crime.

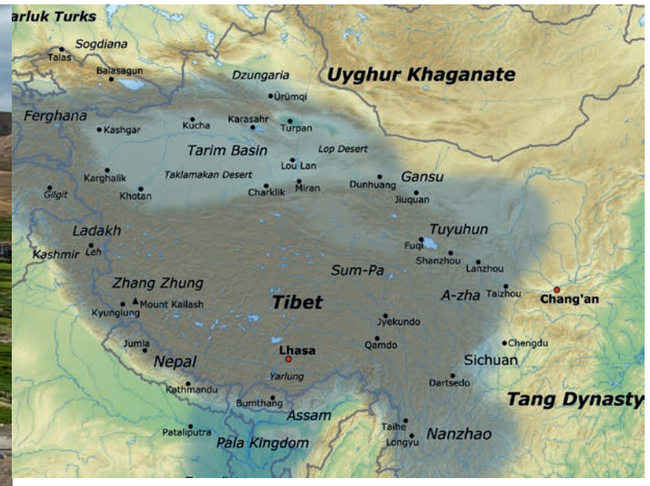
Sakya Monastery in Tibet ©Wikimedia. Photo by Antoine Taveneaux

POST-IMPERIAL DEPENDENCIES IN TIBETAN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

by Lewis Doney

THE WAKE OF EMPIRE

All empires end. Yet, what comes next, and how does a post-imperial populace cope or react to these changing times? In Tibet, the past holds great power and narratives about the Tibetan empire (c. 600–850) continued after its fall, but increasingly re-imagined this time along Buddhist lines. The Tibetan empire therefore left a strong "wake," such as a ship leaves behind after it has passed, but in Tibetan literature its remembrance also resembles a "wake" after a funeral: remembering the dead in a half-religious, half-celebratory mood. Part of the idealization of the Tibetan imperial period as a "golden age" of Buddhist practice ironically ended up supplanting the imperial hierarchy that placed the emperor at the top of Tibetan society with a new social structure giving religious masters pre-eminence. Their rise in status was no doubt supported by the vacuum in meaning left after the fall of the empire, which was filled in mostly with Buddhist values coming mostly from South Asian literature. The growing popularity of Buddhism among Tibetans by the early second millennium seems to have necessitated a literary overthrow of any non-Buddhist hierarchies that remained from the old order and although the emperors were still idealized, it was either in purely Buddhist terms and/or as disciples of mostly Indic Buddhist masters.



Map of the Tibetan empire at its greatest extent between the 780s and the 790s CE. ©Wikimedia. Photo by Javierfv1212

Prof. Dr. Peter Schwieger, my predecessor at Bonn and a former Principal Investigator of the BCDSS, has already analyzed this shift from a social perspective. He showed how Buddhism gradually became the dominant ethical source of values in Tibetan cultural areas, helping to privilege especially elite monastic groups in post-imperial Tibetan society. He identified Tibetan literature as one key motivator of this shift towards Tibetans' dependency on clerics, including Buddhist histories and biographies which narrativize the remembered past. In my recent work, I have aimed to complement Schwieger's analysis of the shift from a royal to a religious center of society by focusing on historiography—Tibetan traditions of writing histories and biographies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

I am especially looking at narratives of the Tibetan emperors and their introduction of Buddhism to the "land of snows" (*gangchen yül, gangs can yul*) from the perspective of cognitive narratology. This approach helps assess the emotional or empathetic effect, the "affect," of narratives on audiences. It thus grounds these texts within discourses of (unequal) power that readers may not be immediately aware of but can still internalize and use to interpret their relations with (asymmetrical) power structures in the real world. Religious biographies (*namtar, rnam thar*) and Buddhist histories (*chöjung, chos 'byung*) proved extremely popular among post-imperial audiences, though there was more crossover between these "genres" of Tibetan literature than the distinct English terms "biography" and "history" suggest. Both genres also tended to be cumulative traditions, expanding with greater detail and including previous narratives as "strata" to form multi-layered compilations. Elite compilers of historiography thereby created increasingly complex "storyworlds"—to borrow a term from cognitive narratologist Erin James—rather than reassessing or completely retelling their stories anew (though some exceptions exist especially in the later tradition).

Through the prism of especially Buddhist historiography, a vision of the Tibetan empire emerged that was increasingly identified with the values of Indic Buddhism rather than military expansion. Narratives reflecting the influence of Buddhist literature and the cultural memory of post-imperial Tibetans transformed the cosmopolitan Tibetan imperial world into a wild borderland contrasted with the Indian subcontinent of the first millennium. This was first achieved through biographical sketches of its emperors bringing Buddhist masters to court from outside their empires and thereby "taming" the land of snows in readiness for conversion. Then biographies of the masters themselves to some extent sidelined the rulers within their own stories—replaced particularly by Indic gurus, or lamas (*bla ma*) in Tibetan.

Tri Songdétsen as a Buddhist king. ©Wikimedia. Photo by Erik Törner

The ability to make a strong connection with an audience (that can last down the generations) and help readers build bonds of empathy with the main characters in a risk-free storyworld is a clear positive aspect or "affordance" of narrative. However, narratologists approaching them from the perspective of social power dynamics, such as Erin James paraphrasing another cognitive narratologist Suzanne Keen, warn that "narrative empathy can be dangerous in that it confirms in-group associations and can foster readers' emotional and imaginative connection with the bad behavior and prejudicial attitudes of characters who inhabit similar subject positions." The cognitive study of Tibetan Buddhist worldbuilding and its (especially Indic) precursors can thus show the diversity and mechanics of how audiences related to and incorporated storyworlds in their daily lives. It also has the power to show how these worlds were adapted and expanded in ways that tended to benefit both Buddhism and the Tibetan elites who espoused their new re-imaginings and the application of their values and hierarchies to society.

THE INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism began to have a major impact on the Tibetan plateau with the expansion of the Tibetan empire from the seventh century onwards. The numbers of Buddhist priests and artists invited from outside and patronized by the emperors increased with the growing wealth of the court and the late eighth century marks a watershed moment for the institution of Buddhism. At this time, the Tibetan empire was at the height of its military power and reached its greatest geographical extent. The emperor (*tsenpo, btsan po*) sat at both the center and zenith of imperial Tibetan society—at least according to the imperial self-representation of court documents that form virtually our only source of written information for this period. From the official perspective of the court, the semi-divine emperors held a position of ultimate power and land ownership across the Tibetan plateau. This great position and wealth allowed Emperor Tri Songdétsen (*khri srong lde brtsan*, 742–c. 800) to confer the status of state religion on Buddhism, and thus high levels of patronage and protection on its ordained monks, or sangha. His own edicts record that he spread (or perhaps imposed) the religion throughout his empire, thereby realizing his intention of granting all Tibetans access to Buddhist liberation from the mundane world of suffering, samsara.

Due to the efforts of the emperor and the sangha, a mass translation exercise led by Buddhist clerics and funded by imperial power helped establish an increasingly Tibetan Buddhism in the empire. Slowly, Buddhist translation literature began to change the Tibetan language itself. The influx of Indic Buddhist ideas introduced concepts such as karma, rebirth, dharmic kingship, and reverence for gurus, among other new notions of virtuous and non-virtuous action, from South Asia to the land of snows. However, we should not ignore the translations into Tibetan from Chinese, from Silk Road languages like Khotanese or from other Indic Prakrits that formed part of the prestigious, cosmopolitan Buddhist presence at court.

In return, evidence from the northeast of the empire shows the long-lasting influence of the (imperially imposed) Tibetan language as both an international and a local *lingua franca* among largely Chinese communities bordering the Tang empire (618–907) and more multi-ethnic groups living in Silk Road city states across all sorts of types of communication. The abiding impact of Tibetan Buddhism taught through the Tibetan language to East and Central Asian devotees was then felt in later kingdoms and empires, such as among the Ordos, Uyghur and Tangut peoples, the latter of whom would later play their own part in world history in their relations with the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). When the Yuan Mongols indirectly ruled over Tibet through elites of the Sakya (*sa skya*) monastic school, the latter gradually took on new role as gurus to the region's new imperial power. Thus, the masters of Tibetan Buddhism have been popular and well-patronized for centuries, be they Tibetans or Indic adepts, as they traveled via trade routes and were welcomed in minor kingdoms or great empires. In this way, the rise in dependence on the guru or lama in Tibetan Buddhism I aim to chart also affected wider Central and East Asian religion and social power relations even up to the present. So this literature offers significant insights into the history of Tibetan asymmetrical dependencies, as well as religious dependency on Tibetans, up to today.

Padmasambhava surrounded by his spiritual consorts, with the Buddha and two Tibetan emperors depicted at the top . ©Wikimedia. Public domain license cc by Auckland Museum.

The Fifth Dalai Lama in an audience with the Shunzhi emperor, 1651, from a mural in the Dalai Lamas' Potala Palacen. ©Wikimedia. Photo public domain.

FROM IMPERIAL TO RELIGIOUS MASTERS

To unpack the later literary representations of these dependencies, I continue to explore second-millennium biographies and histories concerning the Tibetan empire and especially their narratives of foreign masters bringing Buddhism to the land of snows. I find the ongoing Tibetan adaptation of Buddhism in politicized works of biography and history provides rich ground in which to study the multi-faceted cultural processes of power and resistance at work during this period, playing out such important themes as geopolitical center and periphery discourse and issues of human and material agency in perceived governmental structures—but in sometimes surprising ways.

To oversimplify the shifts taking place in this literature, Buddhist emperors such as Tri Songdétsen at first remain the focus of the documents that describe the imperial period, but are increasingly remembered primarily as royal missionaries rather than military rulers. Gradually though, clerics like the eighth-century Indic master Padmasambhava begin to take center stage and supplant Tri Songdétsen's role in spreading Buddhism among his subjects. Historical and biographical narratives praise the superior spiritual status of these gurus and thereby helped raise the real social status of lamas in the minds of Tibetan audiences and eventually Tibetan culture generally. Dependency on the imperial hierarchy increasingly became dependency on elite religious figures in Tibet, which proved an amazingly stable relationship up until the twentieth-century shift towards dependence on the Chinese state hierarchy. These trends accord well with Peter Schwieger's analysis of the shift from a royal to a religious center of Tibetan society in pre-modern times, since Buddhist historiography also helped authorize and normalize real-life asymmetrical relations in land-use and taxation between the Tibetan populace and their clerics.

The post-imperial expansion of Buddhist historiography created an entirely new storyworld of the imagined Tibetan imperial period that over time expanded by accretion of "strata" and increased the status of religious masters in Tibetan literature. The popularity of this historiography led to a socio-political shift towards dependence on religious masters, who were increasingly viewed as deified through their spiritual achievements and with power over the inhabitants of Tibet ranking above that of the emperors formerly at the pinnacle of society. Thus, the eighth-century invitation of foreign Buddhist masters to the Tibetan imperial court of Tri Songdétsen is retold in later histories based on the biographies of Padmasambhava and from within religious traditions concerned with depicting their own viewpoint as superior to those of others. These new perspectives inform the poetics of world-creation, the ethical conclusions of Tibetan narratives and the power exerted asymmetrically on the "other" religious traditions by means of these narrations. In future, a cognitive narratological analysis of abiding storyworlds and legitimizing affect among narrating and reception communities should shed new light on these processes. Expanding our understanding of both imperial court documents and later religious historiography in this way will also help to assess the comparative levels of asymmetric dependency that each of those types of literature engendered in Tibetan society—and beyond that into newer empires.

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Prof. Dr. Lewis Doney
is professor of Tibetology at the University of Bonn and investigator at the BCDSS.
His research focus lies on the pre-modern social status, daily lived experience and self-identity of Tibetans and those with whom Tibetans interacted within the wider Central Asian milieu, focusing on people at the borders of the Tibetan Empire (c. 600–850 CE). He also researches the later cultural effects of Buddhist literary depictions of the imperial period.

Map of the Province of Negros Occidental, Philippines. ©Wikimedia Commons

A JOURNEY FROM NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, PHILIPPINES, TO KOREA AND BACK

by Christine Mae Sarito

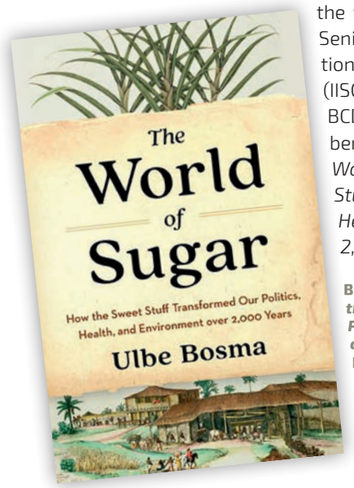
> ***We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there, even though we go away. And there are things in us that we can find again only by going back there.***
>
> *Pascal Mercier, Night Train to Lisbon*

YEARNING FOR 'HOME'

My academic journey away from the Philippines began on 29 August 2010, when I went to Seoul, South Korea, to pursue graduate studies. Receiving the Korean Government Scholarship (now Global Korea Scholarship), ignited my interest in studying Korea's history, beyond *hallyu* (the Korean Wave). My mentors encouraged me to specialise in Korean history since they were not aware of any other Filipino academic focusing on this field. Perhaps due to my youth, I decided to major in modern Korean history, despite having zero knowledge of the Korean language, and departing from my undergraduate research's focus on the sugar industry of Negros Occidental, my home province.

Fast-forward to 2024 – I obtained an MA degree from Sogang University in Seoul and my Korean proficiency is now considerably better than it was more than a decade ago. I am also now in my eighth semester as a PhD Researcher at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), still working on Korean history, this time, in the early modern period. A senior Filipino academic based in the US even remarked that I might be the only Filipino working in this area.

While studying Korean history from an outsider's perspective has been intellectually rewarding, it often brings a quiet longing for something more familiar—a sense of 'home' that feels increasingly distant after years of physical and academic separation. Fortunately, my time at the BCDSS paved the path towards an intellectual 'homecoming.' It began when I learned about the work of Prof. Ulbe Bosma, a Senior Researcher at the International Institute of Social History (IISG) and guest researcher at the BCDSS from August to November 2023. His 2023 book, *The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years*, explores a range



Bosma, U., *The world of sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2023.

of themes that deeply resonated with my earlier studies on the Negros sugar industry, especially regarding asymmetrical dependencies.

Around the same time, the news that the soon-to-be-established sugar museum will be housed in the current city hall of my hometown, Victorias – home to one of Asia's largest sugar mills and refineries, the Victorias Milling Company, Inc. – further sparked my interest, prompting me to ask, "Who and what exactly will be remembered there?"

WHOSE AND WHAT STORIES TO TELL?

Describing the history of the Negros sugar industry as polarising may be an understatement. While some remember the prosperity that came with plantation life, others recall a legacy of hardship. For instance, scions of the *hacendero* families – wealthy sugar plantation owners – would reminisce how they were driven to school in their family-owned Mercedes Benz cars, whereas descendants of sugarcane farm workers would tell their children how they used to walk several kilometres to school barefooted, often on an empty stomach.

This contrast is reflected in a popular Hiligaynon (the local language in Negros Occidental) catchphrase about Negros, *"Sa Negros, ang kuwarta ginapiko kag ginapala"* (translated as "In Negros, money is pickaxed and shoveled"). Appearing on Negros souvenir shirts in the 1990s or perhaps even earlier, this phrase somehow fueled the perception that everyone in Negros led a life of luxury especially during the heyday of the sugar industry in the 1950s and 1960s. However, this prosperity primarily benefited the *hacendero* families, who amassed wealth, power, and influence through the labour of the sugarcane farm workers. The task of presenting a balanced portrayal of this complex history in the upcoming sugar museum undoubtedly poses a challenge for government agencies and other stakeholders, who must carefully consider diverse perspectives in curating the museum's displays and exhibits.

Despite this dilemma, a balanced narrative in the sugar museum might begin with the origins of the Negros sugar industry – starting with the opening of Iloilo, a city located in Negros' neighbouring island of Panay, to world trade in 1855.[1] The involvement of Nicholas Loney, the British vice-consul in Iloilo, was pivotal in promoting the commercial production of sugar to meet the demands of the British market.[2] Equally significant, though lesser-known, is the role of Yves Gaston, a Frenchman and sugar technologist from Lisieux who was trained in Bourbonne and British Mauritius, who initiated the first commercial sugar production in Negros in the late 1840s.

The City Hall of Victorias, the site of the soon-to-be established sugar museum in Negros Occidental. The building, designed by Filipino Architect Juan Arellano, was built in the 1930s during the United States Colonial Period in the Philippines. ©Ian Publico

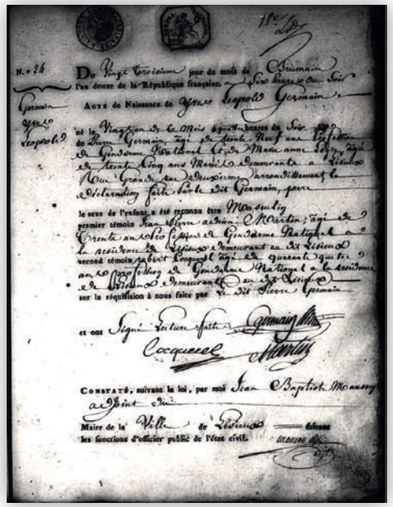
While land in Negros – particularly in Silay – was deemed ideal for sugarcane cultivation, Yves applied his global expertise to local development by installing mechanised iron mills upon settling there in the early 1840s. He likely adapted the practices he learned in Bourbonne and British Mauritius. This innovation transformed Negros' sugar production capabilities, connecting the region to broader global forces—for better or for worse.

Though lesser known, Yves' contributions helped catalyse significant transformations in land use, infrastructure, and migration patterns. His efforts – perhaps in ways he himself might not have predicted – contributed to the clearing of Negros forests to pave way for expansive sugar plantations, as well as the eventual construction of rail networks and centrifugal mills. This economic shift prompted the influx of migrants to Negros, particularly from the provinces of Antique and Iloilo. Together, these developments shaped not only the socio-economic landscape of Negros but also its environmental and demographic aspects.

THE QUEST TO 'FINDING' YVES[3]

Born Yves Léopold Germain on 12 November 1803 (20 Brumaire, An XII in the French Republican Calendar) and known to his descendants as El Frances, he adopted the surname Gaston even before his arrival in the Philippines in 1839, presumably between his time in Bourbonne and British Mauritius. Originally, Yves came to the Philippines to work on the *hacienda* (sugar plantation) in Batangas, Southern Luzon, owned by Domingo Roxas, an *insulares* (a Spaniard born in the Philippines).

Portrait of Yves Léopold Germain Gaston ©The Gastons of Negros Blog



Yves Gaston's birth certificate, bearing the surname Germain. ©Les Archives du Calvados

In Batangas, Yves became romantically involved with Prudencia Fernandez, a local mestiza from the town of Balayan. The couple later settled in Silay, Negros—where their three children—Maria Felicia, Victor Leopold, and Fernando were born—after his venture on Roxas' hacienda did not prosper. After almost two decades of living in Negros, where he became a driving force in its economic development, Yves died in 1863. Despite their intention to marry, Yves and Prudencia were unable to formalise their union; however, he acknowledged their children – aged 15, 12, and 11 – as his legitimate heirs in his last will and testament. Yves also appointed Alfredo Campo, his children's tutor, as the executor of his will to ensure they were financially provided for after his death. Additionally, he bequeathed a substantial amount to Prudencia, to be divided among their three children upon her passing.

Following Yves' death, Prudencia and the children chose neither to move to France, Yves' hometown of Lisieux, nor to return to Prudencia's hometown of Balayan. Perhaps staying in Silay was the most practical decision for the remaining Gastons, allowing them to remain connected to the established community and industry. It was in Silay that the family continued their involvement in the sugar industry, ultimately expanding the Gaston family legacy in Negros.

There are more questions than answers about Yves, and stories about him are passed down through generations of Gastons. One anecdote tells about people wondering why Yves' surname was Germain even though he was French, which supposedly prompted him to adopt the surname Gaston instead. The name Gaston, although French, was derived from the ancient Germanic term *Gast*, which means, among other things, "guest," "foreigner," or "stranger." This sense of being an outsider may have deeply resonated with Yves. Yet, despite this feeling of strangeness, he established a lasting legacy in the Philippines, leaving behind generations of descendants with deep Negrense roots. Some of them, such as Emilio Gaston, who served as Provincial Governor of Negros Occidental from 1934 to 1937, and Monsignor Guillermo "GG" Gaston, a priest of the Diocese of Bacolod and "the last Filipino to reside at the Pontificio Collegio Pio Latino Americano in Rome," rose to prominence in politics and religion, respectively.

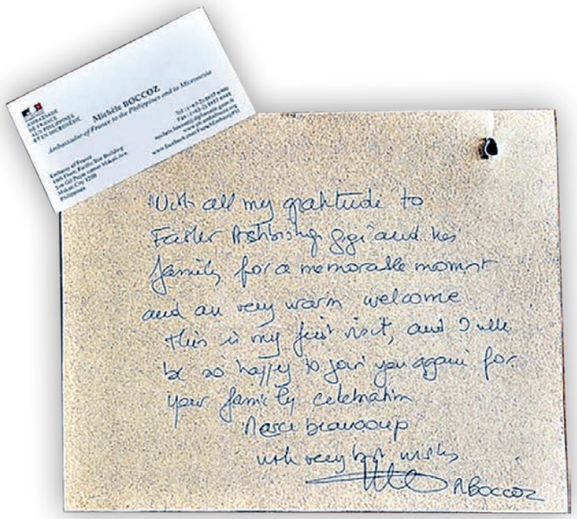
Ancestral House of Yves' second child, Victor Leopold, now the Baláy Negrense (Negrense House) Museum located in Silay City, Negros Occidental. ©Public Information Office, Provincial Government of Negros Occidental

Ancestral House of Yves' grandson, Jose Gaston, located in Hacienda Santa Rosalia, Manapla, Negros Occidental. ©Ivan Anthony Henares

[1] Demy P. Sonza, *Sugar Is Sweet: The Story of Nicholas Loney* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1977), 30.
[2] Ulbe Bosma, The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years (Harvard University Press, 2023), 135, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674293311.
[3] Information on Yves in this article is primarily referenced from *The Gastons of Negros*, the Gaston family WordPress blog, which features various contributions about Yves, his children, and their descendants.

AN INTELLECTUAL 'HOMECOMING'

The mysteries surrounding Yves inspired me to draft and submit a proposal for the Love of Learning Award of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. My aim was to fund an archival trip to Spain and France, further develop this research into a postdoctoral project, and hopefully contribute to the sugar museum back home. Beyond my desire to give back to my hometown, applying for the Love of Learning Award – which supports post-baccalaureate professional development of Phi Kappa Phi's active members – offered a valuable opportunity to test the "fundability" of my research on Yves.



Note from the French Ambassador to the Philippines during her visit to Hacienda Santa Rosalia in August 2022, underscoring the lasting historical connection between the Gaston family and France, with special mention of Monsignor Guillermo "GG" Gaston, Yves great-grandson.
©Hacienda Santa Rosalia Facebook Page

When I submitted my application just four days before the deadline in June 2024, it was already listed as Application No. 63.297, wherein only 200 awards of 1.000 USD were expected to be granted. When the announcements came a few months later, I was both surprised and grateful that Phi Kappa Phi recognised the potential of this research on Yves. I believe that this work could shed light on the asymmetrical dependencies embedded in colonial immigration policies, the circulation of knowledge, land acquisition, the role of foreign firms in financing the sugar industry, and other dynamics of the nineteenth-century global sugar trade.

While I will only be able to fully embark on 'finding' Yves in the Spanish, French, and later, the British archives once my PhD dissertation is complete, the thought of this next chapter fuels my motivation to keep moving forward. I realise that while my academic journey took me far from 'home,' it is through this wandering that I found my way back—intellectually and emotionally. For that, I could not be more grateful.

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Coal mining in Kalimantan, Indonesia all images ©Kristina Großmann

CEMENTING AND CHANGING ASYMMETRIES IN MINING IN INDONESIA

by Kristina Großmann

If you think of large-scale mining, the first picture that comes into your mind is probably the vast environmental destruction caused by it. But mining, as other large-scale resource extraction, also has an immense impact on asymmetrical relationships in the affected communities. Through mining activities, existing dependencies are strengthened but also new groups gain power and can potentially destabilizes asymmetries.

This contribution draws on my research in villages affected by large-scale open-pit coal mining in Kalimantan, Indonesia where mining has had a huge impact on ecological and socio-political formations for the communities for decades. Since 2016, I have been visiting mining families in the north of Central Kalimantan for my research on human-environment relationships and resource extraction conducting ethnographic fieldwork what includes participatory observation and interviews.

Many Southeast Asian societies are highly hierarchically organized with patron–client relationships dominating the social structure. In Indonesia, during the New Order between 1967 and 1998, patronage systems were strengthened based on lucrative bureaucratic positions and economic advantages

The coal is transported via the river to the harbour.

(Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). Patronage systems are especially prevalent in the natural resource sector. Many mining companies have close links to members of the political and military elite, and concessions were a means of ensuring their loyalty to a regime constructed around patronage networks. Large-scale open-pit mining not only destroys the environment but also shatters the social structure of affected communities. People are confronted not only with the cementation of existing patronage relations but also with a shift of power and a change in their social and political positions: farmers become mining employees and village heads become company associates. These transformations entail struggles over access and control of land, employment opportunities and political power. These new opportunities offer groups in the community the possibility to enlarge their power. Existing patronage systems are strengthened and weakened. In this transformation process, many social frictions occur not only between the company and the affected community but also amongst the communities themselves.

One village in the mining area is very dominated by the family of the village founder. About one-third of the people living in the village today are descendants of the village founder, whose grandson is still remembered by older people living in the village. Since the 1990s, companies have started to extract coal in the proximity of the village. Villagers say that they had not mined for coal on a small-scale basis for their own use or for sale before the companies started to arrive. To sustain their livelihood, villagers had practiced shifting cultivation of rice and other food crops, cultivated rubber trees, hunted and fished. After the mining companies established their business in this area, more and more villagers started to work for the company. People from nearby settlements and from the regency capital also began to move to the village to take up employment in the mines. Currently, the village is inhabited by about 700 people and approximately two-thirds of the adult villagers work, directly or indirectly, for the mining companies. As a result, mining currently dominates the social, political and economic lives of most families. As the mining companies took possession of more and more land close to the village, agricultural activity decreased and mining is now the principal source of income for most families.

The category of lineage plays a major role in shaping access and control of resources. Most members of the village elite are affiliated to the family clan of the founder. This group not only takes political decisions but also enforces customary law. As only members of the founder's family clan can get positions in the village elite, lineage is the principal category of difference for villagers and ultimately determines who gains access to political power and control.

Since the beginning of the large-scale mining activities, the company has established strong patronage networks with the village elite. Relationships between miners, members of the village elite and company representatives take the form of patron-client relationships that are highly asymmetrical in terms of power, status and wealth. The company as a patron provides employment opportunities or the opportunity to make extra money in form of bribes. The company also enhances village infrastructure under the terms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. In return, villagers as clients provide labour and support company policies but also endure the increasing pollution and destruction of their environment caused by the coal mines.

The river is often the only available travel route to the villages.

A village in the coal mining area of Kalimantan.

One example of the asymmetrical relationships between company representatives and the village elite and of social frictions amongst community members is the negotiation process of compensation payments and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs at village level. CSR programs intend to compensate for the negative impacts of mining experienced by affected communities but exemplifies the patron–client relations between the company and the villagers, while highlighting the powerful position of the village elite and the exclusion of critical voices from the discussions. Usually, members of the village elite represent the village community in CSR negotiations. Representatives of the company meet formally and informally with the village elite who, as clients, cooperate with the mining companies, the patron, in arranging land leases and giving tacit approval to mining activities. In return for their support, the company gives money and grants favours to the families of the village elite. In one village, the initial meetings took place in the house of the village head, attended by company representatives responsible for CSR and members of the village elite. The company's representatives provided information about the current situation of the mining sites and both parties agreed on a program of further meetings. It was agreed to set up a 'Communication Forum' for the formulation of wishes and demands of villagers and articulation of different interests. The members of this Forum were chosen by the village head and company CSR staff.

Villagers who were not part of the village elite were thus excluded from the initial meetings. Requests by the villagers who did participate focused on measures to the health service, education and the village infrastructure. The biggest project they proposed was to repair the drinking water supply system in the village. In this vein, CSR programs of the mining companies, rather than providing compensation for the negative impacts of mining, make up for deficiencies in services and basic infrastructure that should be provided by the state. Both the company and members of the village elite commonly make use of bribes and threats to push through their agenda and interests. Thus, villagers who are critical of the mining activities or demanding in negotiations about CSR programs are in most cases threatened and excluded. Also, members of the village elite who are too oppositional towards the companies or the agenda of the other members of the ruling village elite are usually sidelined by being removed from their position.

Visiting mining families in the north of Central Kalimantan during ethnographic field work.

Importantly, the patron-client relationship is not limited to business relationships, but extends into the private sphere. Representatives of the company give support for life milestones and attend wedding ceremonies and funeral rites in the village. In so doing, they not only contribute gifts and financial support to

the family concerned, but are also seen to be fulfilling the social responsibilities of a person with a higher status. One reason for the strong asymmetries in mining in this village could be that mining only evolved when the company started large-scale mining operations because villagers didn't mine for coal before the company arrived. Thus, from the beginning of its operation, the company could establish and maintain a strong system of patronage with the village elite, which was reproduced over the years.

Remote road leading to the village.

In large-scale mining, not only the village elite is strengthened. Also, new opportunities are offered to groups in the community to enlarge their power. Coal mining company open job advertisements and more and more villagers are employed at the company. In former times, most young men in the village left school early and formal education was seen as unimportant. This changed with the arrival of mining companies because they needed educated people for higher qualified jobs. Today, young men are well aware that formal school education is a precondition for obtaining a job with a mining company. This requirement motivates people to work hard at school and obtain at least a high school diploma. As a result, education has become a new category for gaining power. People who gained money through their employment in the company contributed also to the development of the village in regard of infrastructure and education. Well-educated young men, with well-paid jobs in the mines, are a newly emerging power group in the mining village. In the villages, the social structure changed and a group of the 'new rich' emerged. However, they have not yet entered the village elite and are still excluded from exerting political power. Maybe in the future, they will gain political positions on village and regency level challenging the established village elite.

Until now, there is little way that the village elite can break out of the patronage networks. The company still has the support of villagers through the provision of employment opportunities and infrastructure, while those who question the dependency that these patron–client relationships entail are threatened and excluded. Most villagers support mining to which they are bound in extremely asymmetrical power relations. Coal is their main source of income, associated with development and the chance of a better life. The national, provincial, district and village governments also support mining, which is lucrative for them, and lack the capacity and motivation to develop alternative income generating opportunities for villagers. The establishment of small-scale business or small-scale agroforestry production of cash crops could offer villagers a way out of destructive resource extraction and their dependency on the mining companies. However, in the absence of these economic alternatives, villagers will continue to support coal mining for the foreseeable future.

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Plate 1: The narrow coastal belt of Kanara is very fertile and covered by deep evergreen rain forests providing the timber for the local building tradition.
All images by ©Julia A.B. Hegewald

ECOLOGICAL DEPENDENCIES IN THE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTH INDIA

by Julia A. B. Hegewald

Premodern traditional architecture worldwide has depended on local building resources and on designs adapting the edifices to the prevalent climatic conditions. This was achieved by guilds of craftsmen who handed down age-old knowledge about the weather, construction techniques and the properties of materials over generations. When better roads improved the transport of supplies over longer distances, and when concrete, steel and large panes of glass became available as artificial building materials along with electric air conditioning, communities could liberate themselves from these longstanding dependencies. A problem with modern structures, which employ imported and artificial materials, however, is that their design often does not adjust to the climate and that they appear alien in their surroundings.

I want to introduce a tradition to you which has remained largely true to its ancient regional architectural tradition, style and its adaptation to the climate, even though it has modified its use of building resources, thereby creating a modernised but authentic architecture which is still in a dialogue with the local natural environment.

TRADITIONAL JAINA TEMPLES IN THE SOUTH

Let us first start with traditional architecture in India, which although it was constrained by climate and material dependencies, resulted in very striking, timeless architectural conceptions. These are well-adapted to the environment, low-cost in production and energy-efficient to maintain. Having been made of local natural materials, they blend well into the natural surroundings.

This is the case, for instance, with the sacred architecture of the Jaina religious community in South India. Jainism is as old as Buddhism, originating in about the sixth century BCE. There is evidence for Jaina activities in Karnataka from at least the second century CE. Structural temple buildings in the south of the subcontinent have only survived from the seventh century CE onwards. The traditional shrines of the Jainas described in this article may have originated in a much earlier age, but they were repaired and extended over the centuries. As a consequence, most have at least substantial elements from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In this article, I will give a brief summary of the traditional as well as the modern and contemporary Jaina sacred constructions from coastal Karnataka as examples of a continued, active interaction of local builders with diverse building materials, with the climate and with nature.

THE GEOGRAPHY, RESOURCES AND THE BUILDING STYLE

Within the vast building tradition of the Jainas in South India as a whole, I will focus on their religious structures erected on the narrow strip of land along the western shoreline known as the Malabar coast. The emphasis will be on the section that lies within the modern state of Karnataka. The architecture of this area is strongly dependent on the prevalent regional climatic situation, and has traditionally been closely adapted to it, employing local construction materials.

The narrow coastal belt of Kanara or Tulunadu is bordered by the Arabian Sea in the west and by a steep range of hills towards the east. The Sahyadri Hills present a barrier for the heavy monsoon clouds approaching the subcontinent from the sea, and cause generous and regular rains to go down over the coastal area. Consequently, this relatively level land is very fertile and covered by deep evergreen rain forests (Plate 1). These provide the main source of wood, the principal building material of the region. Locally harvested timber is combined with mud, taken from the banks of the many streams in the area, and with a limited amount of natural stone. A very porous red laterite is on hand throughout the region.

Plate 2: The Kere Basadi at Karkal is typical of the regional Jaina temple architecture by having multiple slanting, tiered roof structures.

Along the Malabar coast, the impact of ecological issues, such as the weather, on material resources and building traditions is especially pronounced. The local word for a Jaina temple in this region is *basadi*. In order to protect the buildings against heavy monsoon precipitations, the typical shrines of the region have steep, widely projecting, sloping roofs. Often, multiple roof structures have been superimposed (Plate 2).

The roof protections of secular and initially also of sacred edifices in coastal Karnataka were traditionally made from natural materials, such as thatch, split bamboo and palm leaf. For temples and official buildings such as palaces, hand-made clay tiles were also used, and from the nineteenth century onwards mass-produced factory tiles (Plate 3).

Plate 3: The roofs of the local Jaina temples, such as that of the Parshvanatha Temple at Venur, have been made of a wooden substructure covered with terracotta tiles.

Plate 4: The widely projecting roofs are held up by pillars from below, creating laterally open but shaded ambulatory paths, bordered by thick mud walls as here at Padangady

The widely overhanging roofs are supported from below by pillars. These create walkways that are open at the sides but covered, providing protection against sun and rain. The walkways are employed for the clockwise ritual circumambulation of the shrines (Plate 4).

The walls of the *basadis* are plain but often quite thick, usually made of a combination of timber and mud. Usually a wooden frame was filled with rammed earth. The same material has also been used to cover the floors inside the structures. For the flooring of outside areas laterite blocks were also used. Mud, wood and laterite are sustainable, regionally available, low-cost natural products. With their exceptional thermal regulating properties, mud walls and floors in particular create a comfortable microclimate indoors. The buildings are cool in the summer and warm during the winter months, as well as low-cost and eco-sensitive.

The steeply pitched roof constructions keep off the downpours. As they project far beyond the walls, they also deflect the hot summer sun; the multiple roofs provide effective thermal insulation. This is further enhanced by the shaded arcades, thick mud walls and the stone flooring inside the structures. As such, the traditional Jaina temples of the coastal region are excellent examples for climate-responsive building solutions in terms of the materials used and their architectural design.

IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION AND NEW MATERIALS

From about the fifteenth century onwards, builders in the Kanara region started to construct edifices in stone, due to better roads which allowed the transport of stone over longer distances. This was probably to emulate the prominent stone-building tradition of the dry Deccan high plateau. Before the improvement of transport, hard stone was not readily available in the coastal region. The only stone which can be quarried in the region is laterite. Its porous and soft constitution makes it a rather unsuitable stone for permanent buildings, as it does not preserve its clearly carved features well and is subject to weathering. Laterite was only used for the foundations of temples (Plate 5).

Plate 5: The basement of the entrance hall of the Panca Basadi at Humcha has been made of the locally available but soft and porous laterite, which is not a durable construction material.

Therefore, hard stone such as granite and steatite (soapstone) brought in from the Deccan region became sought-after materials for later temple building in the area. Initially, only the foundations and pillars were made of imported hard stone, to provide the edifices with longer durability.

However, at least from the fifteenth century and more prominently during the sixteenth and later centuries, large blocks of hard stone were used more widely in the constructions of buildings in coastal Karnataka. The walls and ambulatories of many of these structures were entirely made of stone. While stone temples on the dry Deccan plateau have flat roofs, those constructed in the Kanara region had to be provided with steeply sloping roofs to drain off rain water. Whilst some temples combine a lower roof of stone with raised levels still made of wood (Plate 6), other structures were made entirely of hard stone, including all their multilayered roof levels (Plate 7).

Plate 6: While the lowest roof level of the Candranatha Basadi at Mudabidri has been made of hard stone, the upper tiers show combinations of wood, tiles and copper sheeting.

Regardless of whether they were made of wood, mud and tiles or of stone brought from afar, practically all the structures have the same characteristic sloping roofs and open arcades. Stone temples often have floors of granite, and today also of polished marble. The latter is usually sourced from even further afield, such as central and northern India. A number of larger temples also have glazed tiled floors, reflecting Portuguese and Islamic inspirations. However, imported hard stone never completely replaced mud, wood and terracotta tiles, and even today, new sanctuaries are still built entirely out of regionally harvested materials. The choice is determined by the accessibility of resources, but also by the funds available, as building in large blocks of durable stone is the most expensive option. Although granite and other hard stones are not local building materials, stone structures and flooring create cool interior environments and are well adapted to the hot climate.

The early twentieth century saw another revolution in materials. Reinforced concrete was introduced to the wider region and is now employed everywhere on the Indian subcontinent. Concrete is a globally available and reasonably cheap construction material. It is easy to transport, as it can be purchased in powdered form and mixed on site with sand and water, making it an extremely popular substance to use. In contrast to mud, fired earth, and wood, which are renewable materials, cement, concrete and steel are artificially created and highly energy-intensive to produce. In addition, concrete does not possess the thermal properties of mud and stone described above, and as a consequence, the temples are not as comfortable in the summer heat. The new materials widened the scope of materials available to the builders and kept construction costs low. However, these changes did not affect the style of the architecture. Contemporary Jaina construction in coastal Karnataka usually still follows the same local style of prominent slanting roofs and open arcades, adapting the edifices to a tropical climate of heat and heavy rains (Plate 8).

Plate 7: The Chandranateshvara Basadi at Bhatkal was built entirely of imported stone, including both of its tiered roof structures

Plate 8: Although the Candranatha Basadi at Dharmasthala is a contemporary concrete structure, it follows the traditional style of having projecting tiered roofs and an open arcade.

CLIMATE-RESPONSIVE ARCHITECTURE BASED ON ANCIENT WISDOM

The west coast of India is inundated by regular and persistent rains, resulting in plentiful wood for building. The long-established architecture of the region responds to and interacts with the local climate and the availability of naturally accessible construction materials. The traditional Jaina temples of the coastal lowlands use clay, timber and terracotta tiles, which are sustainable and low-cost materials to create low-energy intensive buildings that are adapted to the regional climate. As such, this tradition provides sensible answers to the geo-climatic conditions and has brought forth climate-responsive architectural designs.

In terms of building materials, we have seen that from the fifteenth century onwards, and more so during recent centuries, the dependency on locally obtainable construction resources was relaxed. This was largely due to the building of better transport networks and the creation of modern and easily transportable construction materials such as concrete. In terms of the very dominant climate, however, the dependency on the prevalent weather conditions could not be overcome as easily, and the large majority of modern sacred structures still follows the traditional style of steep overhanging roofs combined with pillared arcades. This should not be understood as a failure but rather as a conscious decision to continue a sensible and enduring local tradition.

Despite the changes in materials, architects, master builders and artisans still employ the ancient wisdom about building in tropical climates that has been passed down to them through the generations. Some temples today represent compromises by employing modern, less eco-friendly materials. Nevertheless, through an active adherence to traditional local knowledge systems in terms of architectural designs, continuities in climate-responsive building can still be seen in contemporary Jaina sacred structures in coastal Karnataka.

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Rohingya refugees walking a main road in Kutapalong camp. All images by ©Benjamin Etzold, August 2023.

GENDERED VIOLENCE AND DEPENDENCIES IN ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH

by Benjamin Etzold
and Anas Ansar

Gendered patterns of violence are widespread in Bangladesh's refugee camps. Our research shows that the devastating experiences of violence of Rohingya women and men are rooted in multi-layered asymmetric dependency relations that unfold in the Rohingya community, within the camps and in the wider borderland.

In 2017, following ethnic conflict and violent persecution by the Myanmar army, more than 700.000 Rohingya fled from Myanmar's Rakhine state into neighbouring Bangladesh. As of 2024, nearly one million Rohingya live in 34 refugee camps located near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border under extreme precarity featuring very high population density, fragile basic infrastructure, a lack of livelihood options and a near-total reliance on humanitarian aid. Although the Rohingya are currently shielded from persecution in Myanmar, their safety remains far from assured. The camps where they reside are plagued by insecurity, crime, and widespread gender-based violence. Rohingya women endure frequent physical and sexual abuse, while young men are subjected to abduction, torture, and forced recruitment by armed groups. As a result, both women and men face a continuous cycle of violence, vulnerability, and dependency.

A shelter in Kutapalong camp, in which one Rohingya family lives.

Together with Professor Syeda Rozana Rashid from Dhaka University, Bangladesh, we are currently conducting research on 'Mobility, Translocality and Gendered Violence' in a cooperation project that is funded by UK International Development in the Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) research programme. Relying on data collected through qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation in Rohingya camps and the Bangladesh-Myanmar borderland, our forthcoming study attempts to reassess the conditions, continuities and transformations of gendered violence in the refugee camps. Our research shows that the different forms of gendered violence can only be adequately captured by understanding the multi-layered asymmetric dependency relations that are deeply rooted but also extend far beyond the place of the camp. In the following, we briefly showcase how highly unequal power relations unfold, first at the intra-community level of Rohingya families, second within the humanitarian setting of the camp, and third within the violent spaces of the wider Myanmar-Bangladesh borderland.

Sexual and gender-based violence is not confined to camp settings, nor is it a new experience for Rohingya women. They have faced discrimination in Myanmar, endured genocidal killings and displacement campaigns in Rakhine state, and suffered on their journeys to Bangladesh. However, the testimonies shared by Rohingya women and humanitarian workers highlight the distressing 'normality' of persistent violence against women in the refugee camps. Women are subjected to physical assault, sexual violence, and emotional abuse by intimate partners, community leaders, men from the host community, and armed group members. Young women and girls are also coerced into early marriages, with some being forced into sex work. These devastating experiences, compounded by the ongoing threat of sexual violence, severely limit Rohingya women's daily lives and future prospects, leaving deep wounds in the psyche of many.

> ***"His family doesn't like me and always tortured me like a servant. He did not allow me to visit my parents shelter. He never treated me kindly. He scolded me and beat me seriously with body harm. I slept many nights without food. My father complained about it with CIC (the local authority in charge of managing the camp), but they didn't respond because my husband was a member of ARSA (a Rohingya armed group). I became hopeless."***
>
> *interview with a Rohingya woman, Kutupalong camp, 2 May 2024*

Patriarchal norms and hierarchical family relations are important structural factors at inter-community level that decisively shape gendered violence and keep, in particular young, women in dependent and subordinate positions to men and within their family. Cultural and religious norms such as *Purdah*, the seclusion of women from the public 'gaze' under conservative Muslim rules, also come into play here and limit the freedom and thus also the future opportunities of Rohingya women. As male Rohingya are conventionally seen as main 'providers and primary protectors' of women,

women who have been 'left behind' in the camp by their husbands or fathers, who have either been killed in the war in Myanmar, left the camp to work in cities, or migrated to other countries, are therefore particularly exposed to gendered violence. Polygamic marriages, in which a Rohingya man has two, three or more wives, are also common in the camp context, which has an increasingly uneven gender balance. For the women, such arrangements can provide protection and better access to support and services, but they also create new dependencies and can even make them more prone to experiencing violence, in particular if there is a lack of benevolence in the relationship with their spouse and his family, as several of the narratives shared with us revealed.

> ***"At the age of 14, she got married to a man from the Rohingya community who lived in the same neighbourhood. He used to beat her every time he got drunk. (...) Her in-laws paid no heed to her. When the situation worsened, she fled to her mother's house. Her husband apologised and convinced her to go back. (...) She believed him and went back. But he then beat her brutally on the same night; injuring her severely. Her neighbours took her to the hospital. (...) She gave birth to her child after a few months. After three days of her labour, her mother-in-law ousted her from the house. She said they didn't want her in the house anymore and since the baby was their grandson they would keep him. She requested them to give the child to her as it needed to be breastfed. But they beat her and ousted her."***
>
> *interview with a Rohingya woman speaking about her sisters' experience, Kutupalong camp, 16 May 2024*

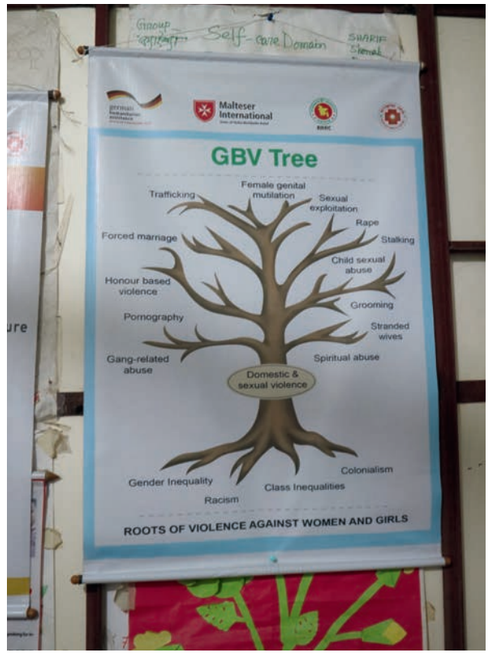
Encampment is the central humanitarian response to the Rohingya's displacement crisis. However, this strategy creates further asymmetric dependency relations which represent another significant layer of gendered violence. While the Bangladeshi state, international organisations and NGOs have made tremendous efforts to provide shelter and basic needs to the displaced Rohingya, the refugees remain largely dependent on this aid and thus vulnerable to poverty, discrimination, and violence. This is partially due to systematic social exclusion and prohibited mobility. The Rohingya are, for instance, officially not allowed to live and work outside of the dedicated refugee camps. As a result, they are effectively hindered from accessing any sustainable livelihoods. In addition, the power difference between Bangladeshi locals and those refugees who nonetheless work under precarious conditions through informal arrangements is exacerbated. Importantly, the state that formally provides protection is neither able nor willing to provide security for the refugees living in the camps. This creates an environment conducive to criminal activities and human rights abuses, perpetrated by men of the Bangladeshi host community, but most notably by members of Rohingya armed groups, who exercise de facto control over the refugee camps and engage in night-time conflicts for dominance. As the quotes below show, sexual violence against Rohingya women is a contentious matter in hostilities between the host community and the displaced, and even a conscious strategy in armed groups' attempts to forcibly recruit new members. Bodily violence against women is thereby also a power strategy to maintain systems of hierarchy and dependency.

> ***"I have heard that one of the Rohingya girls has been raped by a host community dweller. But they were afraid and did not report. This is a common situation. The host community is also accused of kidnapping. The survivors claim that the host community is involved in the kidnapping. The perpetrators enter the camp. They go to the shelters and bang on the door. Sometimes they forcibly get into their houses. They behave very badly with them."***
>
> *interview with a GBV case worker in a camp near Teknaf, 07 May 2024*

Under these conditions of stark inequalities, uncertainty and anxiety, many survivors choose not to report incidents to authorities for several reasons. First, they do not trust the formal referral pathways and cannot afford the legal fees. Second, they fear retaliation and further violence from the perpetrator(s). And third, they try to avoid the social stigma that is associated with the "loss of dignity" if their situation becomes known to others. This reflects not only the complex social hierarchies within the Rohingya community, but also their dependence on Bangladeshi state institutions that continuously fail them. In such challenging circumstances, humanitarian organizations offer immediate care through health clinics, psycho-social support services, and, with the survivor's and her family's consent, may initiate legal action. However, these organizations cannot address the fundamental issues of insecurity in the camps, the absence of criminal prosecution, and the lack of transparency in legal processes. While several organizations run information and prevention campaigns to combat gender-based violence in the

Clothes drying in the sun next to refugee shelters in Kutapalong camp.

camps, working to transform gender relations and enhance refugee women's resilience, women still struggle to respond to violence due to their precarious position within the family, community, and in relation to the state. As a result, most Rohingya women retreat into the private sphere of their homes to avoid any further violence, hence narrowing their spaces for action.



Many humanitarian organisations address and aim to reduce gender-based violence in the refugee camps.

The disturbing prevalence of gender-based violence and the concerningly low levels of security in refugee camps are, unfortunately, nothing new, and have been described by other scholars. So, what new insights does our research offer in this context? First, our study shows clearly that conditions and structures of gendered violence become ever further consolidated as the freedoms and rights of refugees as well as the resources available to them shrink over time. Endless encampment and blocked pathways to more 'durable solutions' – such as return to Myanmar, real local integration in the Bangladeshi communities, and resettlement to other countries – continue to marginalise the Rohingya community socially and politically and effectively contribute to locking the refugees in a downward spiral of precarity and violence, from which it is hard to escape.

Second, our study proves that the 'culture of violence' in the camps cannot be explained by focusing solely on the camp itself. On the contrary, the persistence of violence in the camps needs to be contextualised in the constantly transforming power constellations, i.e. shifting asymmetric dependency relations, and violent dynamics in the translocal borderland. What does this mean? The large-scale ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and subsequent displacement to Bangladesh in 2017, the Military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 and the more recent escalation of civil war between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army over power and territorial control of Rakhine state have had a profound impact on the social structures within the Rohingya community. Among the affected were those Rohingya who could remain, those who were displaced within Rakhine state and those who fled to Bangla-

desh – and their respective relations to the states and other groups that are operating in this border region. Formally respected Rohingya community and religious leaders who previously advocated community cohesion and served as mediators in disputes, including those involving sexual violence, have lost their influence. Meanwhile, armed groups have gained power and established de facto regimes within the camps. However, competition for supremacy in specific locations is often brutally contested amongst them. In these power contestations the capabilities to control mobilities in the border region, such as trafficking of licit and illicit goods and human smuggling, and the respective alliances with power fractions in Myanmar, Bangladesh or in both countries – in other words their translocal practices and networks – are decisive resources. As a consequence, direct violence against Rohingya men has also increased tremendously.

> ***If the brother or father or the husband don't want to go to Myanmar (and fight in the ongoing violent conflict as forcibly recruited members of Rohingya armed groups), the groups threatens those families and particularly the daughters or wives. Basically, if the men don't join, the women will be abducted and raped.***
>
> *interview with a representative of a humanitarian NGO, Cox's Bazar, 19 May 2024*

The violence of forced conscription is deeply gendered, with male refugees particularly targeted by armed groups. Young men are coerced into joining either the Rohingya military factions, forcibly captured in the camps, trafficked across borders, trained in weaponry, and then sold as fighters or 'human shields' to both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army. As the quote suggests, this forced recruitment is often linked to gendered violence against Rohingya women. However, women also play a critical role in resisting abductions, hiding young men at night or assisting their escape from the camps. The long-term consequences of these violent recruitment practices remain uncertain, but they are likely to shift power dynamics, deepen dependencies and empower armed groups and other violent actors. The extent to which these new forms of gendered violence transform gender relations within the Rohingya community, and their lasting effects in the camps and borderlands, are questions that we cannot answer, yet.

We thank our colleague Professor Syeda Rozana Rashid and our five research assistants in Cox's Bazar for their dedication and excellent contributions to this research, and are particularly grateful for the time and insights that our study participants shared with us.

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A picture of Chattrapati (King) Shahu of Maratha with his Peshwa (Prime Minister) Bajirao I (mid to late eighteenth century), c.1750
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DOING DEPENDENCY IN SOUTH ASIA? LOOKING BEYOND EUROCENTRISM AND HISTORICAL MYTH-MAKING

by Nabhojeet Sen

How to read dependency and dependent social relations in an archive that seem to mostly evade these forms of questions? This question became of signal importance as I made my way through archival data and started processing my findings.

My research focuses on the multiple entanglements between punishment and labour in early modern and colonial India. In my efforts to understand the details of asymmetrical social relations and the systems of dependencies in South Asia as they existed on the eve of the colonial takeover of the subcontinent, I had zeroed in on the Marathas, one of the prominent pre-British kingdoms in South Asia and later an empire. Before long, I found myself in the archives in the state of Maharashtra, formerly the seat of the Maratha power, who ruled over large parts of the subcontinent as the colonial power knocked on the doors of India. I had hoped to find detailed references to asymmetrical social relations and how systems of dependencies operated in South Asia as they existed before the British rule. Little did I know that I was about to be thoroughly humbled!

The early modern archive of Maharashtra only seems to mention dependencies such as enslavement in a passing manner, thus making it all the more complicated to work out the precise modalities and the full extent of such dependent social relations. My training in social and labour history was often found wanting in a context where I was not looking at colonial plantations, factories, recruiters, industries and industrial workers, legal and labour regimes which together comprise the most fertile fields of labour and social historical interventions in South Asia. The issue became all the more critical because the terms and terminologies of the archives and the regional languages resist easy translations and being rendered into the language of the scholarship, i.e. English. The early modern archives only seemed to carry fleeting glimpses of systems of dependency, mostly as financial concerns of the state. For example, they were mentioned as part of the state requisitions (demanding a fixed number of slaves for deployment etc.) or in financial concerns of the state (accounting for slaves as part of the estate and households of elites). This made it very difficult to paint a complete picture of the violence, coercion or the modalities of systems of dependencies in precolonial India. Much of it has to do with the specifics of the way in which the early modern archives in South Asia have been organized. As a result, only fragments of the everyday life and non-elite actors and social practices are allowed to filter through.

Finding the right literature to lean on, the methodological-empirical tools to employ, and disciplinary traditions to follow, became easier than previously imagined thanks to the company of scholars at the BCDSS. Discussions with colleagues working on different knowl-

edge traditions, regional-temporal contexts, languages and indeed disciplines enabled me to broaden my intellectual horizon and to develop new and innovative ways of thinking about dependency. I was made aware of the limitations as well as the potential of my own disciplinary and knowledge traditions which discouraged mimicking existing research questions, archives, literature and ways of understanding the past. This came in handy specially as I grappled with two contending but well-developed (one more than the other) historiographical currents in asymmetrical social relations in this period in this region. One was represented by colonial officials and observers. The India that was 'produced' in their records and observations was marked by various sorts of inequalities of statuses, caste and hierarchy. By focussing on the most extreme and systematic form of personal domination, dishonour, dehumanisation and economic exploitation for writing the standard canons of caste hierarchies in the subcontinent, the colonial records equated various kinds of statuses marked by labour, social dishonour and forms of extra economic coercion with the unfreedom inherent in slavery. Such colonialist ideological rendering of the Indian past has been brought forward by scholars such as Indrani Chatterjee and Eugene Irshick.

BRITISH MYTH-MAKING ABOUT PRE-COLONIAL INDIA CATEGORIZED ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES AS BEING AN INHERENT PART OF THE SOCIETY.

The historical myth-making about pre-colonial India that was an ideological project of the British colonialist observers refused to see beyond a timeless and static society existing within an unchanging historical landscape, mostly centred around the village communities. This was often combined with viewing social and ritual dependency, unfreedom and inequality, as the terms of constitution of the society. This came out quite sharply in the writings of Utilitarians such as James Mill and J.S. Mill, whose volumes on India were the reference points of colonial officials in India. Such ideological renderings and racial- prejudicial categorizations of social systems would come in quite handy for an emergent colonialist enterprise locked in a perpetual struggle to extend its control over resources, territory and people, far away from its homeland. What was also handy was to categorize certain practices of asymmetrical relations and dependency as being customary, traditional and an ancient part of the society, so that it could escape regulations that prohibited slavery and slave trade in the British overseas colonies and possessions, including India.

> ***"Indians lived in a time very different from that of the British. Their world belonged to a remote past, separated from the modern world of their masters. So virtually since the beginning of colonial rule, for British administrators and orientalists, contemporary India existed as the vestige of a classical India that was made increasingly visible through religious texts. However valued and admired, this classical India may have been by the orientalists, its basis in the denial of coevalness- a denial that... meant that it could become easily devalued when the admiration for Indian traditions gave way to demands for reforms and progress. This began to happen in the early nineteenth century. In the changed context, the reduction of the contemporary India as a mere signifier of classical India saw contemporaneous social conditions criticised as outmoded and uncivilised. And for the comparative understanding of such uncivilised and 'inhuman' condition such as kamia-malik relations (a form of dependent relation), ancient slavery and medieval serfdom rather than modern wage slavery, provided the appropriate framework. Representing the past, and embodying the reign of unfreedom in the past, the Kamias placement in the continuum extending from slavery to freedom became the mode in which the doctrine of progress was pronounced."***
>
> *Gyan Prakash, Bonded Histories, pp. 8-9*

This insistence on reading contemporaneous practices through classical and religious texts allowed the continuation of such slave like practices.

POST-COLONIALIST WRITINGS SOUGHT TO BRING IN A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING BY SHOWING THE BRITISH COLONIAL ENTERPRISE AS RESPONSIBLE FOR REFORMULATING AND ENFORCING THE PRACTICES OF DEPENDENCY THAT IT CLAIMED WERE ANCIENT PART OF THE SOCIETY.

Such measures and more were brought to light by post-colonialist writings, which sought to bring in a less superficial and more nuanced understanding of dependency and 'unfreedom'. They saw the British colonial enterprise acting as its own self-fulfilling prophecy, and therefore as responsible for repackaging and reformulating strategies and practices of dependency and unfreedom that it had claimed was part of the ancient society in India. How is one to cut through this fog and achieve clarity?

Extent of the Maratha Empire (in yellow) in the late eighteenth century, c 1760. ©Wikimedia. public domain

As I flipped through pages after pages of documents in the archives, existing approaches seemed to offer very few answers, and moreover the limitations of colonialist and post-colonialist writings became clear to me. It did not give a full picture and a complete modality of the system of dependencies in Western India. I could see the problems but did not find a way out.

It helped me to imagine the whole archive itself as the product of asymmetrical social relations, rather than expecting it to yield information about aspects of dependency

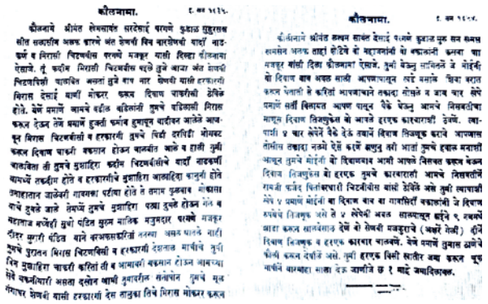
To arrive at a 'fuller' picture of the modalities of dependency, it helped me to imagine the whole archive itself as the product of asymmetrical social relations rather than expecting it to yield information about aspects of dependency. Re-imagining the archives in this way allowed me to employ a whole range of sources and documents that I had previously sidelined, in order to collect what I had thought were more 'direct' references to aspects of dependency. Now, pages after pages of financial transactions, deeds of sale and purchase of property, claims, disputes, petitions, decisions made sense to me as products of a protocol of state control. They allowed me to see an emergent Maratha state seeking to extend its power and control outwards from larger urban centres, and seeking to subsume a whole spectrum of social relations and structures of local authority under its de-jure control, thereby enabling the accumulation of large amounts of surplus and tributes. As part of this process, most of these resources flowed to the military and social elites, who accumulated much of this surplus in exchange for playing an unreliable role, shifting their loyalty between rival states such as the Mughals, the British and even the rival factions within the Maratha state. This affected most aspects of social, economic, legal and religious life, but had the worst effect on the productive classes of the society. They were brought under unprecedented amounts of obligation and subjugation. This resulted in a wide variety of asymmetrical and dependent social relations. Not all of them were mentioned equally within the archives, with some in more detail than others; but they made sense in the overall vexed and entangled context of the balance of power and authority in precolonial South Asia. The scarcity of labour and resources combined with the many competing states, such as the Mughals, Hyderabad, Mysore, British, French, Portuguese, the elites always vacillating between working for these states and the economic and social intermediaries who were always a perpetual headache for all governments; and a lack of coordinated bureaucracy, at least in the initial period of state formation in the 1600s, all came together to produce and preserve the documents that I now held in my hands.

As I read through pages of adjudications, disputes, settlements, orders of title and rewards, I could see precious details about dependents that could only be obtained when someone petitioned on behalf of them, or when a dependent person was punished or being called upon to provide a service. I paid special attention to the way these documents were classified, categorized and catalogued. It revealed much about how aspects of asymmetrical social relations were viewed, and the violence entailed therein. In that sense, rather than constitute problems for statecraft, the dependents and the asymmetrical social relations seemed to merge seamlessly

An *Akhbar* from 1776. *Akhbars* were reports or news-letters that could either be sent to the court or an officer by an individual, or could be prepared in the court for the perusal of the rulers. This report is from Saswad, dated 1776. It gives information about the movement of the Kolis, Yesaji Shinde and Haider Ali with their troops. ©Wikimedia. public domain

into everyday functions of the state, elites and intermediaries, successfully projecting an illusion of flexibility and a benevolent state. Reading between the archival lines, whenever these actors emerged from historical anonymity and obscurity, they drove a wedge between the 'paternalistic' state and the various fulcrums of the social order such as the elites. This ruptured the carefully managed social relations and the distribution of authority across the state, elites and other intermediares. Every time a dependent registered their presence in these documents, it was not because of but *despite* the carefully cultivated archival coherence, forcing recalibration and recalculation of overlapping distribution of power and authority between different levers of the government. As a result, whatever can be gleaned in the documents are merely ripples and aftershocks of the intense negotiations and alignments that went on. A muted letter of instruction sent to a government official, following a petition against high amounts of levies by a group of corvée workers, could therefore employ a semantic schema that would deliberately obfuscate and project the state as a paternalistic protector of those in asymmetrical social relations.

Every document followed a set semantic schema. A document containing an instruction to an official to get the finest of concubines for the king for a specified amount would be listed with other financial documents and as part of the annual account sheets. This process of classification and obfuscation enabled these papers to be absorbed as part and parcel of the everyday function of the state and its officials, instructing while at the same time omitting important aspects of violence and coercion embedded in the system. We rarely get any information about how they were hired, which communities they came from (although we can certainly say that they belonged to the non-Brahmin castes, as Brahmins could not be enslaved by law) and what circumstances would have led their transition to becoming slave-concubines. Through cross referencing other sources and letters, we can render the world of dependents in that time period. We can certainly say that at least some of those that were made concubines would have been travelling long distances in search of subsistence, as this region in the eighteenth century existed in perpetual cycle of devastation, depopulation and repopulation. Some of them would have certainly been prepared to become enslaved, some would have been punished with enslavement, and some would still have been subjected to forced enslavement and sale by the numerous itinerant trading communities operating in this area in 18th century, such as the *Charans*. From a completely different set of historical literature, such as the *Lavani*, and other prose and poetry composed by *Shahirs* (bards), we can surmise that such actors often lamented their social position and resented being perpetually reduced for sexual slavery and other domestic servitude. This literature could provide further insight into the experiences of other dependents, including enslaved women working in different settings. They often pined for the status of *Saubhagyawati* (wife) that they would never achieve in their lifetime.



A *Kaulnama* (granting of rights and privileges usually to a cultivator, especially to encourage cultivation ad resettlement in times of famine or political instability) given by Khem Savant, a chief of Sawantwadi estate, a vassal of the Maratha empire. The function of the *Kaulnama* was to parcel out lands and privileges in lieu of favourable rates of taxation. . ©archive.org, public domain

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THINGS IN THE (RE)INSCRIPTION OF POWER

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION ON THE ISLAND COMMUNITIES OF LAKSHADWEEP, SOUTH INDIA

by Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

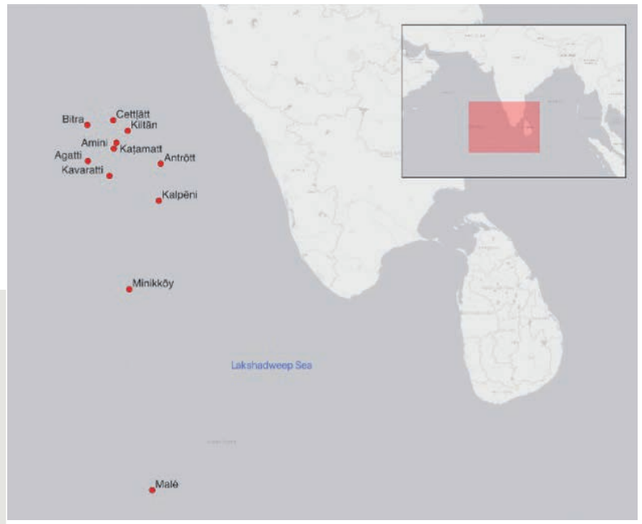


Fig.1: Lakshadweep Islands in the Indian Ocean (and Malé, the capital city of the Maldives) ©Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

Muslim communities in the littorals of South Asia have increasingly come under the spotlight of scholarship on Indian Ocean Studies, however, the island communities are still relatively marginal in the field. One such community is the Muslims on the Islands of Lakshadweep (Fig.1), currently one of the Union Territories (UT) of India. The word 'Lakshadweep' is a composite of two words: *'laksha'* which means 'hundred thousand' and *'dweep' (dvīp)* meaning island, therefore, literally, the 'Hundred Thousand Islands'. It is a cluster of coral islands situated in the Arabian Sea off the Malabar Coast of Southwest India. Geographically it belongs to the Chagos-Maldives-Laccadive Ridge. There are a total of 36 islands and islets, of which only ten are inhabited (namely, Cettlāt, Bitra, Kiltān, Amini, Kaṭmatt, Agatti, Antrōtt, Kavaratti, Kalpēni, and Minikkōy). The population of the islands is approximately 65,000, and the inhabitants are mainly involved in fishing and agricultural activities, particularly in the making of value-added products from coconut farming, such as coir. Their life is affected by the negligence of the various Indian governments. For instance, connectivity amongst the Islands and the mainland is a major issue. A smaller percentage works in the government sector and in the various other occupations found on the mainland of India. Almost the entire population of the Lakshadweep Islands are Muslims.

This brief report is about the forms of restrictive social practices driven by stratification in these communities. Although 'caste' hierarchy forms was (is) the basis of restrictive practices amongst the Muslims on the Islands, it is not easy to ascribe the equivalent 'castes' as seen among the 'Hindu' communities on the subcontinent, however, the 'caste' groupings on the Island shares many of its common elements such as endogamy. The main caste-like groups on the Lakshadweep Islands are the Kōyās, Mālumis, and the Mēlāccēris. The Kōyās were (are) uppermost in the hierarchy, they were landowners, some of whom claim the genealogy of the prophet. They could own an *ōṭaṁ*, a relatively large sailing vessel used in trade and transportation between the islands and the mainland. The word *kōya* is believed to be derived from the Arabic-Persian word *khāja* (honoured). The Mālumis (*mu'allimi*) were traditionally the navigators of these sailing vessels. The word *mālumi* is seemingly derived from the Arabic word *mu'allim*, a commonly used term in the Indian Ocean littorals for 'captain'. The Mēlāccēris were the traditional labour caste, exploited by those higher up in the hierarchy. They were subjected to extreme forms of caste discrimination, such as restrictions on the wearing of sandals, shirts (stitched clothes), and turbans for the men, and the wearing of sandals, gold ornaments and silk for the women. During *rites de passage* ceremonies such as circumcisions, they were not allowed to sing and hold processions along the streets; upon

Fig.2: The Hujra Mosque, Kavaratti, Lakshadweep Islands. ©Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

Fig.3: The Shrine of Qāsim Valiyullah (in front the Hujra Mosque), Lakshadweep Islands. ©Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

seeing a Kōya on the street, the melacceri men had to remove their *vēsṭi,* a piece of unstitched cloth to cover the upper body. If they had to talk with a Kōya, the Mēlāccēris had to cover their mouth with their fingers; they were not allowed to own an *ōṭaṁ*. In this social hierarchy, the position of the *qāḍī* (jurist) of a mosque was conventionally limited to the Kōyas. Interestingly, the position of *mu'adhin* (*muezzin*, the individual in the mosque appointed to call to the prayer) was reserved for the Mālumis, the middle-ranking caste-like group, and the position of the mosque servant was allotted to the Mēlāccēris. Only a Kōya could preside over and conduct the recitations during religious ceremonies such as the *mawlid* (the festival commemorating the birth of the Prophet). The position of the leader of an island was always limited to the Kōyas, similarly, the council of elders, a traditional body having powers in the matters of petty civil and criminal cases in each island, was controlled by the Kōyās.

Because of these extreme caste practices, the Mēlāccēris had always struggled and protested. As a result of this struggle, in 1915, John Robb, the Collector of Malabar District under the British colonial government, issued a verdict which allowed the Mēlāccēris to use umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun and rain, however, they were not to use them to offend the Kōyās. Similarly, they were allowed the use of musical instruments in their houses for weddings, but not to hold processions along the streets with singing during the festivities, and they were also allowed to wear shirts during sailing and also on the islands, but only when the weather was very hostile. They were prohibited from wearing shirts as an adornment. Soon after this verdict, a member of the Mēlāccēri, Rajab Arakkalār from Kalpeni Island again petitioned the Collector as to whether the wearing of clothing was a fundamental right. He secured an order that allowed the Mēlāccēris to wear clothes covering the upper body even when they were on the islands. Rajab came to the mosque for the next Friday prayer wearing a new jacket. However, after the prayer, he was severely attacked by the Kōyās and his jacket was slit with a knife. The Mēlāccēris had to fight a long battle to enjoy several basic rights, such as the general using of umbrellas and possessing an *ōṭaṁ* – even after the Indian Independence. These extreme forms of restrictive practices based on the caste hierarchy are no longer practised on the Islands.

Another important characteristic feature of Islam on the Lakshadweep Islands is its Sufi *ṭarīqas* (specific orders or Sufi groups), which were also formed along these social divisions.[1] There are two main Sufi paths: the *qādiriyya* and *rifā'iyya*, both of which are still very active on the Islands. On the islands, the history of the *qādiriyya ṭarīqa* may be as old as the *qādiriyya* in southern India as well as in the wider Indian Ocean littorals. The *rifā'iyya ṭarīqa* on the islands is believed to have been instituted by the much-venerated saint of the Lakshadweep Islands, Sheikh Muḥammad Qāsim Thaṅṅaḷ (d. 1728) (Fig.2-3). A form of ritual recitation (names of God) called *dhikr* forms a central part of Sufi practice. It also includes intercessory-rituals mediating and invoking a bond with the saint. The style of such recitation varies between the different orders or *ṭarīqas*. Theodore Gabriel, a religious studies scholar who has published on the Sufis of the Lakshadweep Islands, described the ritual recitations and performance (the *rātīb*) of the *qādiriyya ṭarīqa* as a "sober affair" when compared to that of the *rifā'i ṭarīqa*,[2] whose *rifā'i* rituals include self-mortification mainly by using a *"labbūs"* (from the Arabic root word *'lubus'* something which is worn), an object with a moulded wooden handle and a sharp metal head, which is used to cut one's body during the ritual mediation of the saint (Fig.4). Sometimes the sharp objects were temporarily used to pierce and then worn on the body of the performer, therefore, the name (*lubus*) underscores the use of such objects in the ritual. Gabriel observes that the *qādiriyya ṭarīqa's* rituals are/were conducted in venues controlled by the landowning Kōyās, the upper 'caste'. The *rifā'i* rituals, which he refers to as "Melacceri [Mēlāccēri] rituals," are described as "more lively and charismatic *dhikr* in compliance with the Riffai *[rifā'i]* order".[3] On the islands, where both of these two *ṭarīqās* are prominent, caste power politics played a role in constituting how these *ṭarīqas* were locally formed, and I agree with Gabriel's opinion about the sobriety of the *qādiriyya* rituals when compared to that of the *rifā'iyya*. However, seeing it as a "more dignified Sufi ritual" is a matter of perspective.

Fig.4: Labbūs kept in Hujra Mosque, Agatti, Lakshadweep Islands. ©Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

To conclude, over the course of time, especially during the last century, most of the extreme forms of restrictive social practices on the Islands, once stringently enforced by the upper castes, have been cast aside. This was made possible largely through the long history of struggle against such restrictive practices by the oppressed and humiliated groups on the Islands. Interestingly, this social hierarchy amongst the Islanders also informed and shaped the ways in which their Sufi *ṭarīqas* were formed. In the wake of the material turn in the humanities, it has now become a truism that things (with people) are constitutively imbricated in the constitution of social and cultural realities. Caste as a form of stratification relied very much on restrictive practices, in which symbols indexing social and cultural authority were restricted; here in this case it was ensured through the restrictions on the possession and use of *ōṭaṁs,* sandals, upper body coverings, umbrellas, ornaments etc. The unrestrictive and unregulated use of material things, practices, and resources had immense power to cast off the power imposed on the oppressed social groups, making way for social change. It is through the materials and embodied practices that power, and identities were/are (re)inscribed and (re-) constituted.[4]

Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali
is a PhD researcher at the BCDSS. He investigates "Entangled Dependencies and Venerated Spaces: Islamic Material Culture in the Littorals of Pre-modern South India", focusing on the pre-modern Indian Ocean networks of religion–trade–slavery. He holds am M.A. in Sociology and an M.Phil. in the Study of Social Systems, both from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

[1] On Sufi *ṭarīqas* in the Islands of Lakshadweep, please see the study by Brian Didier which focuses on Antrōtt Island. Didier, who is a social anthropologist, focuses on interreligious relationships, see Brian J. Didier, "The Scars of Piety: Islam and the Dynamics of Religious Dispute on Andrott Island, South India," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2000); for a small write up on Sufi *tariqas* of the Lakshadweep Islands, see Theodore Gabriel, "The Sufi Tariqas of the Lakshadweep Islands, India," *Isim Newsletter*, 2 no. 1 (1999): 15.

[2] Gabriel, "The Sufi Tariqas of the Lakshadweep Islands, India," 15.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, "Improvisation Through a Culture of Dependency: Islamic Material Culture in the South Indian Littorals," paper presented at the 'Dependency, Inequality, and Material Culture,' Workshop, University of Bonn, 12–14, February 2019, Akademisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn; and see also Julia A. B. Hegewald, "Introduction: Embodiments of Dependencies and Freedoms in Asian Art," In *Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms: Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia* edited by Julia A.B. Hegewald, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110979855-001

NEWS

Fellows

Prof. Dr. Sean Kelley
University of Essex, UK
10/2024 – 05/2025

The Emergence of an Atlantic Slave System in Cape Verde and São Tomé

Dr. Aleksander Paradziński
10/2024 – 09/2025

Elite Women, their Dependents, and the Systems of Dependencies in the Late Antique Literary Sources

Dr. Henriette Rødland
10/2024 – 09/2025

Traces of Clay: Exploring slave status and outsider identities on the Medieval Swahili Coast

Amelia Spooner
Columbia University, US
10/2024 – 12/2024 & 06/2025 – 08/2025

Formally Free: Regulating Work in the French Empire, 1820s–1870s

Prof. Dr. Nathaniel Umukoro
Western Delta University, Oghara, Nigeria
10/2024 – 11/2024

Slavery-Induced Dependency, Food Insecurity and Human Trafficking in Africa: Lessons from Edo State, Nigeria

Dr. Katherine Burns
10/2024 – 09/2025

'Keep this Unwritten History': Mapping African American Family Histories in ‚Information Wanted' Advertisements, 1880–1900

Prof. Dr. Sophia Labadi
University of Kent, UK
12/2024 – 07/2025

19th Century Colonialists: Biographies, Statues, and Continued Asymmetrical Dependencies as Hierarchies of Power

Guests

Prof. Dr. Jamie Wood
(Leverhulme International Fellowship)
University of Lincoln, UK
09/2024 – 12/2024

The Unnamed: Slavery and the Making of the Church in Late Antique Iberia

Ezequiel M. T. Costa
(DAAD Fellowship)
Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul
10/2024 – 12/2024

From Global Networks to Local Policies: The Institutionalization of Eugenics and Inequality in 20th-Century Brazil

Prof. Dr. Ann R. David
Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Institute of Oriental & Asian Studies, University of Bonn
10/2024 – 10/2026

Gendered Dependence: Non-Binary Notions of Sexuality in Indian art and Performance

We are very happy to announce that BCDSS Professor Dr. Pia Wiegmink is part of a joint research project entitled „Unfreedom, Voices, Redress: Plantation Cultures of the Western Pacific" that has been granted 882,000 AUSD by the Australian Research Council!

Chief Investigators of the four-year project are Professor Penny Edmonds, of Flinders University, and Professor Deirdre Coleman, of University of Melbourne.

Professor Dr. Pia Wiegmink is Partner Investigator alongside Dr. Margaret Mishra (University of the South Pacific), Dr. Oliver Lueb (Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne), and Ms Imelda Miller (Queensland Museum).

Using fresh scholarly and creative approaches, this project aims to examine the hidden histories of the Western Pacific's Anglo and German plantations. The investigators will examine indenture, blackbirding (kidnapping) and forms of unfreedom, with a focus on gender and mixed-race relationships. Linking archives in English and German, and foregrounding Pacific voices, especially of women, they will generate new knowledge of plantation lives, the labour trade and its legacies. Working with museums and Pacific artists they will also meet urgent demands for public redress and commemoration. Benefits include bringing the Pacific into conversation with global debates on unfreedom and slavery and advancing political change across Australia and the Western Pacific.

ENMESHED AND ENTWINED: FABRICS OF DEPENDENCY

FABRICS OF DEPENDENCY EXHIBITION MEETS GLOBAL HERITAGE LAB!

Following the successful launch of the BCDSS exhibition "Enmeshed and Entwined: Fabrics of Dependency" at the Bonn University and State Library in October 2024, the exhibition will move to new premises in 2025. As of April 24th, it will be hosted by the Global Heritage Lab in the heart of Bonn city, where it will be on display until October 19th, 2025. What better exhibition space could there be, amidst large clothing retailers, for an exhibition that aims to lay bare the social interdependencies and hierarchical power structures inherent in fabrics, one of our oldest cultural assets. Predestined for a collaboration with the Global Heritage Lab, their critical reflections on heritage and historically suppressed forms of knowledge will add additional depth to the stories that the cluster's exhibits tell.

At the center of the exhibition is a large quilt that provides the 'narrative' framework for the multi-dimensional story of the 'textures of dependency' in a series of "story patches" from different periods and regions. Through them, we explore what textiles – coarse cloth or fine silks, work and household linen, clothes in different styles and fashions – can tell us about different forms of dependency: enslavement, serfdom, forced labor, or in our own day, factory work in the Global South? How do social, economic, religious and power-political hierarchies and the dependencies they produce, and the resistance that dependencies in their turn generate, tie in with the production, distribution and the use of textiles? What types of dependency underlie the global trade routes and commodity chains for textiles and their raw materials? And why are researchers from different fields – including archaeology, history, culture studies, art history, and literary and religious studies – currently engaged in investigating such questions at the University of Bonn?

2025 KICK-OFF EVENTS WITH INTERNATONAL PARTNERS

The BCDSS will be kicking off the new year with two major collaborative events, organized in cooperation with partner institutions in Brazil and Cuba.

Palacio Ferrer, Cienfuegos, Cuba. ©Michael Zeuske, 2023

CURRENT TRENDS IN SLAVERY STUDIES IN BRAZIL II

From January 22-24, the cluster will be welcoming fourteen speakers from Brazil to discuss "Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil II". Following on from the first conference in 2020 and the resulting publications and output that have emerged since, the event aims to further characterize Brazilian historiography.

Slavery as a radical form of asymmetrical dependency plays a key role in Brazilian historiography. African slaves were brought into Brazil as early as 1530, with abolition only in 1888. During those centuries, Brazil received more than 4,000,000 Africans, over four times as many as any other American destination. Brazilian histories of indigenous and black slaveries provide a particularly rich source for understanding dependency categories. The cooperation between Brazilian scholars and the BCDSS has been particularly important in the last years, resulting in important publications, such as the volume produced after the Conference "Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil I". In its second edition, invited speakers shall be focusing on new areas of study: the relationship between Church and slavery, law and slavery, and science and slavery – including recent research on labor history, as well as a comparative approach of Brazilian and African (Angolan) history.

The conference is organised by Paulo Terra (Universidade Federal Fluminense - Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Roberto Hofmeister Pich (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul – Porto Alegre, Brazil), and Stephan Conermann (BCDSS, University of Bonn). It is split into five sessions:

SESSION 1 –
Church, Theology, and Slavery
chaired by Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann,
BCDSS – Bonn / Germany

SESSION 2 –
Enslavements and Dependencies between Law and Science
chaired by Prof. Dr. Marçal de Menezes Paredes,
PUCRS – Rio de Janeiro / Brazil

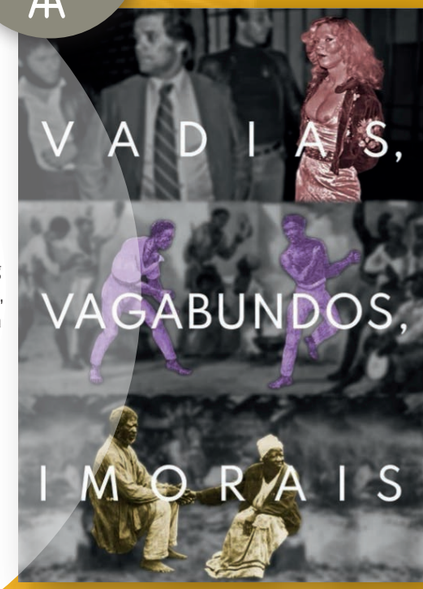
SESSION 3 –
Frontiers of Slavery and Dependency: Brazil and Angola
chaired by Prof. Dr. Luis Rosenfield,
PUCRS – Porto Alegre / Brazil

SESSION 4 –
Slavery, Freedom and Labor History
chaired by Prof. Dr. Michael Zeuske,
BCDSS – Bonn / Germany

SESSION 5 –
Enslavement, Gender and Race
chaired by Prof. Dr. Paulo Cruz Terra,
UFF – Rio de Janeiro / Brazil

MOVIE SCREENING

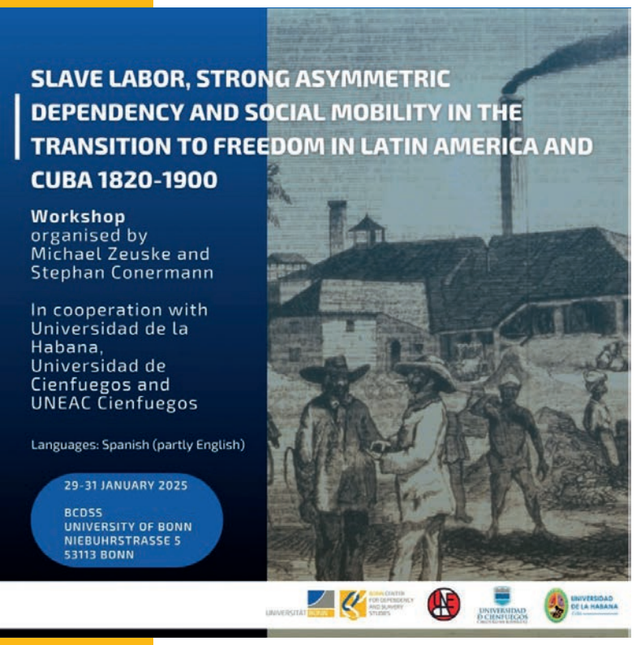
The conference includes the screening of the documentary "Vagrants, Vagabonds, Immorals" (Brazil 2024) by Nina Tedesco and Paulo Cruz Terra (both direction and script). The movie queries the meanings of vagrancy throughout Brazilian history, at least since Abolition. Who was considered a vagrant? What are the possibilities of resistance to attempts at criminalization of vagrancy? Approaching these questions through the intersectional lens of class, gender, race and sexualities, the movie engages in a dialogue with four female activists: Neusa Maria Pereira, journalist and one of the founders of the Movimento Negro Unificado; Shirley Krenak, Indigenous activist of the Krenak people; Jovanna Baby, founder of the organized movement of transgender people in Brazil; and Nataraj Trinta, historian and organizer of the Slut Walk in Rio de Janeiro.



CONFERENCE DATE:	**JANUARY 22-24, 2025.**
LOCATION:	**BONNER UNIVERSITÄTSFORUM, HEUSSALLEE 18-24, 53113 BONN**
CONTACT:	**EVENTS@DEPENDENCY.UNI-BONN.DE**
CONFERENCE LANGUAGE:	**ENGLISH**

SLAVE LABOR, STRONG ASYMMETRIC DEPENDENCY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE TRANSITION TO FREEDOM IN LATIN AMERICA AND CUBA 1820-1900

From January 29-31, the cluster will be welcoming five speakers from three main partner institutions in Cuba: The Universidad de la Habana and Universidad de Cienfuegos, as well as UNEAC Cienfuegos, the Cuban writers' and artists' association.



Together with Prof. Dr. Michael Zeuske and Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann, they will be offering a workshop on "Slave Labor, Strong Asymmetric Dependency and Social Mobility in the Transition to Freedom in Latin America and Cuba 1820-1900".

The workshop will focus on the work of slaves and former slaves as well as other people in strong asymmetric dependencies before and after formal abolition in various areas/countries of Latin America (1816-1888), but also on their (possible) social mobility during an era of great anti-colonial revolutions (1810-1898).

SPEAKERS:

Sergio Guerra Vilaboy, Universidad de la Habana: "Slavery in the fight for independence in Latin America"

René Villaboy Zandívar, Universidad de la Habana: "Artisans and Militiamen: two forms of social mobility of the "free people of color and former slaves in the Hispanic Caribbean"

Anabel García García, Universidad de Cienfuegos: "Associationism and political mobilization of former slaves and their descendants (1888-1912)"

Olga Isabel Sosa Amorós, Universidad de Cienfuegos:
"Trade, slavery and plantation: the foundations of the fortune of Tomás Terry Adams in Cienfuegos (1830-1882)"

Orlando García Martínez, UNEAC Cienfuegos: "The sugar industry in Cienfuegos: the workforce in the transition from the Ingenio to the Central. 1868-1898"

CONFERENCE DATE:	**JANUARY 29-31, 2025.**
LOCATION:	**BCDSS, UNIVERSITY OF BONN, NIEBUHRSTRASSE 5, 53113 BONN**
CONTACT:	**EVENTS@DEPENDENCY.UNI-BONN.DE**
CONFERENCE LANGUAGES:	**SPANISH (PARTLY ENGLISH)**

NEW PUBLICATIONS

SELBSTVERSKLAVUNG IM KLASSISCHEN RÖMISCHEN RECHT

[SELF-ENSLAVEMENT IN CLASSICAL ROMAN LAW]

Markus Goffin,
Selbstversklavung im klassischen römischen Recht
[Self-Enslavement in Classical Roman Law]
(Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024)
ISBN: 9783111467221

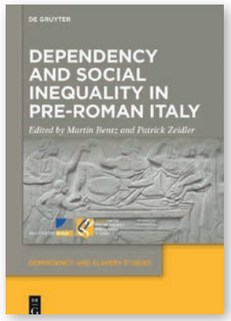
Volume 12 in the BCDSS series "Dependency and Slavery Studies" (DSS)
By Magnus Goffin

Aside from being born as a slave or being enslaved during war, classical legal sources recognize other cases in which it was no longer possible to regain at least freedom. One of these cases was sale for the purpose of participating in the purchase price. This volume examines whether and how free individuals could enslave themselves, offering a legal and social-historical perspective on the ancient sources.

Download via open access:

DEPENDENCY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN PRE-ROMAN ITALY

Volume 13 in the BCDSS series "Dependency and Slavery Studies" (DSS)
Edited by Martin Bentz and Patrick Zeidler



Martin Bentz and Patrick Zeidler, eds., *Dependency and Social Inequality in Pre-Roman Italy* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024)
ISBN: 9783111558417

In the past, most studies on Pre-Roman societies in Italy (1st millennium BCE) focused on the elites, their representation and cultural contacts. The aim of this volume is to look at dependent and marginalized social groups, which are less visible and often even difficult to define (slaves, servants, freedmen, captives, ‚foreigners', athletes, women, children etc.). The methodological challenges connected to the study of such heterogeneous and scattered sources are addressed. Is the evidence representative enough for defining different forms of dependencies? Can we rely on written and pictorial sources or do they only reflect Greek and Roman views and iconographic conventions? Which social groups can't be traced in the literary and archaeological record? For the investigation of this topic, we combined historical and epigraphical studies (Greek and Roman literary sources, Etruscan inscriptions) with material culture studies (images, sanctuaries, necropoleis) including anthropological and bioarchaeological methods. These new insights open a new chapter in the study of dependency and social inequality in the societies of Pre-Roman Italy.

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ELITESKLAVEREIEN UND PROFIFUSSBALL (DIS)KONTINUITÄTEN IN DER PRODUKTION VON ELITEKÖRPERN

[Elite Slavery and Asymmetric Relationships of Dependency: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Production of Elite Bodies in Professional Football]

Volume 15 in the BCDSS series "Dependency and Slavery Studies" (DSS)
By Alexander Rothenberg

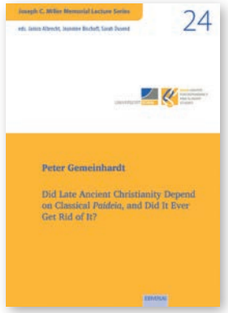
Alexander Rothenberg, *Elitesklavereien und Profifußball (Dis)Kontinuitäten in der Produktion von Elitekörpern* [Elite Slavery and Asymmetric Relationships of Dependency: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Production of Elite Bodies in Professional Football] (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024)
ISBN: 9783111381862

The concept of elite slavery describes the practice of abducting and then spending years training and disciplining children, who were then placed in high-level positions, sometimes amassing huge wealth. These features can also be found, though in a different form, in contemporary asymmetric relationships of dependency. The example of professional football reveals similarities and differences in the production of elite bodies.

Download via open access:

DID LATE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY DEPEND ON CLASSICAL PAIDEIA, AND DID IT EVER GET RID OF IT?

Volume 24 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series
by Peter Gemeinhardt



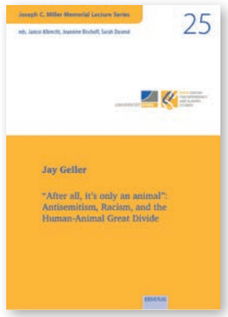
Peter Gemeinhardt, *Did Late Ancient Christianity Depend on Classical Paideia, and Did It Ever Get Rid of It?* (Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2024)
ISBN: 9783868934847

Did Christianity in its beginnings depend on classical education, and was it ever able to free itself of this dependency? Christians were confronted with classical *paideia*, which comprised literate learning as well as social codes and the ideal of the true human being. Many Christian writers uttered their skepticism about *paideia* (due to the prominence of pagan Gods in school texts), but looking at educational practices opens up a different view. Christians made use of literate skills in memorializing the dead in inscriptions, writing down the life of saints, and preaching the Gospel in worship. Their dependency on educational competencies and values thus always entailed innovation and creativity as well as an ongoing interaction with contemporary religious cultures. If one distinguishes the levels of discourse and practice, it becomes clear that Christians felt no need to dispose of *paideia*. Instead, religious education was promoted for all members of the faith, regardless of age, sex, social standing, and also regardless of a person's status as a free citizen, freed person, or slave. One may even call late ancient Christianity, as is argued, a "Bildungsreligion" (a religion characterized by education).

Download via open access:

"AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY AN ANIMAL": ANTISEMITISM, RACISM, AND THE HUMAN-ANIMAL GREAT DIVIDE

Volume 25 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series
by Jay Geller



Jay Geller, *"After all, it's only an animal": Antisemitism, Racism, and the Human-Animal Great Divide* (Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2024)
ISBN: 9783868934854

In his *Minima Moralia*, Theodor Adorno isolated the phrase "After all, it's only an animal" as the telltale justification for the possibility of "pogroms" against "savages, blacks, Japanese [and] Jews" by its overcoding their human status with animality. Concomitant with rendering their human identity invisible is rendering their animal—their species—difference visible. The imputation of intersecting identifiers not only enacts both the subordination of those marked in the collective singular (the Jew, the Black, the Animal) and the dominance of the unmarked markers (Gentiles, Whites, Humans), it also (re) constructs the authority of hierarchical oppositions indexed by each identifier. Hence to analogize Jews or Blacks with animals not only maintains the hierarchical opposition of Jew and Gentile or Black and White, but that of Animal and Human as well. This work focuses upon several shared loci for the generation by Gentiles and Whites of bestial ascriptions of, respectively, Jews and Blacks: two, happenstances of geography and diet, that identify them with specific animals, and one, fears of their passing in the wake of their legal and political emancipations, that identifies them with "the Animal" in its visible varieties to render their respective differences as discernable and self-evident.

Download via open access:

UNFREE LABOUR RELATIONS IN BRAZIL'S AMAZON REGION. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHANGES DUE TO THE POLITICAL CRISIS UNDER THE BOLSONARO-GOVERNMENT

Julia Harnoncourt, *Unfree Labour Relations in Brazil's Amazon Region. An Assessment of the Changes Due to the Political Crisis Under the Bolsonaro-Government* (Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2024)
ISBN: 9783868934885

Volume 26 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series
by Julia Harnoncourt

Trabalho escravo, a form of unfree labour, has been considered a crime in Brazil since 1995. Historically, Pará, a state in the Brazilian Amazon region, has had the highest numbers of *trabalho escravo*, especially in the agricultural sector. This article examines the changes in the regime of *trabalho escravo* in Pará, from the time after the coup against Dilma Rousseff in 2016 until the end of the Bolsonaro government. Political and economic changes have had reciprocal effects on the organization of *trabalho escravo* as well as on the power dynamics in the Amazon region, on land conflicts and on the racialization of the labourers, which in turn influence *trabalho escravo*. To study all of these factors, two series of interviews with experts working in the field were conducted, one in 2014 and another in 2022. Apart from the secondary literature, this article also draws on statistics gathered by the state and those gathered by one of the most important NGOs fighting this labour regime. All these enable this work to shed light on a time frame that, to date, has barely been the subject of research, especially with regard to *trabalho escravo*.

Download via open access:

PROSTITUTION / SERVITUDE / SLAVERY: PICTURING FEMALE DEPENDENCIES IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY AMSTERDAM

Birgit Ulrike Münch, "Prostitution / Servitude / Slavery: Picturing Female Dependencies in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," *BCDSS Working Paper* 15 (2024)
ISSN 27479331

Volume 15 in the BCDSS Working Paper Series
by Birgit Ulrike Münch

This working paper seeks to explore the concept of asymmetrical dependency from an art and cultural historical perspective. Prostitution and sex work are central domains in which female dependency was negotiated and bargained over during the early modern period. The aim of this project is to modify the network of different asymmetrical dependencies as it relates to female occupations, in particular to female prostitution in Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which is critically shaped by the role of the globalized metropolis in Dutch colonialism. The final section will focus on the concrete example of the exhibition on Dutch still lives "Augenlust," co-curated by the author (LVR-Landesmuseum Bonn, 23.09.22– 20.02.23, held in cooperation with the Museum Allard Pierson Amsterdam), in which several cabinets were dedicated to the theme of asymmetrical dependency.

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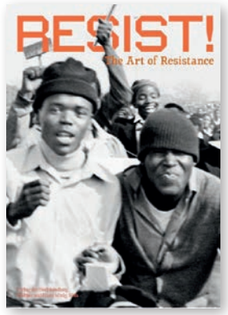
RESIST! THE ART OF RESISTANCE: EXHIBITION CATALOGUE RAUTENSTRAUCH-JOEST MUSEUM

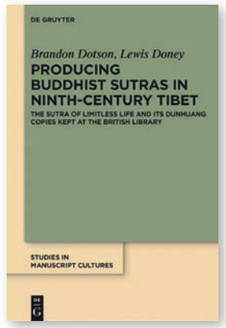


Ricardo Márquez García, Lydia Hauth, Vera Marušić and Nanette Snoep (eds.), *RESIST! The Art of Resistance: Exhibition Catalogue Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum* (Cologne: Walther und Franz König, 2024)
ISBN: 9783753302713

New book
by Ricardo Márquez García, Lydia Hauth, Vera Marušić and Nanette Snoep

RESIST! illuminates 500 years of anti-colonial resistance in the Global South and tells about colonial violence and oppression and its continuities. The exhibition and the book about it pay homage to the people who resisted in the most diverse ways and whose stories have hardly ever been told or heard to this day. The works of over 40 contemporary artists from the Global South and the diaspora tell stories of rebellion and war, violence and trauma as well as survival and resilience. Their stories are complemented by historical documents and numerous objects from the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum collection, silent witnesses of moments of anti-colonial resistance.

PRODUCING BUDDHIST SUTRAS IN NINTH-CENTURY TIBET



Brandon Dotson and Lewis Doney, *Producing Buddhist Sutras in Ninth-Century Tibet: The Sutra of Limitless Life and its Dunhuang Copies Kept at the British Library* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025)
ISBN: 9783111569307

New book
By Lewis Doney

In Dunhuang in the 820s CE, scribes, editors, and administrators produced thousands of copies of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* for the Tibetan emperor whose military and administrators ruled over the area at that time. Drawing on the 1,500 such Tibetan copies now kept at the British Library, this study explores the people and practices that created these manuscripts under imperial rule, exploring the lives of Dunhuang's *dependent* multi-ethnic scribes, editors, and administrators and reveals how their practices changed in a short period of time during the 820s. The book also surveys the various versions of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* (Tib. *Tshe dpag du myed pa'i mdo*; Ch. *Wuliangshou zongyao jing*; Skt. *Aparimitāyuḥ sūtra*) circulating in Dunhuang as evidence of Buddhism travelling along the Silk Roads. Finally, the authors uncover twentieth-century colonial collecting and cataloguing practices between Dunhuang and London and as these manuscripts were documented and conserved at the British Museum, India Office Library, and British Library.

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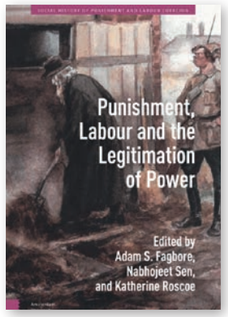
PUNISHMENT, LABOUR AND THE LEGITIMATION OF POWER



Adam Fagbore, Nabhojeet Sen, and Katherine Roscoe (eds.), *Punishment, Labour and the Legitimation of Power* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023)
ISBN: 9789463724777

New book
by Adam Fagbore, Nabhojeet Sen and Katherine Roscoe

This volume draws the outlines of a new field of scholarship at the crossroads of the social histories of punishment and labour. It poses key questions: What is "punishment" and how is it legitimized? In particular, how do punitive practices contribute to shape the processes of labour extraction and workers' mobility? Based on empirically grounded research on a wide range of geographical and temporal contexts, this volume provides important insights on these questions and on the ways through which they can be studied. It highlights the need to pluralize both punishment and labour, moving beyond the standard focus on incarceration and wage labour. It invites to produce contextualized studies of the processes of coercion and the relations between multiple actors, rather than starting from predefined categories of labour and punishment. And it foregrounds the importance of the simultaneous analysis of processes of mobilization and immobilization of the workforce.

AFRO-LATINIDAD E HISTORIA DE LAS ESCLAVITUDES

Michael Zeuske, *Afro-latinidad e historia de las esclavitudes* [Afro-latinity and the history of slavery] (Guadalajara: Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara, 2024)
ISBN: 9786075812557

New book
by Michael Zeuske

En este ensayo se presentan la historia real de esclavizados y esclavos en África, en el Atlántico y en lo que muchos llaman las Américas, es decir, todas Américas, del Norte al Sur, concentrándome en América Latina y en las primeras sociedades capitalistas-esclavistas, con una base económica llamada hoy segunda esclavitud (second slavery), como Cuba, Brasil y Estados Unidos. Busco entrelazar esta historia real con el discurso y la narración del concepto relativamente joven de "afro", y dar así una idea del surgimiento histórico de este término desde la historia de la esclavitud y de la trata entre África, el Atlántico y las Américas. Algunos consideran el término "afro" un neologismo.Y aunque hoy se piense que es un concepto creado en los EE.UU, se trata en realidad de un invento cubano, como lo explica el autor en el texto.

This essay presents the real history of enslaved and enslaved people in Africa, in the Atlantic and in what many call the Americas, that is, all the Americas, from North to South, concentrating on Latin America and the first capitalist-slave societies, with an economic base called "second slavery" today, such as Cuba, Brazil and the United States. The aim is to intertwine this actual history with the discourse and narrative of the relatively young concept of "Afro", and thus give a sense of the historical emergence of this term from the history of slavery and the slave trade between Africa, the Atlantic and the Americas. Some consider the term "Afro" a neologism, and although today it is thought to be a concept created in the U.S., it is in fact a Cuban invention, as it is explained in the text.

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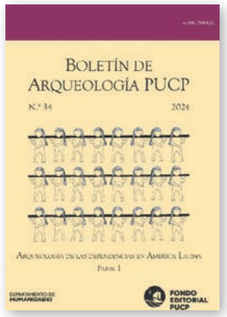
ARQUEOLOGÍA DE LAS DEPENDENCIAS EN AMÉRICA LATINA

Special issue of the *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP*

edited by Christian Mader, Tamia Viteri Toledo, Claire Conrad and Hanna Schubert
with articles by Christian Mader, Tamia Viteri Toledo, Claire Conrad, Hanna Schubert, Paul Graf, David Beresford-Jones and Karoline Noack



Christian Mader, Tamia Viteri Toledo, Claire Conrad and Hanna Schubert (eds.), "Arqueología de las dependencias en América Latina. Parte 1." *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP* 34 (2024)

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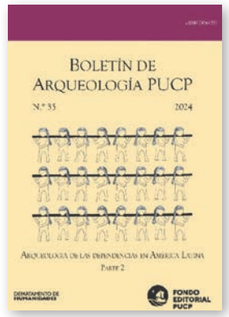

Christian Mader, Tamia Viteri Toledo, Claire Conrad and Hanna Schubert (eds.), "Arqueología de las dependencias en América Latina. Parte 2." *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP* 35 (2024)

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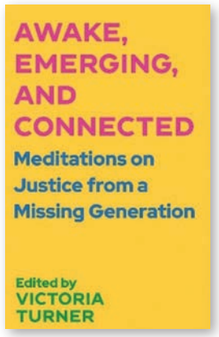
These special issues of the *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP* are the result of the international conference "Archaeologies of Dependency in Latin America" held in Bonn, Germany, on September 7-8, 2023 and organized by the research group "Archaeology of Dependencies (ArchDepth): Resources, Power and Status Differentiation" of the University of Bonn. Christian Mader, Tamia Viteri Toledo, Claire Conrad and Hanna Schubert are invited editors of both issues and contributed with several articles.

These special issues bring together new theoretical, analytical and methodological approaches, as well as new archaeological perspectives on dependency relations and related phenomena in Latin America. The articles cover different regions of the continent, ranging from the pre-Hispanic period to the colonial era. The first part of the special issue (*Boletín de Archaeología PUCP 34*) presents several approaches to dependency, including case studies in Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon. The second issue (*Boletín de Archaeología PUCP 35*) offers further case studies, presenting and discussing different notions of dependency based on the analysis of archaeological data and material culture.

"THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG":

QUEER PRESBYTERIANS, PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS, PRACTICAL POLITICS, AND A CASE FOR CHURCH HISTORY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGIES OF JUSTICE

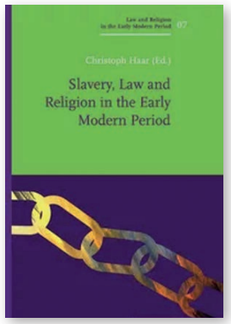


Book chapter in edited volume
by David Brandon Smith

Millennials and Gen Zers have been characterized as individualistic capitalist consumers, as politically unengaged and spiritually selfish, or only interested in identity politics. This edited collection, by bringing together younger generations of theologians, activists, campaigners, artists, and those working in politics, academia, the church, economics, or community work, offers a new narrative of justice- one that is globally aware and actively intersectional.

David Brandon Smith,
"'This is my Story, this is my Song': Queer Presbyterians, Provocative Questions, Practical Politics, and a Case for Church History in the Development of Theologies of Justice," in *Awake, Emerging, and Connected: Meditations on Justice from a Missing Generation*, ed. Victoria Turner, (London: SCM Press, 2024) ISBN: 9780334065432

SLAVERY, LAW AND RELIGION IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD



Contributions to edited volume
By Eva Marie Lehner, Bahar Bayraktaroğlu and Turkana Allahverdiyeva

This book examines enslavement, slavery and the global slave trade through the lens of law and religion in the period c. 1500–1800, revealing the discursive and practical contexts in which relations of slavery appeared across different settings around the globe. The volume adds to current research trends in the historical disciplines by incorporating underexamined geographical areas, by drawing on conceptual work on the meaning of slavery and by supporting interdisciplinary scholarship. Approaches from cultural, intellectual, religious and legal history feature in this volume and enter into conversation. Moreover, the individual chapters move across time and space, inviting the reader to consider the spectrum of slaveries in the early modern world. One key theme throughout the volume lies in taking up the perspectives of law and religion to analyse how local cultural settings as well as semantic appropriations shaped relations of slavery.

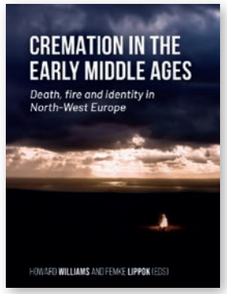
Eva Marie Lehner,
"Religion, Slavery and Resistance in Cape Town during the Dutch Colonial Period (1652–1795)," in *Slavery, Law and Religion in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Christoph Haar (Paderborn: Brill | Schöningh, 2024): 37–59
ISBN: 9783657796328

Bahar Bayraktaroğlu,
"In the Shadows of War: Early Ottomans and the Controversy of One-Fifth Booty (Pençik)," in *Slavery, Law and Religion in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Christoph Haar (Paderborn: Brill | Schöningh, 2024): 87–108
ISBN: 9783657796328

Turkana Allahverdiyeva,
"Slave Voices Unveiled: Practices of Slavery, Dynamics of Agency and Asymmetrical Dependency in the Early Modern Crimean Khanate," in *Slavery, Law and Religion in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Christoph Haar (Paderborn: Brill | Schöningh, 2024): 109–125
ISBN: 9783657796328

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY, THE ADVENTUS SAXONUM, AND THE POLITICS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Book chapter in edited volume
by James Harland



Cremation in the Early Middle Ages draws together the latest research and thinking on early medieval cremation practices. The book takes you on a journey through 19 chapters exploring cremation practices from the fifth to the eleventh centuries CE in Fennoscandia, the UK and Ireland, Frisia, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, and France. In this way, the book aims to be a central resource for anyone interested in early medieval cremations, or indeed funerary practices more generally. Notably, the structure and style of this book represent a departure from the norm. As well as a co-authored introduction, chapters constitute a conversation between the editors and key researchers captured via structured interviews, supported by a series of fact boxes highlighting key ideas, methods and techniques, sites, graves and discoveries.

Cremation was no single disposal tradition in the Early Middle Ages: it constituted but one dimension of local, regional and supra-regional deathways operating across different locales and with varying degrees of expenditure, meanings and materials, as well as involved a complex range of resources, environments, practices and performances both before, during and after the burning of the bodies. Where cremation is not the dominant burial rite, our authors reflect on the potential under-representation of cremation in our models. Ethnic and cultural labelling of the early medieval cremated dead are countered and critiqued by various authors.

James Harland
"Historiography and Archaeology, the Adventus Saxonum, and the Politics of the Early Middle Ages,"
in *Cremation in the Early Middle Ages*,
eds. Howard Williams and Femke Lippok
(Oxford: Sidestone Press, 2024)
ISBN: 9789464270990

"MAGDALENA MORE'S COMPLAINT"

Journal article
By Josef Köstlbauer and Scott Paul Gordon

In a remarkable 1784 letter, Magdalena More (ca. 1731–1820) exposes the complexities of enslavement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Magdalena More was sent to Bethlehem enslaved in 1747, was manumitted in the 1750s, and died there in 1820. Her husband, Andrew, remained enslaved from his arrival in Bethlehem in 1746 until his death in 1779. Her letter, published here for the first time, criticizes Moravian authorities for compelling her enslaved husband to pay rent and for neglecting other obligations they had to him.

Josef Köstlbauer
and Scott Paul Gordon,
"Magdalena More's Complaint,"
Journal of Moravian History 24,
no. 1: 56–79.
ISSN: 19336632

"DIGITAL DIASPORA ACTIVISM AT THE MARGINS: UNFOLDING ROHINGYA DIASPORA INTERACTIONS ON FACEBOOK (2017–2022)"

Journal article
By Anas Ansar and Julian Maitra

Anas Ansar and Julian Maitra, "Digital Diaspora Activism at the Margins: Unfolding Rohingya Diaspora Interactions on Facebook (2017–2022)," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 1 https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241228603 ISSN: 2056-3051

This study maps the Rohingya diaspora's digital engagement on Facebook and explores how their participation has transformed over the years. Using the CrowdTangle analytics platform, this mixed-methods study presents the Rohingya community's collective engagement on Facebook across six years, from January 2017 to December 2022. It comprises 47 Rohingya diaspora FB pages that published 34,905 posts and received nearly 8 million user interactions. Revealing their yearly transformation in interactions on Facebook, this study uncovers their contextual embodiment—within the increasingly complex and ever-changing regional and global socio-political landscape. Three key insights emerged from our findings. First, memories of loss, suffering, and longing for home intertwine in Rohingya transnational digital connectivity. In this remembrance process, Arakan (Rakhine) remains the place of reference and the center of gravity in their multi-layered identity formation and political mobilization. Second, as a gateway to seek global attention and articulate their political grievances, Rohingyas compose a coherent, unified, and human rights-based discourse on Facebook. Through such framing, they create an oppositional consciousness, drawing positive attention to their plight and the injustice they have endured for decades. Third, Islam, Muslim solidarity, and the narrative of Muslim victimhood emerge as indisputable markers in their identity (re)construction and manifesting political resistance. Anchoring on Islam, they build bridges between the scattered diaspora members and transcend their local struggle to the global audience, cementing the nexus between their Muslim identity and discrimination by the Buddhist-majority Myanmar government.

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GERMAN (POST)COLONIALISM: ARCHIVING, COLLECTING, EXHIBITING AND REPATRIATING PACIFIC CULTURES, A CONVERSATION

Pia Wiegmink, Imelda Miller, Oliver Lueb and Emma Christopher, "German (Post)Colonialism: Archiving, Collecting, Exhibiting and Repatriating Pacific Cultures, A Conversation," *Atlantic Studies* (2024): 1–19 ISSN: 1740-4649

Journal article
By Pia Wiegmink, Imelda Miller, Oliver Lueb and Emma Christopher

In Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism (2019) Ariella Azoulay highlights how histories of slavery and colonialism and the acquiring, taking, stealing and looting of artefacts from people and communities around the world by Western imperial actors are often two sides of the same coin. This conversation brings together scholars and curators to address these intricate and entangled histories and their legacies in the context of the German presence in the Pacific. Pia Wiegmink, a scholar of transatlantic slavery, interviews Emma Christopher, an Australian historian currently working on a database project to document "blackbirding" in the Pacific, Oliver Lueb, a German curator of an Oceania collection in a German museum, and Imelda Miller, an Australian South Sea Islander curator working with collections and archaeological sites in Queensland, Australia.

"DIE VERFASSER UND OFFENBARER HEILIGER SCHRIFTEN UND IHRE AMBIGE LITERARISCHE VERFÜGUNGSGEWALT ÜBER DAS GÖTTLICHE."

Eine christliche und eine buddhistische Fallstudie: Beobachtungen zum Johannesevangelium und zur Padmasambhava-Biografie [The Authors and Revealers of Sacred Writings and their Ambiguous Literary Power over the Divine]

Lewis Doney and Christian Blumenthal, "Die Verfasser und Offenbarer heiliger Schriften und ihre ambige literarische Verfügungsgewalt über das Göttliche. Eine christliche und eine buddhistische Fallstudie: Beobachtungen zum Johannesevangelium und zur Padmasambhava-Biografie [The Authors and Revealers of Sacred Writings and their Ambiguous Literary Power over the Divine]," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 108, no. 2: 196–217. ISSN: 0044-3123

Journal article
By Lewis Doney and Christian Blumenthal

Authors and revealers of holy scriptures represent themselves as subordinate to the divine and show themselves to be completely committed to it. They portray themselves as (authorized) witnesses and transmitters of events and messages. At the same time though, in their roles as creators of narrative they have control over their traditions, even if they are aware of their duties to maintain these traditions. Authors and revealers decide how to present each event and in which ways they retell it, in relation with their audiences. They portray their characters in the context of new narrated worlds and ascribe to them certain characteristics and attributes. This article shows how both sides of these roles are exemplified in two case studies on, first, the author of the Biblical Gospel of John at the end of the first century AD and, second, the twelfth-century Tibetan Buddhist named Nyangrel who revealed a biography of the Indian guru Padmasambhava.

EVENTS & PREVIEW

SAVE THE DATES!

1ST HALF OF 2025

7-8 January

"COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO POWER AND DEPENDENCY IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES: A WORKSHOP IN HONOUR OF ALHEYDIS PLASSMANN AND BJÖRN WEILER"

WORKSHOP

Organized by
Ryan Kemp

22-24 January

"DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY IN BRAZIL"

CONFERENCE

Organized by
Paolo Terra,
Roberto Hofmeister Pich and
Stephan Conermann

29-31 January

"SLAVE LABOR, STRONG ASYMMETRIC DEPENDENCY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE TRANSITION TO FREEDOM IN LATIN AMERICA AND CUBA 1820-1900"

WORKSHOP

Organized by
Michael Zeuske and
Stephan Conermann

3-5 February

"CONNECTING LATE ANTIQUITIES"

CONFERENCE

Organized by
Julia Hillner

6-7 March

"DEPENDENCY AND AGENCY AT THE NORTHERN CROSSROADS OF PRE-MODERN ASIA AND EUROPE"

CONFERENCE

Organized by
Christoph Witzenrath

April – October

ENMESHED & ENTWINED: FABRICS OF DEPENDENCY

BCDSS EXHIBITION

on display at the Global Heritage Lab (GHL), located at the new Bonn University premises "P26"

Organized by
Beatrix Ihde-Hoffmann, in cooperation with Julia Binter from GHL

6-8 May

„STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM ASIA"

CONFERENCE

Organised by Jeannine Bischoff & Claude Chevaleyre

27 or 28 May

„CRISPINA PERES: AN AFRICAN WOMAN'S MICROHISTORY AND THE STUDY OF THE AFRICAN PAST"

LECTURE

Speaker: Prof. Dr. Toby Green (King's College London)

Organised by
Ana Lucia Araujo

4-6 June

"FAMILY IN THE ISLAMICATE WORLD"

WORKSHOP

Organised by
Emma Kalb & Bahar Bayraktaroglu

12 June

"PLANTATIONS, STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCY, AND THE GLOBAL HISTORY OF CAPITALISM"

WORKSHOP

Organized by
Joseph Biggerstaff in cooperation with Ulbe Bosma, IISH

17 June

TALK ON TONI MORRISON'S "A MERCY"

JUNETEENTH LECTURE

Speaker: Kinohi Nishikawa (Princeton University)

Organised by
Pia Wiegmink in cooperation with North American Studies Program, Uni Bonn, and AmerikaHaus NRW

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Joseph C. Miller
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MONDAYS, **4:15 PM CEST** (HYBRID) *

january

JANUARY 15, 2024

Disaster and Human Dependency in Late Antiquity

KRISTINA SESSA
(The University of Ohio. USA)

april

APRIL 7, 2024

JEFFREY EASTON
(Southwestern University, USA)

APRIL 28, 2024

JOERGN RIEGER
(Vanderbilt University, USA)

may

MAY 12, 2024

ZHANG YING
(Leiden University, The Netherlands)

MAY 19, 2024

YOLANDA PIERCE
(Vanderbilt University, USA)

june

JUNE 16, 2024

CRYSTAL NICOLE EDDINS
(University of Pittsburgh, USA)

JUNE 23, 2024

MARCY NORTON
(University of Pennsylvania, USA)

july

JULY 7, 2024

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PUBLISHER
Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS)
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STÄHLINGDESIGN, Darmstadt
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OTHER SUBJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM THE BCDSS
Over the coming years, the BCDSS will continue to publish information about its current research projects on its website, and to provide background information on subjects related to the overall topic of dependency. BCDSS scholars will also comment on social developments from their own perspectives. In the "Interviews" section, they talk about the conditions of their work, new methods and the changing nature of research communication.

THE BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES (BCDSS)
The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) hosts the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom", which aims to overcome the binary opposition of "slavery versus freedom". For that we approach the phenomenon of slavery and other types of strong asymmetrical dependencies (e.g. debt bondage, convict labor, tributary labor, servitude, serfdom, and domestic work as well as forms of wage labor and various types of patronage) from methodologically and theoretically distinct perspectives.

The research cluster is part of the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the Federal Government and the *Länder* and is free and independent in the selection and realization of its research projects.

Our Cluster of Excellence is a joint project of scholars from the fields of Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Law, Literary Studies, Area Studies (including The History of the Islamicate World, Japanese and Chinese Studies, Tibetan Studies), Sociology and Theology. We propose "strong asymmetrical dependency" as a new key concept that includes all forms of bondage across time and space.

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