

# DEPENDENT

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## ECHOES AND HORIZONS

### TAKING STOCK & LOOKING AHEAD

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BONN CENTER  
FOR DEPENDENCY  
AND SLAVERY  
STUDIES





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DEPENDENT, across all issues  
1–12 (2020–2025)

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TAKING STOCK & LOOKING AHEAD

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SEVEN YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

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Dear Readers,  
Welcome to the twelfth issue of our Cluster Magazine DEPENDENT. This is a special edition in which we look back on our joint achievements over the last seven years and, with the second funding phase now secured, we also look ahead with great excitement and ambition. In the second part of this issue, we offer insights into how we plan to expand the Cluster’s collaborative scope and use interdisciplinary dialogue to drive new research questions and methodologies.

In his introduction, the Cluster’s spokesperson, Stephan Conermann, offers a personal reflection on the journey from a small working group of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers exploring ideas for a DFG network application, through a successful proposal under the German Excellence Initiative, to the realities of the first “seven years of excellence” and the ambitious goals ahead.

We continue our reflection on the first funding phase from the perspectives of those whose research careers have been shaped by the Cluster and who, in turn, have helped shape its research agenda. This issue therefore foregrounds the biographies and experiences of some of our early career researchers. Taking a wider view, it also features reflections from international partners, fellows, and guest researchers on how the concept of Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies has informed their work.

Looking ahead, the second funding phase brings together 25 Principal Investigators from five faculties, spanning archaeology, anthropology, history, literary and cultural studies, art history, law, religious studies, and human geography, with regional expertise across five continents. We offer a first glimpse into their research projects and the directions they will shape in the years ahead.

In a close-up report on “Dialogues from Bolivia”, Carla Jaimes Betancourt, Stephan Conermann, and Roberto Hofmeister-Pich illustrate how the Cluster ensures that future projects address dependency, resilience, and social transformation through mutually co-produced knowledge developed in partnership with those whose experiences and expertise are central. Combining historical depth with innovative, globally informed research, “Dialogues from Bolivia” exemplifies a collaborative approach that explores Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies with the Global South, one of the key goals for the years ahead.

We look forward to sharing our endeavours with you over the next seven years!

Cécile Jeblawei

December 2025





by Stephan Conermann

Celebrating the Cluster's successful outcome of the application for the second funding phase. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, May 2025.

**How did it all begin? It started with a small working group of doctoral students and postdocs, in which we were looking for topics with which to apply for DFG network funding.**

Jeannine Bischoff in particular had close ties to the European Labour History Network (ELHN) working group 'Free and Unfree Labour', so it seemed like an obvious choice to choose this topic for our application. While we were still discussing this, the Rector of the University of Bonn, in whose team I was working at the time as Vice-Rector for International Affairs, asked me to submit an application for a humanities and social sciences project for the Faculty of Arts under the Excellence Initiative. (This Initiative by the German federal government aims to promote top-level research and to improve the quality of German universities and research institutions in general.) I told my working group about this suggestion, and it quickly became clear that as it stood, our topic was not suitable for a project under the Excellence Initiative. It was too close to the history of the labour movements and the associated Marxist connotations. Within a short time, however, we came to discuss slavery. This seemed a better fit, especially as at that time, Germany was not necessarily regarded as a major colonial power (unlike Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain or France). However, the term 'slavery' struck us as too loaded, and since it was also closely asso-

ciated with the notion of 'freedom', we developed the more sociological concept of 'strong asymmetrical dependencies'. This appeared to work well, and so we decided to enter it into the race.

Then came a long and intense application process. Our successful preliminary application was followed by the submission of our full application. Then we had to prepare for inspection by the German Research Foundation (which funds research on behalf of the government). A key moment was a weekend retreat in Bad Breisig, where some members of the management team went with the twenty-five professors designated to be PIs (Principal Investigators). This was when we succeeded in creating a real mood of optimism, mainly because our professorial colleagues suddenly realised that while we did not want to promise them to get PhD- and postdoc positions, they would have the opportunity to be released from their duties for a whole year of research at the Cluster's research college. This proved to be the right decision in terms of motivating the PIs.



Rector Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Michael Hoch congratulating Cluster speaker Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann on the opening of the Excellence Cluster. Photo: BCDSS, October 2, 2019.



Some of the early day cluster members welcoming the first cohort of fellows and PhDs. Photo: BCDSS, October 2019.

It was a lot of effort to prepare for the inspection, which took place in Cologne, but by the end of that process we were a very good, close-knit team. Even so, I don't think any of us will ever forget how we completely reorganised all the Power Point slides during the evening before the inspection ... or standing outside our hotel for an hour in the middle of the night, in our pyjamas, because of a fire alarm. And even so, on the day itself, everything went brilliantly. Then came more than half a year of waiting for the final decision, and on the day itself there was another nail-biting wait before it was finally clear that we would get the funding to be one of fifty-seven Clusters of Excellence across Germany.

The first of January 2019 was our official start date. Within a very short time, we managed to put together an excellent team for the general organisation, which was then gradually expanded. In addition to the Managing Director and her Team Assistant, the Events Management, the Publications Team, the PR Department, the Bonn Center for Digital Humanities (BCDH), and the Coordinators for the Institute for Advanced Study and the Degree and PhD Programmes evolved to be the main pillars of the Cluster. The decision to additionally hire an eTeaching Coordinator, another Language Editor and a Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (DIE) Coordinator proved to be a very wise one.

We stand out from other Clusters of Excellence primarily through our two degree programmes, our research college, the PhD programme and the opportunity for all members of the BCDSS to submit funding applications to the Steering Committee. In addition, it was also a smart move to establish the 'research group' (RG) format, which is rather unusual in the humanities. A RG – for which we took the inspiration from the DFG's Emmy Noether Programme – consists of a postdoctoral Group Leader and two PhD students supervised by her or him. A RG operates independently and on its own responsibility, i.e. it is not assigned to (or supervised by) a professor. The initial phase involved advertising and filling the numerous positions we had





**The late Prof. Dr. Trevor Burnard, then director of the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation at the University of Hull, giving his introductory speech at the official opening on November 6, 2019.** Photo: BCDSS, Nov. 2019.

specified in the application: ten RG leaders plus twenty PhD candidates, ten postdocs, ten fellows, another twenty-five PhD students and four Cluster Professors. Given our origins, it was not surprising that many of the first people we recruited were young scholars from the 'Free and Unfree Labour' working group: the postdocs Christian De Vito, Claude Chévaleyre, Hanne Østhus, Viola Müller, Lisa Hellman, Elena Smolarz and Josef Köstlbauer; Juliane Schiel as professor (she shortly afterwards took up a tenure-track professorship at Vienna) and Marcel van der Linden and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt for our International Advisory Board. The appointment process for the Cluster Professors took a while, but in the end, we succeeded in recruiting four outstanding colleagues: Julia Hillner, Claudia Jarzebowski, Pia Wiegink and Christoph Witzernath.



**At a reception in the Rector's Office – Rector Prof. Dr. h. c. Michael Hoch officially presented the appointment certificates to Prof. Dr. Julia Hillner, Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink, Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski and Prof. Dr. Christoph Witzernath (from left).** Photo: Barbara Frommann, Uni Bonn, August 31, 2021.

Although the cluster is a cross-faculty project, it forms a structurally independent institute within the Faculty of Arts and is part of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS). One carefully considered special feature is that three of the four Cluster Profes-



**The official opening conference in Bonn, held on November 6-7, 2019.** Photo: BCDSS, Nov. 2019.

sors are associated exclusively with the Cluster and not tied to any other institute. This has quickly led to their complete identification with the BCDSS. In addition, they can make a 100 percent contribution to our two degree programmes with their teaching.

The first year also saw the evolution of decision-making structures within the Cluster. The Executive Board (Stephan Conermann, Jeannine Bischoff, Marion Gymnich, Konrad Vössing and Karoline Noack) became an outstanding, highly efficient team. The Steering Committee became a refreshingly critical and engaged body thanks to the commitment of the representatives of the various status groups (who include representatives of each Research Area, one Cluster Professor, a Research Group Leader representative, and postdoc and PhD student representatives).

It took about three years to establish the Cluster's complete infrastructure. But I think that is to be expected given the size of this large collaborative research project. During this initial phase a fellowship programme was also set up. At any given time, a total of around ten international Fellows can stay and work with us for up to twelve months. This made it possible from the outset to attract outstanding researchers to our topic and to enter into direct contact and scholarly exchange with them. We initially set up a structured PhD programme for our doctoral students, which we expanded after some time to include what I consider to be a very helpful monitoring system. We faced a major challenge with the establishment of our two master's degree programmes. Both required accreditation, which is always a long and arduous process. At the end of this process, everyone involved was very happy and relieved that the reviewers did not impose any conditions on us, so that we could immediately start work on putting the two programmes into action. From the

outset, we received applications from large numbers of students from many different countries around the globe, so that the tutors are working with a wide range of groups and individuals. This is very enriching and positive, and can also pose lots of intercultural challenges. By this I not only mean our students' many and varied educational backgrounds that need to be accommodated, but also structural disadvantages. Due to the many operational difficulties (requirements for visas, accommodation, recognition of degrees, proof of funds etc.), students from non-European countries usually do not arrive in Bonn until the beginning of their second semester. This means that we have to teach the first semester almost entirely online. Speaking of internationality: we are all thrilled that the students and scholars we have been able to attract to all levels of the Cluster are predominantly women and internationals, many of whom are from non-European countries. This has resulted in a fantastic diversity. In this context I must mention the outstanding work of our DEI Coordinator, who has made the Cluster an absolute pioneer in the field of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity within the University of Bonn.

Our new PR team has also achieved great things. It really is admirable how much commitment they have shown in developing so many fantastic events and marketing formats. The same praise also goes to the Management and the Publications Teams. Our numerous events are undergirded by a professional support structure that allows even the largest conferences to run smoothly and without a hitch. Our excellent publications machinery is run by a well-coordinated team that meticulously oversees the entire publication process. The decision to set up our own Open-Access publishing series with a well-known publisher (DeGruyter) turned out to be just as seminal as the hiring of a translator and an additional language editor. Finally, the Bonn Center for Digital Humanities, which we established together with the Faculty of Arts, has developed excellently over the last years and is,



**BCDSS study trip to the exhibition "Amt 45i" by artist Cameron Rowland in Frankfurt, Germany, organized by Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink as part of the M.A. programs in Dependency and Slavery Studies. The exhibition addressed German entanglements and involvements in transatlantic slavery.** Photo: Susanne C. Soellinger, summer 2023.



**BCDSS PhD researchers at the General Assembly.** Photo: Daniela Berrío Domínguez, December 2023.

in my opinion, well positioned for the future. Overall, the entire management team has done a fantastic job. Without them, our large collaborative research project would not be able to function at all.

Naturally, it took a while for all the PIs and the new scholars to get on board, both physically and mentally. But gradually, the Cluster gained momentum and the number of scholarly activities (field research, scholars participating in international conferences and organising workshops and conferences in Bonn; round tables, lectures and, above all, publications of various sorts) steadily increased. The Research Areas also began to take shape, especially since each RA was responsible for organising one of five thematic years. This worked reasonably well, and still left sufficient room for numerous individual initiatives, most of which resulted in the formation of informal working groups.

In retrospect, a real miracle for me is how well everybody coped with the COVID-19 pandemic, which, let us not forget, lasted from January 2020 to May 2023. The Cluster did not allow itself to be deterred or irritated in any way, but immediately switched all activities to online formats. The weekly Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture especially succeeded in making the Cluster and its scholarly endeavours known to a to a broad international audience during this period.



**M.A. study trip to The Humboldt Forum, Berlin, during the COVID pandemic. The excursion was a part of the course "Colonialism, Racism, Antisemitism in recent (and not so recent!) debates on German Cultural Heritage", led by Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski.** Photo: Susanne C. Soellinger, May 2022.



As the crisis drew to a close and the world returned to normal, we were once more able to vigorously pursue the establishment of strategic partnerships. During the course of 2023 and 2024, we succeeded in forging an impressive partnership network. Our institutional contacts now extend beyond numerous European institutions to the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and East Asia.



Visit of a delegation from our international partner in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Photo: Niniane Waldmann, July 2025.

In early 2024 the Cluster was running at full steam. We had clearly succeeded in creating a highly productive, transdisciplinary and international working atmosphere based on curiosity and collegial cooperation. At the same time, we had to start preparing the application for the second funding phase. I experienced this as an incredibly intense, but always constructive and productive process of discussion, exchange and writing, which culminated with the submission of what we felt was an excellent application text in August of that year. Even then, there was barely time to catch our breath, as we had to prepare our presentation for the inspection, which was scheduled for 18 December in Bonn. In light of the fact that this happened during the winter semester with all of its teaching and administrative tasks, this was an extremely challenging, but also exciting period of team work in the best sense of the word. There were crises and days full of doubt, but in the end, everyone felt that we were excellently prepared for the review, and we delivered the best possible performance on the crucial day. We then had to wait until May 2025, when it was officially announced that our application had been approved and that we would receive funding for another seven years (2026–2032). Of course, there was enormous joy and relief for all concerned.

## What will happen next?

Our goals for the second phase are ambitious: we ultimately want to establish a 'dependency turn' in the humanities, social sciences and object studies, while our more immediate focus will be on legacies and continuities of strong asymmetrical dependencies in contemporary societies. We want to put together and publish a handbook, a reader and an annotated collection of sources, as well as set up our own journal. We will overhaul the master's programmes and develop a separate minor subject at BA level. We will also modify the PhD programme and integrate it into the Bonn International Graduate School (BIGS). Our DEI concept will evolve further and we will expand our third-mission activities in a targeted manner. There is the Methods Lab to be set up and got going; and in this context, we must work intensively on the challenges that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) will bring. And finally, we want to expand our strategic partnerships in order to incorporate additional, primarily non-Western, perspectives and scholarly expertise into our research programme. The end result should be a diverse and varied network whose members contribute multilaterally to our Historically Informed Dependency Studies.

That is what we're envisioning. Now, let's get on with it!

Translation by Imogen Herrad  
(Translator and Academic Editor, BCDSS)



### Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann

is Spokesperson and Principal Investigator at the BCDSS. In addition to his role as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Stephan Conermann is Professor of Islamic Studies. He is editor of several journals, including the Bonner Islamstudien (BIS), the Bonner Asienstudien (BAS) and the Bonner islamwissenschaftliche Hefte (BiH). In his research, he compares various forms of slavery in pre-modern societies. His starting point are different forms of dependency in the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria (1250–1517).



## Further Impressions 2019-2025

The images below offer only a small, exemplary glimpse into the countless activities jointly undertaken by BCDSS members and partners.



The conference "New Perspectives on Heritage and German Global History" was convened in July 2022 by BCDSS Professors Pia Wiegink and Claudia Jarzowski, in collaboration with FU Berlin and the University of Würzburg. The conference explored slavery and other forms of dependency in German and global history since the 1450s, highlighting neglected sources created by enslaved and bonded people. It focused on their agency, resistance, and cultural expressions often overlooked in traditional historiography. Here: Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzowski and Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink and participants at the conference opening. Photos: Jan Hörber, BCDSS, July 2022.

Launched in 2022, the Reading and Discussion series "(Un) Abhängige Ansichten" invites authors and other creative minds to present their books or concepts and engage with contemporary issues relevant to the Cluster. Here, co-speaker Prof. Dr. Konrad Vössing opened the series with cultural scholar and philosopher Iris Därmann, the first guest speaker. From left to right: Prof. Dr. Christoph Antweiler, Dr. Iris Därmann, Prof. Dr. Birgit Münch and (standing) Prof. Dr. Konrad Vössing. Photo: Cécile Jeblawei, BCDSS, July 2022.



The Roman Bonn team—Maja E. Baum, Giulia Cappucci, Dr. James M. Harland, and Cluster Prof. Dr. Julia Hillner—established the Roman Bonn walking tour in 2022 and developed into what is now a comprehensive and interactive World of Roman Bonn website, launched in 2024. The platform presents archaeological and historical records of Roman Bonn and explores themes central to the Cluster's research, including imperialism, military conquest, mechanisms of surplus extraction, local responses to colonial rule, and, importantly, slavery and freedom. Photo: Julia Hillner.





The end of December 2022 saw the opening of the exhibition "All they wanted was to study - The numerus clausus law and young women", at the Women's Museum ('Frauenmuseum') in Bonn, by BCDSS Investigator Prof. Dr. Béla Bodó. The exhibition focused on young Hungarian Jewish women whose lives were fundamental-ly altered by the "numerous clausus law" of 1920 in Hungary and explores its impact on women's emancipation and Jewish assimilation. Here: Prof. Dr. Béla Bodó welcoming the visitors. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, Dec. 2022.

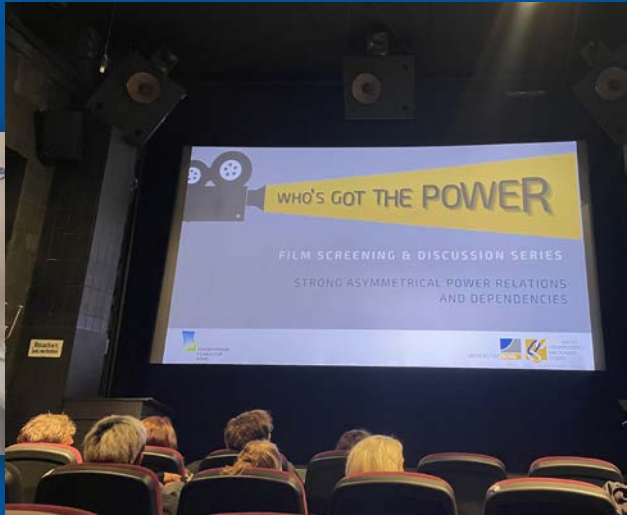
On 18 January 2023, BCDSS Managing Director Jeannine Bischoff and Principal Investigator Prof. Dr. Winfried Schmitz officially opened the Library of Ancient Slavery. It comprises 3,500 books / monographs, numerous printouts or photocopies of encyclopaedia entries, 12,250 papers and articles, some microfilms and 3,100 PDF files. It is one of the world's largest collections on ancient slavery, including texts not only in the European scholarly languages, but also from the Slavic, Nordic and Finno-Ugric language families, as well as titles in Hebrew, Turkish, Japanese, Korean and Chinese. Here: Prof. Dr. Winfried Schmitz (left) with Jeannine Bischoff (talking), presenting parts of the collection. Photos: Cécile Jeblawei, BCDSS, Jan. 2023; Alina Gläser, BCDSS, Jan. 2022 (library photo).



The BCDSS Annual Conference on "Households as Coercive Labour Regimes" was held at the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam, one of our international partner institutions, in November 2023. The conference explored large household-like institutions as sites of asymmetric labour relations and as-sessed whether "household" can serve as an analytical concept for studying systems of strong dependency. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, Nov. 2023.

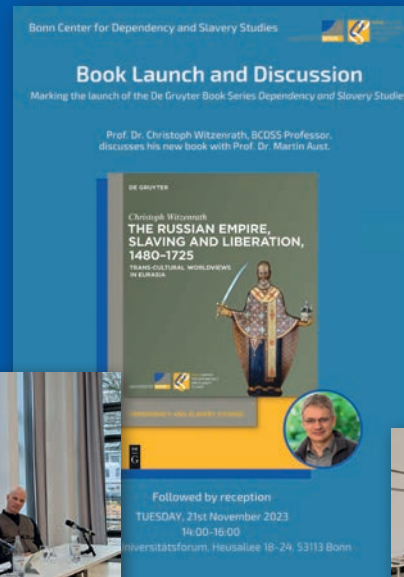


Following the release of the German translation of *Les Mondes de l'esclavage* in 2023, Cluster Prof. Claudia Jarzebowski led a discussion with Prof. Dr. Paulin Ismard, Prof. Dr. Benedetta Rossi (authors), Cluster speaker Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann, and PhD researcher Joseph Biggerstaff on „Slavery and Dependency: Comparative Approaches in Global History" in June 2024. The event was held in cooperation with the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (BPB) in Bonn. Photo: Niniane Waldmann, BCDSS, June 2023.



Launched in 2022, the BCDSS film and discussion series "Who's Got the Power?" aims to engage with the public and foster dialogue. Here at the screening of "Salam Bombay" (from left to right): PhD researcher Ayesha Hussain, BCDSS Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski, Press & PR Manager Cécile Jeblawei and PhD researcher Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali. Photo: Daniela Berrio Domínguez, Nov. 2022.





To celebrate the launch of the De Gruyter publication series *Dependency and Slavery Studies*, BCDSS Investigator Prof. Dr. Martin Aust joined BCDSS Professor Dr. Christian Witzentrath for a discussion of his book *The Russian Empire, Slaving and Liberation, 1480-1725: Trans-Cultural Worldviews in Eurasia*, exploring the historical and historiographical context as well as contemporary references. The conversation was moderated by BCDSS Professor Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski. Photo: BCDSS November 2023.



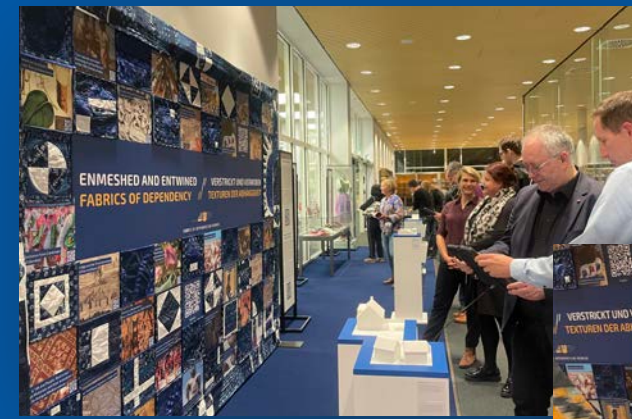
From left to right: Prof. Dr. Christian Witzentrath, Prof. Dr. Claudia Jarzebowski, Prof. Dr. Martin Aust. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, Nov. 2023.



Publications Manager Dr. Janico Albrecht presenting the De Gruyter publication series *Dependency and Slavery Studies* and introducing the speakers. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, Nov. 2023.



The *Dependency and Slavery Studies* book table, presented by De Gruyter Publisher. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, Nov. 2023.



October 2024 saw the launch of the exhibition „Enmeshed and Entwined: Fabrics of Dependency“, jointly developed by the BCDSS and BCDH and hosted by the Bonn University and State Library (ULB). Photos: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS.



In 2025, the exhibition "Enmeshed and Entwined: Fabrics of Dependency" was relocated to the Global Heritage Lab to be shown in conjunction with their exhibition "Dressing Resistance". Both exhibitions highlighted strong asymmetrical dependencies in the production, use, and distribution of textiles, showing their

entanglement in past and present. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, April 2025.



From drafting antidiscrimination policies in 2022 to a comprehensive training program within a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) framework, the BCDSS has developed a pioneering, structured approach to promoting academic diversity and addressing discrimination and harassment. The training courses are open to BCDSS members as well as to the wider University of Bonn community.



From left to right: BCDSS Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink and BCDSS PhD researchers Giulia Cappucci and Mary Aderonke Afolabi-Adeolu. Photo: Cécile Jeblawe, February 2022.



BCDSS Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Certificate Awardees, Autumn 2025. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS.



DEI training in "Inclusive Teaching Spaces - Transcultural Skills as a Practical Toolbox", held in October 2024. From left to right: Dr. Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa, Prof. Dr. Marion Gymnich, Manon Diederich (trainer), Prof. Dr. Christoph Witzentrath, Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink, Prof. Dr. Julia Hillner. Photo: David B. Smith, who also took part.



BCDSS Professor Dr. Pia Wiegink with guest speaker Prof. Dr. Homi K. Bhabha from Harvard University, a leading scholar in contemporary postcolonial studies, at the University of Bonn International Days 2024. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, October 2024.



PhD researcher Ayesha Hussain taking part in a round table discussion on migration at the University of Bonn International Days 2023. Photos: Niniane Waldmann, October 2023.

Internationalization is central to the BCDSS, both in its research focus and its organizational structure. Cluster members, including Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink and PhD researcher Ayesha Hussain, have played key roles in the University's annual International Days.



Introduced in 2022 by BCDSS Professor Dr. Pia Wiegink in cooperation with AmerikaHaus NRW e.V. and the North American Studies Program (NAS) at Bonn University, the Juneteenth Lecture has become an annual event, held on or around Juneteenth National Independence Day—a U.S. federal holiday established on 17 June 2021 to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved African Americans.

**Juneteenth Lecture:**  
Enslaved Females in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century North America: Examining the Fugitive Slave Archive



Wednesday, June 19, 2024  
6:00 p.m.  
Konferenzraum EG  
Neubustr. 9 | 53113 Bonn

**Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson**  
Provost Professor of Art History, Department of History of Architecture and Director of the Slavery North Initiative, University of Massachusetts Amherst.





The organizers and speaker of the 2024 Juneteenth Lecture. From left to right: Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink and Dr. Luvena Kopp (BCDSS), Monique Mauel (Amerikahaus NRW), Dr. Charmaine Nelson (Juneteenth Guest speaker, University of Massachusetts Amherst), Prof. Dr. Sabine Meyer and Prof. Dr. Sabine Sielke (both NAS Uni Bonn). Photo: BCDSS



**STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES, PERSPECTIVES FROM ASIA, PAST AND PRESENT**  
PROGRAM

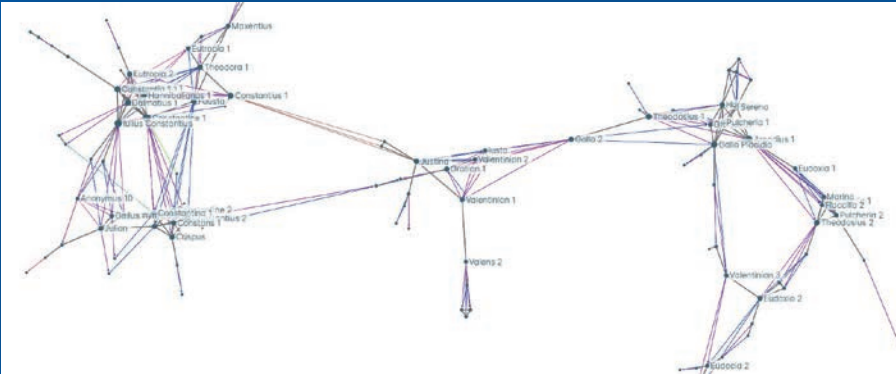
**5 MAY 2025  
KEYNOTE LECTURE**  
University Club Bonn e. V.  
Konviktstraße 9  
53113 Bonn

**6 - 8 MAY 2025  
CONFERENCE**  
Bonner Universitätsforum  
Heussallee 18-24  
53113 Bonn





The three-day conference "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past and Present", organized by Jeannine Bischoff and Dr. Claude Chevalytre in collaboration with the Transdisciplinary Research Area "Present Pasts", convened in May 2025. It examined Eurocentric frameworks in studies of early-modern Asian slavery, investigated emic approaches from vernacular sources, and considered Asian historiographies alongside contemporary legacies. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, May 2025.



The collaborative project *Connecting Late Antiquities*, funded by the DFG and AHRC (2023–2025) and organized by the BCDSS in collaboration with the Universities of Exeter and London, created open-access digital prosopographical resources for the Roman and post-Roman world. The project culminated in a conference hosted by Prof. Dr. Julia Hillner and team in Bonn, bringing together all key participants. Image: Julia Hillner, BCDSS.



Participants of the "Connecting Late Antiquities" conference. Photo: Klaudia Inanç, BCDSS, Febr. 2025.



Principal Investigators Prof. Dr. Julia Hillner (BCDSS, middle) and Dr. Richard Flower (University of Exeter, far left) with further panel members. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, Febr. 2025.

The BCDSS regularly participates in the annual University of Bonn's Wissenschaftsrallye, an open day aimed at school children, where intricate ideas are turned into bite-size discoveries. Here, PhD researcher Bahar Bayraktaroğlu invites participants to reflect on child dependencies in entertainment. Photo: Volker Lannert, University of Bonn, May 2025.

University of Bonn  
Sciency Rallye 2025

**Kids in Entertainment**  
früher und heute


Saturday, 10 May 2025  
10:00 - 15:00





From Complexity to Curiosity: How We Turn Intricate Ideas into Bite-Size Discoveries at the Annual "Wissenschaftsrallye"

by Bahar Bayraktaroğlu, Daniela Berio Dominguez, Azraha Geric, Laura Hartmann, Cécile Jabbouri & Miriam Wollmann



dependencies.kb.zg

**From Complexity to Curiosity**  
How we turn intricate ideas into bite-size discoveries at the annual "Wissenschaftsrallye"

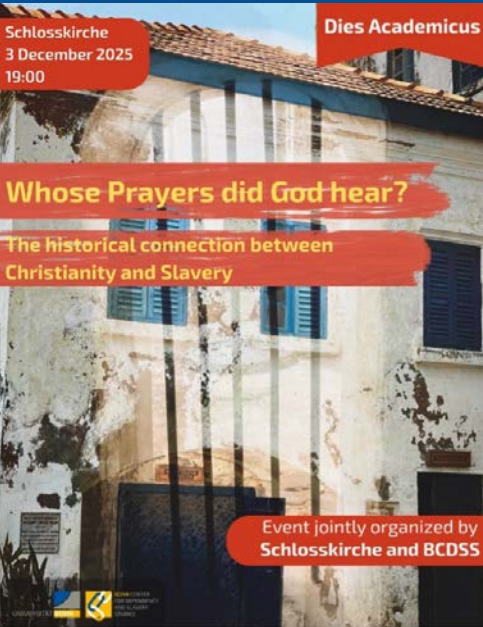




The ESTA Database—relaunched in December 2025 in an expanded version—is a collaborative project initiated by our partner, the International Institute of Social History (IISH), with BCDSS scholars contributing crucial data on slave-trade voyages and enslaved individuals in the Indian Ocean, the Indonesian Archipelago, and the East Asian Seas.



Prof. Dr. Matthias van Rossum, Project Leader of ESTA (Exploring Slave Trade in Asia) at the International Institute of Social History (IISH), during the Bonn launch of the database on 20 November 2023. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, Nov. 2023.



The BCDSS regularly participates in the bi-annual University of Bonn's Dies Academicus events (open days). Shown here, Rev. David Brandon Smith (BCDSS PhD researcher) in conversation with Prof. Dr. Markus Saur (Professor of Old Testament Studies, Faculty of Protestant Theology,) during an evening of discussion and reflection on the historical connection between Christianity and Slavery. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, Dec. 2025.



University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria: A key international collaboration partner. Since 2021, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Chioma Daisy Onyige, the University of Port Harcourt has held numerous joint events with the BCDSS at both academic and institutional levels, involving researchers, teaching staff, and administrative personnel. Photo: Niniane Waldmann, BCDSS, July 2025.



From left to right: Dr Kinikanwo Samuel, Prof. Daisy Onyige, Dr Aaron Anyanabia, Dr Destiny Agwanwo and Emmanuel Nwakanma. Photo: BCDSS, May 2024



A joint group photo of academic and administrative staff from both institutions. Photo: Niniane Waldmann, BCDSS, July 2025.



Celebrating the Cluster's successful outcome of the application for the second funding phase. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, May 2025.



# BCDSS PUBLICATIONS

Monographs: **37**

Edited volumes and special issues: **43**

Peer-reviewed journal articles: **102**

Contributions to edited volumes: **153**



For all publications in the BCDSS publication series and for publications by BCDSS researchers in other series, journals, or edited volumes, see: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/research/publications>



**DEPENDENT –**  
the cluster's bi-  
annual outreach  
magazine



Link to website  
[https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/  
outreach/cluster-magazine-dependent](https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/outreach/cluster-magazine-dependent)

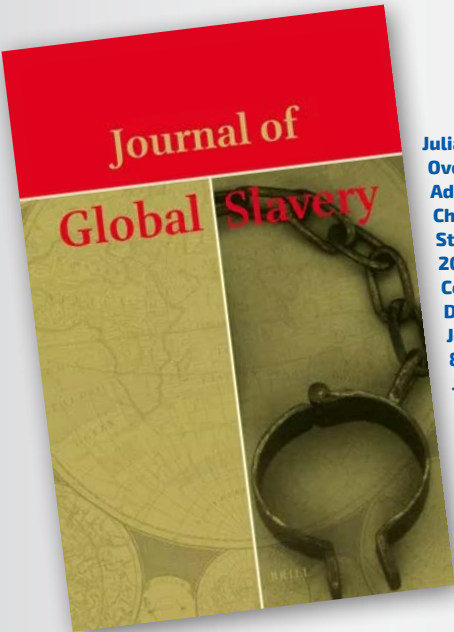


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**DEPENDENCY AND  
SLAVERY STUDIES  
book series –**  
the cluster's main  
in-house publication







Julia Winnebeck,  
Ove Sutter,  
Adrian Hermann,  
Christoph Antweiler,  
Stephan Conermann.  
2023. „The Analytical  
Concept of Asymmetrical  
Dependency“,  
Journal of Global Slavery,  
8(1), 1-59.  
Journal of Global Slavery,  
volume 8



Link to website  
<https://brill.com/view/journals/jgs/8/1/jgs.8.issue-1.xml>

The Journal of Global Slavery and Discussion Papers – the main publications in which the core concept of Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SAD) was developed.



Discussion Papers. Edited  
by Janico Albrecht, Jeannine  
Bischoff, and Stephan Conermann.  
Bonn: Bonn Center for Dependency  
and Slavery Studies, University of  
Bonn. ISSN 2751-1642.



Link to website  
<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/research/publications/bcdsss-publishing-series/discussion>



Dependent: Global Perspectives on the History of Resources and Slavery - an illustrated volume accompanying the exhibition "Enmeshed and Entwined: Fabrics of Dependency"

Martin Bentz, Nikolai  
Grube and Patrick  
Zeidler, eds., Abhängig!  
Globalhistorische  
Perspektiven auf  
Ressourcen und Sklaverei  
(Dresden: Sandstein  
Verlag, 2024)  
ISBN: 9783954988525



Link to website  
<https://www.sandstein-kultur.de/shop/abhaengig>



Martin Bentz,  
Nikolai Grube and  
Patrick Zeidler, eds.,  
Dependent: Global  
Perspectives on the  
History of Resources  
and Slavery  
(Dresden: Sandstein  
Verlag, 2024)  
ISBN: 9783954988532





# BCDSS BIOGRAPHIES

Discover how working at the BCDSS has shaped the career paths of some of our early career researchers.

## DR. VIOLA MÜLLER

Postdoctoral Researcher & Lecturer at Economic and Environmental History Group, Wageningen University, NL  
Postdoctoral Researcher, BCDSS, 2021-2023



Viola Müller in front of Wageningen University.  
Photo: Viola Müller 2025

When I began working at the BCDSS as a postdoctoral researcher, it was 2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic was in full swing. It took a while to actually meet most of my new colleagues, yet the community that was taking shape became a cherished stage of my academic development. While researchers at the BCDSS work on a plethora of topics, regions, and periods, of which they ask many different questions, they are all united by a common desire to understand what people throughout history

did to each other in the most intense situations. This includes the most horrific and most beautiful things imaginable. They also try to understand how these situations of extreme exploitation, violence, coercion, and terror were created, how they changed over time, and how they were dismantled – or lived on. Each in their own way, then, also tries to understand the world we live in today.

I worked at the BCDSS for about two and a half years as a postdoc who specialized in American slavery. It was the ideal time to publish my first book, *Escape to the City: Runaway Slaves in the Antebellum Urban South*, and also make room for some promotional activities. I had time for collaborative projects, including a special issue and two edited volumes, and could lay the groundwork for my current project. This included a research trip to Cuba and writing a grant proposal. My post provided a great opportunity to conclude old things, try out new ones, and forge connections. In addition to one's direct colleagues there are always a bunch of inspiring fellows in Bonn, and the many events are almost too many to choose from.

Two years later, I am still in touch with my colleagues at the BCDSS. I continue to be involved in the working group "Rethinking Atlantic Narratives of Slavery and Freedom" with Pia Wiegink and Luvena Kopp. I now work at the Economic and Environmental History Group at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, where I teach courses on colonialism, labor, slavery, and migration. My research revolves around the transition period from slavery to post-slavery and the changing mechanisms of coercion during the long period of abolition in the Americas. Specifically, I examine processes of illegalization of workers between 1840 and 1900. I am thrilled that the cluster is starting a second phase, and I hope to stay connected.



Dr. Viola Müller is giving a lecture on "The History of Sugar" as part of the Children's University Days at the University of Bonn.  
Photo: Volker Lannert, 2023.



DR. JENNIFER LEETSCH

Junior Professor for Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, University of Trier  
Postdoctoral Researcher, BCDSS, 2021-2024



Dr. Jennifer Leetsch  
Photo: Jennifer Leetsch, 2025

My time at the BCDSS came as a surprise, after a period when I was fairly convinced academia would spit me out again, having thoroughly chewed me up during my PhD and early, uncertain postdoc phase. Walking into the Center felt like entering a place where thinking happened almost automatically and all the time – both in big sweeping arcs and in small, everyday moments. The place has its own energy: rooms humming with discussion, people constantly moving between events, the sense that something is always unfolding: another talk, another workshop, another unexpected conversation that might shift your day a little.

I remember the generosity of the community first. Colleagues were deeply committed to their research, yet the atmosphere stayed open, curious, light on its feet. I learned a huge amount simply by being around. A quick exchange on the stairs could turn into a lesson on the archive; a lunchtime chat might leave me reimagining a chapter; a casual question in a seminar could open a door I hadn't realised existed.

My own work (on Black Atlantic ecologies and slave narratives) grew in ways I never foresaw because I was surrounded by people who thought about method, material and history differently – and in ways that, because of that difference, were wonderfully stimulating.

Teaching in the master's programmes brought its own joy. The students came in with such eagerness that our sessions often felt like shared explorations. They pushed the readings hard, asked generous and sharp questions, and made connections that stayed with me long afterward. Their curiosity shaped the courses as much as my planning did.

The regular working group meetings gave the months a rhythm I loved. The Life Writing group created space for conversations that stuck with me: careful, probing, full of the kinds of insights that make you return to a text from the beginning. The Ecological Dependencies group sparked ideas that still echo through my current work. The value of these groups was never in measurable "outcomes"; the real gain came from thinking with others: being challenged, surprised, nudged into clearer, fuller arguments. I came away from each meeting feeling slightly rearranged, in the best possible way.

What lingers most is the tone of everyday academic life at the BCDSS: the warmth of my team, the ease with which people shared time and thought. I never felt isolated; I always felt in conversation. Looking back, that period shaped how I understand research communities and how I try to build them now. It taught me the value of generous critique and of spaces where learning moves in many directions at once. It was a time filled with growth, inspiration and the kind of collegiality that leaves a lasting mark.



BCDSS colleagues (from left to right): Jennifer Leetsch with Cluster Professor Pia Wiegink and Luvena Kopp.  
Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, 2024.



Jennifer Leetsch (left) presenting at the BCDSS/VHS roundtable discussion on "Resource Extractivism" alongside (from left to right): Aline R. Barbosa Pereira (GHL), Cécile Jeblawei (BCDSS), Marie Müller-Koné (bicc) and Ulbe Bosma (IISG / Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam). Volkshochschule Bonn, Nov. 2024. Photo: Buğra N. Duman.

DR. JOSEF KÖSTLBAUER

Research Associate, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences  
Postdoctoral Researcher, BCDSS, 2021-2025



Dr. Josef Köstlbauer  
Photo: Barbara Frommann, Uni Bonn, 2023

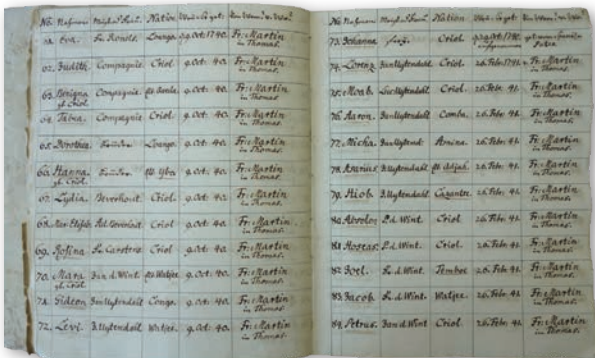
Mytime at the BCDSS has been immensely inspiring for my research on the relationship between mission and slavery. When I arrived in Bonn in 2021, I was still busy uncovering information about enslaved individuals brought to Europe by members of the Moravian Brethren (a radical Protestant community known as *Evangelische Brüdergemeine* or *Herrnhuter* in German) during the eighteenth century. The Moravians' remarkable missionary zeal made them travel to far-flung places, such as the Caribbean, Suriname, South Africa, Greenland, or southern India. It also led to their involvement with slavery. The very first Moravian missionaries were sent to proselytize among the enslaved people on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas (now part of the U.S. Virgin Islands), which was a Danish colony at the time. Within a few years, the Brethren had become plantation owners and enslavers themselves – a deeply ambiguous situation in which some members of the congregation were the legal property of their European brothers and sisters. Several enslaved men, women, and children were also sent to the European congregation settlements, where they acted as representatives of missionary success and living symbols of the Moravians' peculiar eschatological vision.

The intertwining of mission and enslavement makes for a fascinating research topic. However, by the time I arrived at the BCDSS in late 2021, I was feeling increasingly awkward about my research. I was facing a challenge that every historian of slavery has to deal with. In a not-so-subtle way, we still profit from past enslavement. By writing about the lives of the enslaved, we further our academic careers, build reputations, and vie for recognition and funding. Therefore, I am thankful for the many discussions I had with my brilliant colleagues at the BCDSS, which helped me to come to terms with the ethical and methodological challenges of my research. I found the working groups especially inspiring and amicable places for collaboration. The *Terminology of Dependency* working group helped me refine my ideas about the historical semantics of enslavement, serfdom, and other forms of asymmetrical dependency. The *Life Writing* working group engaged in interdisciplinary discussions about the archive of slavery and the self-perceptions and self-representations of enslaved people, which gave me new ideas for my research and writing. This collaborative atmosphere enabled me to produce a fair number of articles and book chapters, and helped to speed my own book manuscript towards completion.

Indeed, looking back over the past few years, I realize that it was the people, the personal acquaintances and friendships I was privileged to experience at the BCDSS that made my time there truly memorable. The months we spent in isolation during the pandemic were a stark reminder of the importance of frequent interactions with friends and colleagues. Therefore, thank you Jutta, Eva, Elena, Jenny, Pia, Amalia, Lewis, Julia and Julia, Emma, Claudia, Trevor (sadly missed!), Jeannine, Sarah, James, Joseph, Imogen, Lukas, Luvena, Martina, Wencke, Astrid, Jan, Sinah, Christoph, Laura, Cécile, Martin, and all the others who I was fortunate to meet in Bonn!



Maria Andressen, a Moravian sister and former slave from St. Thomas, lived in the German congregation settlement of Marienborn from 1743 to 1749. Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut, QS 394.



Double page from a catalogue of persons baptized by Moravian missionaries on St. Thomas, 1736 to 1759. Two of those listed, Dorothea and Hanna, were enslaved women owned by the Moravian congregation. Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut, R.15B.b.24



## DAVID BRANDON SMITH

Research Associate at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

PhD Researcher, BCDSS 2021-2025



David Brandon Smith  
Photo: Barbara Frommann, Uni Bonn, 2023

I am finishing my time at the BCDSS with both a sense of accomplishment and a bit of sadness. It's been one heck of a ride! I joined the team during the pandemic, found myself caught between two continents, and spent many months alone typing in the office when few people were allowed to be present. As difficult as those early years were, they taught me a valuable lesson: if we were to achieve the goals of the Cluster and build a sense of academic community, we would have to do so together, from the ground up. I am convinced that we did just that. We not only produced substantial research and knowledge, but also established a new field of inquiry.

Being at the BCDSS gave me countless opportunities to feel like the dumbest person in the room, and that is a real gift if it generates a desire to learn more, to expand one's horizons, and to do hard things. As I have now stepped into a new position, I have a deeper appreciation for the uniqueness of the BCDSS. It's not just that we have access to generous funding and support structures, though, that helps; it's also that many of us have learned to embrace the value of truly interdisciplinary, intercultural, and intersectional reflection on a shared theme.

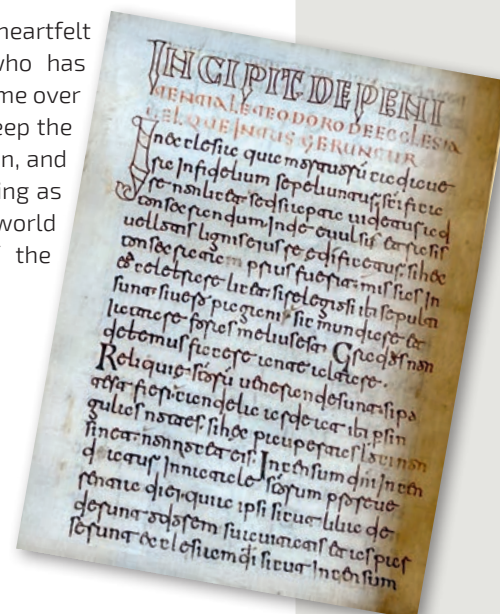


David B. Smith with speakers and co-organizers of the Dies Academicus event "Who's Prayers did God hear?", an evening of discussion and reflection on the historical connection between Christianity and Slavery. From left to right: Prof. Dr. Markus Saur, Hayford Ofori, Rev. David Brandon Smith (BCDSS PhD researcher), Prof. Dr. Michael Schulz, Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink, Cécile Jeblawei. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, Dec. 2025.

Like other PhD Researchers at the BCDSS, I am now embarking on a new journey: As a researcher and lecturer at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. There, I am part of the "Decolonizing Postcolonialism" project, which focuses on the role of churches in Namibia's struggle for independence from 1957 to 1990. The Volkswagen Foundation describes this project as "high risk" for several reasons. One of them is that the theoretical and methodological innovations needed to pull it off are significant. Had it not been for the experiences at BCDSS, where I was encouraged to participate in foundational conceptual work on the analytical concept of asymmetrical dependency, I would not have been prepared for the responsibilities of the current project.

As this chapter closes and another opens, not only for me, but for the Cluster itself, I am also filled with a sense of gratitude for the democratic structures we established. Like many of my fellow PhD Researchers, I was privileged to serve in leadership roles that would not have been open to people at my level in other academic institutions. Uphold this venerable tradition! It has caused, and no doubt will continue to cause, its share of frustrations. Still, it will empower junior colleagues to develop the skills and experiences they need to take up even greater leadership roles in the future, thereby carrying forward the legacy of the BCDSS long after the second funding phase has ended and far beyond Germany's borders.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has challenged and supported me over the past five years. Let's keep the conversations, collaboration, and idea-packed reflections going as we spread out across the world to continue the work of the Cluster in our own ways!



Excerpt from the "Penitential of Theodore," an 8th century collection of rulings for priests who administer penance in a 16th century collection of canon law, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Hamilton 132 (H), Berlin Staatsbibliothek. Photo: DBS, March 2023.

## DR. ALEX ROTHENBERG

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn

PhD Graduate, BCDSS, 2022



Dr. Alex Rothenberg  
Photo: Gregor Hübl, Uni Bonn, 2025

My time at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) was formative in many ways – intellectually, professionally, and personally. Moving from Cologne to Bonn opened up a world of exchange, ideas, and inspiration. What shaped me most were my colleagues: a group of open-minded, curious, and supportive people who made daily academic life both interesting and enjoyable. The interdisciplinary environment challenged me, but also encouraged me to think outside the box and approach questions from multiple perspectives.

My PhD project explored asymmetrical dependencies in football and historical forms of elite slavery, tracing how historical forms of exploitation and unequal power relations continue to have an impact not only in global sport, but also in the entertainment industry. The BCDSS's interdisciplinary structure allowed me to connect with researchers studying some of these cases, such as palace eunuchs or mamluks, which broadened my perspective and significantly improved my understanding of dependency systems across time and contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which fell right in the middle of my PhD, was another defining period. For many of us PhD candidates, the situation was deeply unsettling. Planned field research had to be postponed, topics had to be changed and much of our communication moved online.

While it was undoubtedly a challenging time, it also brought us closer together. Within the group of doctoral researchers, we collaborated and supported each other, which helped us navigate the difficulties of that period together.

Thanks to an attentive BCDSS colleague and friend, I was later able to continue my academic path in Bonn, now as a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), working on Planetary Health and sustainable (plant-based) nutrition. In this project, we study how food systems (in football in particular) can promote sustainable dietary practices. Using the example of youth elite football academies in Germany, we explore how nutrition knowledge, attitudes, and structural conditions shape the adoption of sustainable eating habits among young athletes, coaches, and support staff. The project aims to identify both the potential and the obstacles to integrating sustainable nutrition into high-performance sports settings. In a way, my research journey has come full circle: football remains at the center, but the focus has shifted: from the history of dependency and exploitation to the future of sustainability.



©Alexander Rothenberg, 2025

The transition from the humanities and social sciences into nutritional and sustainability research was made easier by the interdisciplinary work I had experienced at the BCDSS. Being part of a setting where different methods and perspectives meet gave me the confidence to explore new academic directions and to connect sociological and historical thinking with contemporary questions.

Now, as a postdoctoral researcher, I still value the experiences and connections I made at the BCDSS. Some of the colleagues I met there have become friends, and I hope to stay in touch with the Cluster in the future, be it at lectures, conferences, or simply over a coffee in Bonn. The perspectives I gained there continue to shape my work today: they taught me to think across disciplines and to stay open-minded: Because, in the end, everything is connected in one way or another.



Rothenberg, Alexander. *Elitesklavereien und Profifußball: (Dis)Kontinuitäten in der Produktion von Elitekörpern*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111381862>



## DR. ANAS ANSAR

Assistant Professor of Political Science, North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh  
PhD Graduate, BCDSS, 2024



**Dr. Anas Ansar**  
Photo: Barbara Frommann,  
Uni Bonn, 2023

In 2019, I began my doctoral research on *Precarity and Dependency in the Everyday Life of Rohingya Refugees in South and Southeast Asia*. As a researcher working on contemporary migration and politics, I initially felt somewhat like an outsider among colleagues trained as historians, theologians, and archaeologists. Yet, as my PhD work advanced, I came to appreciate just how fortunate I was to be part of such a truly interdisciplinary community, one that brings together scholars conducting cutting-edge research across the globe.

I joined the BCDSS at a moment of transition in my professional life. At the time, I was working with a humanitarian organization in Geneva, Switzerland, and faced a major decision: to accept a position with the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Bangladesh as Deputy Country Coordinator, or to embark on the PhD journey at the BCDSS in Bonn. After careful consideration, I chose the path of doctoral research – a decision that has since shaped both my academic trajectory and my personal growth.

The BCDSS's commitment to fostering scholarly exchange allowed me to participate in numerous seminars and international conferences, where I presented my work, received thoughtful feedback, and engaged with eminent scholars across disciplines. These experiences not only enriched my dissertation but also encouraged me to think beyond it. I was fortunate to conduct fieldwork and attend academic events across Asia, Latin America, and Europe – travel that the institution supported with remarkable generosity.

Equally important was the vibrant, collegial atmosphere within the Centre. The interdisciplinary research teams, the outstanding management, and the kindness of colleagues helped me navigate

especially difficult periods, including the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The BCDSS's multicultural environment made me feel welcomed from the very beginning. Moreover, the freedom to explore ideas beyond the confines of my dissertation enabled me to publish, collaborate, and develop a profile that proved essential for my transition into postdoctoral research.

Shortly after submitting my PhD, I joined the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute (ABI) at the University of Freiburg as an early postdoctoral researcher, working with the Asia research team. The expertise, networks, and publications I cultivated during my time at the BCDSS proved crucial in expanding my contribution to international research at the ABI. I am currently an Assistant Professor of Political Science at North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Although I have returned home, I remain deeply committed to fostering international – especially North-South – academic collaboration, a commitment that I trace directly back to my experience at the BCDSS.

Most recently, I was awarded the prestigious Walter Benjamin Postdoctoral Fellowship, which means I am returning back to Germany once again and continue to exercise living the life of a global citizen. I am deeply grateful to the BCDSS for the intellectual freedom, institutional support, and critical perspective it instilled in me. In a world marked by division, othering, and an unsettling erosion of multicultural values, the BCDSS stands firm in upholding the ideals of diversity, dialogue, and togetherness.

Thank you for shaping the scholar – and the person – I have become. I look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years ahead.



**Dr. Anas Ansar presenting at the "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past & Present" conference in Bonn, May 2025.**

## DR. DITA AUZIŢA

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, NL  
PhD Graduate, BCDSS, 2025



**Dr. Dita Auzița**  
Photo: Barbara Frommann,  
Uni Bonn, 2023

When I started applying for PhD positions in 2018, I had only a few requirements. First and most importantly, the position needed to be fully funded. I had spent my MA years working full time and was certain that I did not want to combine research with a full-time job again. I also wanted to be somewhere in Central or Northern Europe to accommodate my husband's work, and I hoped to focus on the fields I loved most: Central American archaeology and history.

Bonn unexpectedly fulfilled all those requirements. Having never been to Bonn before, and always seeing Germany as a large, slightly boring country one simply drives through to reach more interesting places, I accepted the offer. Since then, I have grown to appreciate the academic thoroughness of Germany and the general societal wish to understand topics in real depth.

The BCDSS offered options that very few PhD programmes would: funding to conduct my own independent field project that was not a direct interest or subproject of any of my supervisors, and an incredible level of interdisciplinarity that often made me feel as though I was in the middle of the most current global debates.

With the support of the BCDSS, I was able to establish an independent field project in a previously unresearched area of the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, and to assemble and lead a team of excellent researchers who contributed significantly to the analyses that shaped my dissertation, *Anchoring in the Unstable: Monumentality and Networks of Dependency in the Kukra Hill Region, Caribbean Nicaragua (8th Century BCE to 15th Century CE)*. The BCDSS also gave me the opportunity to organise a conference directly linked to my dissertation topic and to bring together leading researchers from Central America and beyond. Both of those endeavours will soon be published as gold open access books,

also facilitated by the BCDSS. These opportunities, thoroughly supported but never interfered with by BCDSS staff, helped me position myself as an independent specialist in my field. Being at that moment, the only foreign archaeologist with a running field project in Nicaragua played an important role in securing my first postdoctoral position at Leiden University. From here, I now continue to lead archaeological research in Nicaragua and study human and nature dependencies.

Interdisciplinarity is often used as an empty buzzword, but the BCDSS offered me the chance to experience it fully – and it was genuinely hard. True interdisciplinarity does not mean simply applying a method here and there from different fields. It means identifying and questioning your own disciplinary (and regional) dogmas, truly listening to other perspectives, and reviewing the ways you think. I found this difficult at the time, but I believe these varied perspectives and constant discussions made me a better and more critical and open-minded researcher.

I am not yet sure what my next professional step will be. At the moment, I am in Leiden, halfway through my current research project. But the BCDSS has not only equipped me with skills and experiences that make me confident I will find a good position; it has also opened my eyes to a much wider range of research fields and possible paths, and raised my standards for what a research institute can be.



**Opening of the international conference Monumentality in Southern Central America at the University of Bonn, November 2023.**  
Photo: BCDSS Bugra Duman



## ANKIT CHOWDHURY

BCDSS Predoctoral Grant holder

MA Graduate 2025, *Slavery and Dependency Studies*, BCDSS



Ankit Chowdhury during his internship at the Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies in New Delhi  
Photo: Ankit Chowdhury, 2025

My time at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) was both intellectually formative and personally transformative. Firstly, I have finished a master's degree in Dependency and Slavery Studies at the BCDSS in 2025. During my master's studies, what I truly valued most was the opportunity to learn from scholars coming from different disciplines and diverse areas of expertise. Indeed, these exchanges underscored for me the significance of inter-disciplinarity, not merely as an abstract concept but as a necessary mode of inquiry for understanding the layered and interdependent nature of global dynamics and dependencies.

Furthermore, frequent academic events, workshops, and seminars at the centre created a vibrant intellectual community that constantly challenged me to think beyond the conventional. Especially, engaging with different methodologies such as global and micro-historical analysis to approaches drawn from sociology, archaeology, and the Anthropocene has helped me to broaden my analytical lens and see the value of methodological plurality. Including that, exposure to these perspectives has encouraged me to think more comparatively so as to question the inherited assumptions about developments, modernity, and power. Meanwhile, these engagements not only expanded my academic horizons but also connected me with an inspiring network of scholars, mentors, and friends who continue to shape my thinking.

After that, my forthcoming predoctoral research will grow directly out of this intellectual foundation. My topic is "Cold-War dependencies: Labour, technology and ecology in the postcolonial Global South," and I aim to explore how strong asymmetrical dependencies were formed and sustained during the Cold War period, through two case studies of an Indian and

Brazilian steel plant established during that time. In addition, by examining the entanglement of labour, technological transfer, and ecological transformation, I wish to uncover how large-scale industrialization in the Global South has produced long-term vulnerabilities and various forms of dependency that continue to shape south-south relations, particularly within the BRICS framework today. In other terms, I aim to highlight how the Cold War was not just an ideological or neurological warfare between the Global North nations, but also a materially mediated phenomenon that continues to exist in and shape the Global South.

Finally, as I move forward, I aspire to pursue and achieve my PhD within the BCDSS framework and then pursue a career in academia. At the same time, I hope that through my future research and scholarship, I can highlight the importance of collaborative approaches across the Global South and emphasise how questions of labour, ecology, pharmaceuticals, and technology remain deeply intertwined both historically and in the present. As in the present times, I believe collaboration is a way to democratize academia, especially to oppose the notion of the binarism of the centre-periphery dichotomy across time and space. Lastly, I am excited to continue my journey with the BCDSS and contribute to the interdisciplinary dialogues of the global academia.



An abandoned union office in the township of Durgapur, a steel town in India Ankit Chowdhury studied as part of his MA thesis  
©Ankit Chowdhury 08/2024

## NATALIIA VOITKO

BCDSS Predoctoral Grant holder

MA Graduate 2025, *Slavery Studies*, BCDSS



Nataliia Voitko  
Photo: Nataliia Voitko, 2025

For me, the BCDSS embodies growth, innovative thinking, and worldwide collaborations. As a former Master's student and now a pre-doctoral fellow, I am part of a community that aims for the highest research standards, values open discussions, and confidently builds cross-cultural bridges. The variety of academic events organized at the BCDSS has allowed me to engage with diverse perspectives and refine my own scholarly outlook.

During the Slavery Studies Master's program, my understanding of slavery and dependency changed significantly. I became familiar with current trends in the study of historical and modern slavery, labor relations, and social inequalities. Professors who were open to discussions and well-designed courses taught me to question the status quo in my own research projects. Consequently, in an award-winning term paper, I examined serf advertisements in early modern Russian newspapers that had largely been overlooked in the existing literature. Approaching these sources from a dependency perspective helped me reveal important scholarly gaps and discuss them later at the annual workshop of the Premodern East Slavic Europe Network.

In my MA thesis, I contested the USSR motto "All the best for children!" and explored the ways in which child labor was framed by the state and experienced by children in the late Soviet Union. Shifting my focus from the early modern to the modern period spurred my interest in engaging more with contemporary issues, making me eager to examine the world's social and political orders through the lens of asymmetrical dependency and its narrative dimension.

Becoming a pre-doctoral fellow provided me with an exceptional opportunity to move into new disciplines, including political science and international relations. As a trained historian, I initially struggled to approach a new body of literature, but meaningful

suggestions from my academic supervisor and support from program mentors have helped me develop this project more coherently. Employing the knowledge that I gained during my Master's research of how narratives are formed within interdependent systems, I am developing a PhD proposal on how small states navigate asymmetrical international dependencies through strategic narratives during acute crises. Focusing on Ukraine allows me to investigate the ways in which a semi-peripheral state with limited resources manages partial control over its foreign image, while remaining dependent on external recognition to secure its legitimacy.

I have benefited greatly from all the knowledge and research skills I acquired here at the BCDSS, as they have enhanced my ability to connect historical and contemporary forms of dependency. BCDSS events helped me obtain valuable contacts and scholarly insights during open lectures, and through participation in the international workshops in Bonn and in the collaborative conference in Istanbul. These experiences strengthened my confidence as an emerging researcher and prepared me for the next stage of my academic path as a doctoral student.



Social media post by Istanbul Bilgi University covering the BILGI-BONN History Graduate Conference held on May 9-10, 2025, in Istanbul. The event was jointly organized by graduate students from Istanbul Bilgi University's History Department and the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies.



The Kayapó village in the southeastern Amazon in the state of Pará, Brazil. Photo: Taynã Tagliati.

**Ethnographic Work among the Mebengokré-Kayapó Indigenous Group in the southeastern Amazon State of Pará, Brazil.** See DEPENDENT issue 8 (2023-2), p. 32-35.

# FIELD RESEARCH IMPRESSIONS

Inside a Pakistani migrant family home in Brescia, Italy, with Italian teacher visiting. Photo: Ayesha Hussain, 2022.

Pakistani migrant workers at work on the fields in the vicinity of Brescia, Italy. Photo: Ayesha Hussain, 2022.

**Fieldwork among Pakistani Migrants in Italy.** See DEPENDENT issue 5 (2022-1), p. 30-33.

Pakistani migrant workers in the heavy metal and steel industry in Brescia, Italy. Photo: Ayesha Hussain, 2022.

Anas Ansar on route to Bhasanchar Island in the Bay of Bengal, developed by the Bangladesh government to serve as a remote refugee camp for Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. See DEPENDENT issue 6 (2022-2), p. 21-25, for his full report "Revisiting Refugeehood, Humanitarian Tourism and Systemic Dependency in Bhasanchar Island of Bangladesh". Photo: courtesy of Anas Ansar, 2021.

**Cementing and Changing Asymmetries in Mining in Indonesia** by Kristina Großmann. See DEPENDENT issue 10 (24-2), p. 33-36.

Visiting mining families in the north of Central Kalimantan during ethnographic field work. Photo: Kristina Großmann.

Aerial photo of Fort William along the coast of Ghana. Photo: Christian Mader.

**Sensing the Materiality of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Fieldwork Report on Slave Dungeons in Ghana.** See DEPENDENT issue 11 (25-1), p. 48-53.





Link to website  
<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/research/strategic-partners/international-institutional-cooperation-partners>





# THE IMPACT OF STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCY ON MY RESEARCH

Discover how our international partners, fellows and guest researchers view the influence of Strong Asymmetrical Dependency on their research.





PROFESSOR

**DR. DAMIAN PARGAS**

Professor of the History and Culture of North America  
Leiden University & Roosevelt Institute for American Studies  
(RIAS), Netherlands  
*Member of the International Advisory Board (since 2019)*



**Alexander Gardner, *Group of Free Blacks in Richmond, Virginia*** (photograph, June 9, 1865), wet collodion glass-plate negative, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, public domain.

As an International Advisory Board member of the BCDSS, I was delighted to hear that the DFG has awarded a second term to the center's Cluster of Excellence. Congratulations!

I am an historian of American slavery, but for the past decade I have actively sought out and collaborated on projects and publications that underscore global perspectives on slavery and slavery-related practices. My intention has always been to better understand my own field of research by considering the influence of broader trends regarding human bondage and captivity across time and space. To this end I have collaborated with scholars of diverse disciplines, backgrounds, and specializations, based at a wide variety of research institutes and universities.

My ongoing collaboration with the BCDSS, however, has helped shape my thinking on the nature of slavery, unfreedom, and asymmetrical dependency more than any other academic institution. Through my participation in various BCDSS seminars, workshops, lectures, and on occasion even being afforded the opportunity to present my own work-in-progress, I have come to appreciate the spectrum and the *sliding scale* of asymmetrical dependencies in the history of American slavery in ways that I had not considered before. This has inspired both my previous and my current research projects. For my last book, for exam-

ple, I wanted to write about the "runaway slave crisis" in nineteenth-century North America. After considering the concept of "asymmetrical dependencies" as advanced by scholars at the BCDSS, however, I ended up analyzing the spectrum of asylum regimes for runaway slaves throughout the continent, and the extent to which they affected the vulnerabilities, opportunities, and dependent relationships experienced by refugees from slavery in various regions. My current project similarly examines the various asymmetrical dependent relationships that free Black populations experienced along the broad spectrum of American citizenship and democracy in the same era.



**Damian Pargas with Jean Pfaelzer and Luvena Kopp at the reading and discussion of Pfaelzer's *California, a Slave State*.** Photograph by Niniane Waldmann, May 2025.

**DR. VITALI BYL**

Postdoctoral Researcher, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (with third-party funding), since 2024 to date

I joined the BCDSS almost two years ago with my own, DFG-funded project "Race and Freedom: Africans in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the eve of Modernity". I arrived with great expectations and curiosity, and I can say without hesitation that they were fulfilled.

A closer engagement with the concept of strong asymmetrical dependencies turned out to be unexpectedly useful for thinking about non-typical social groups in Eastern Europe, such as Africans, who did not fit neatly into established categories or social structures. SAD provided a flexible and relevant framework to conceptualise this complexity.

I also benefited enormously from the diversity of the Center's environment. It was extremely enlightening to step outside my own chronological and geographical box and dive into the work of colleagues researching the Roman world, South Asia, Latin America, and periods ranging from antiquity to the present. This experience made visible how many overlooked connections and parallels exist; connections that easily disappear when one remains in a narrow specialist bubble.

Within the BCDSS, I found excellent opportunities for collaboration and networking, not only thanks to the diverse community of fellows, but also through my peers who also work on Eastern Europe.

The Center's well-structured management and administrative system has also been a great help to me. Wencke Uhl guided me through several tricky administrative situations with patience and expertise. Another great advantage of the BCDSS is the rich programme of workshops. I particularly appreciated the DEI training organised by Dima Al Munajed and her colleagues.

I was also greatly amazed by the artistic perspectives on the focus topic of dependencies—such as the film screening series organised by Cécile Jeblawei and the exhibitions blending scholarship with artistic expression.

With my fairly diverse academic background, I can confidently say that the BCDSS is a unique place with enormous potential and impact. I am happy, and proud, to be part of it.



**African royal retainers in oriental costumes. Painting *Departure from Wilanów of Jan III and Marysieńka Sobieski*, by Józef Brandt, 1897 (fragment). National Museum Warsaw, MP 4374.** Photo: Ligier Piotr, 2017. Wikimedia Commons, public domain.





PROFESSOR

**DR. CHIOMA DAISY ONYIGE**

Professor of Sociology (Criminology), University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
Senior Heinz Heinen Fellow,  
BCDSS, 10/2021 – 09/2022 and 01/2025 – 12/2025

For over a decade, my research on human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery has led me to confront, again and again, the complex realities of dependency and power imbalance that define many lives today. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS)'s concept of *asymmetrical dependency* deeply resonates with my work, offering a conceptual language for what I have long observed in the field, which is, that exploitation often thrives in relationships marked by unequal access to resources, opportunities, and autonomy.

In studying the experiences of trafficked persons, especially women and children across Africa, I have seen first hand how economic hardship, migration pressures, and social expectations converge to create webs of dependency that are difficult to escape. These relationships are rarely sustained by force alone; they are often maintained through emotional, cultural, and institutional ties that mirror older hierarchies established during colonial and patriarchal eras. Recognizing these continuities has helped me to understand that contemporary slavery is not a historical aberration but an evolving form of structural dependency shaped by global capitalism and inequality.

Engaging with the BCDSS framework has sharpened my awareness of how such asymmetrical dependencies are reproduced in laws, labour markets, and even humanitarian interventions that claim to promote freedom. It has encouraged me to think more critically about the subtle ways power operates within systems of aid, migration, and justice.

Ultimately, this concept enriches my scholarship by connecting personal stories of survival and resilience with broader questions of justice and human dignity. It reminds me that to study slavery today is to study the persistence of dependency in our modern world, and the enduring human struggle to transform it into genuine freedom.



**Academic and Cultural Exchange: a BCDSS delegation visits the palace of His Eminence, Barrister Dr. Nwachukwu Obouhna Nnam Obi III, the Eze Ogba of Ogbaland, Nigeria, May 2025.** Photo courtesy of Prof. Chioma Daisy Onyige.



**A two-day collaborative international workshop between the Department of Sociology, University of Port Harcourt, and the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), May 2024.** Photo courtesy of Prof. Chioma Daisy Onyige.



**Meeting at the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Port Harcourt Branch, Nigeria.** Photo courtesy of Prof. Chioma Daisy Onyige



ASSOC. PROFESSOR

**DR. EMMANUEL SABORO**

Centre for African and International Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana  
Guest Researcher, BCDSS 09/2023 – 10/2023

Between September 1 and October 15, 2023, I was a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn. I was offered a one-month fellowship to enable me to reflect on my new book project: *Sites of Memory: The Hidden and Lost Stories that Spaces and Historical Sites tell about the Atlantic Slave Trade in Ghana*.

During this period, I had the opportunity to meet an incredible staff and other fellows at the Center who offered tremendous support. The Center offered a highly stimulating intellectual environment conducive

to research. I benefited from both formal and informal interactions with members of the Cluster, particularly those who were working on West Africa.

My stay at Bonn was also to begin discussions towards a partnership that the Centre for African and International Studies at the University of Cape Coast is intending to establish with the Bonn Center – a collaboration that will be mutually beneficial to both institutions in terms of bringing different but innovative conceptual and methodological approaches to our understanding of asymmetrical dependencies.



**Remains of Slave Wells at Salaga in Northern Ghana: These wells, community memories suggest, were wells slaves dug and drank from while awaiting to be sent to the Coast for onward shipment to the New World.** Photo Emmanuel Saboro.





PROFESSOR

DR. ROBERTO HOFMEISTER PICH

Professor of Philosophy, Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul – PUCRS, Porto Alegre, Brazil  
Cooperation Partner & Guest Researcher, BCDSS summer term 2019



PROFESSOR

DR. OLGA ISABEL SOSA AMORÓS

Professor of History and Sociocultural Anthropology, University of Cienfuegos, Cuba  
BCDSS Cooperation Partner

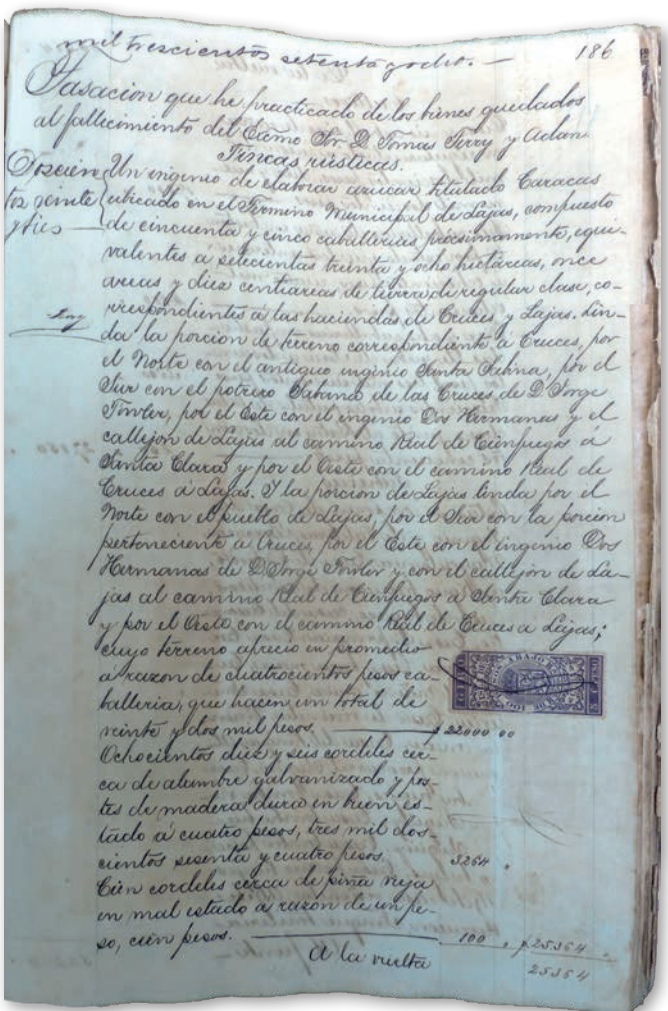
There is no question that the transatlantic slave trade represents a major topic in American and African histories. In the history of that trade system, several forms of strong asymmetrical dependencies have been identified. As a Brazilian scholar interested in the history of philosophy and in Latin American history, I soon realized that the philosophical, theological, and juridical backgrounds of the ideology of Black slavery from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries had been only poorly investigated, especially with regard to Second Scholastic sources in Latin. Catholic thinkers, above all Jesuits and especially those from the Iberian Peninsula, but also from South American institutions of higher education, disputed and wrote extensively on slavery and slave trading, both of indigenous and African people. Their views are documented in hundreds of printed books and manuscripts. Their texts were quite diverse, including formal commentaries on commutative justice and property theory, expositions on right conscience and restitution, as well as analyses of the justice of

contracts and philosophical-theological accounts of history and evangelization. Institutions and normative systems play a key role in the conception, normalization, and critique of human relationships characterized by asymmetrical dependency. Complex and ambiguous systems such as the transatlantic slave trade and colonial economies in the Americas based on slave labor could not have continued without a kind of super-structural matrix that, like an ideology, legitimated those systems. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies welcomed with great enthusiasm my philosophical research on those pre- and early-modern normative sources that discussed the transatlantic slave trade and enslavements in Africa. But the project of describing and analyzing the views of Second Scholastic authors is just beginning. A key aspect of future investigation is the debate on “restitution” for injustices and misdeeds in exchanging goods – a topic that is relevant not only until the nineteenth century, the century of abolitionism(s), but very much in our own time.

The integration of “asymmetrical dependency” into my research made it possible to reveal new dynamics within a peripheral, insular colonial context of the nineteenth century, specifically in Cuba, and in its southern region of Cienfuegos. It showed the strong interaction between human actors subject to power and technical forms of domination linked to non-human elements. Together, these formed a network of human and non-human actors that operated through a socio-technical assemblage. This assemblage consisted of constantly shifting and overlapping networks.

The socio-technical assemblage included several components: forms of knowledge; networks for exchanging technical expertise and human capital; machinery; and the skills required to operate modern equipment. It also encompassed processes of technological transfer. These elements became the tools through which people engaged with modernity as technological change advanced. They shaped how individuals transformed and managed their activities in the continuous process of producing goods or providing services within an anomalous form of capitalism.

This anomalous capitalism characterized peripheral island societies on this side of the Atlantic, where the slave plantation operated as a subsystem of modern capitalism. It rested on instrumental rationality and practical logics. Most importantly, it relied on slavery, the commodification of enslaved human bodies, and the exploitation of enslaved labor. Within this system, the economically dominant class applied new strategies for transferring technologies. The enslaved people, positioned at the end of this chain, became the means for generating surplus value, like a tool, a component, an alienated entity at the service of capitalism. The collaboration with the BCDSS offered a new perspective on the phenomenon of slavery and the profound asymmetrical dependencies it produced. It also enriched my understanding of how enslaved labor was exploited in modern peripheral colonial societies where slave-based capitalism expanded.



Provincial Historical Archive of Cienfuegos. Notarial Protocols Collection, José Joaquín Verdagué. Deeds of Tomás Terry, May 18, 1887. Tomás Terry was a Cuban business magnate, whose huge fortune was built through involvement, among other things, in slave trading and sugar production. Photo: Olga Isabel Sosa Amorós.



Frontispiece by Johan de Noort of “De Instauranda Aethiopia Salute”, a history of Ethiopia by Alonso de Sandoval, a Spanish Jesuit priest who was active as a missionary of enslaved Africans arriving in the Colombian port city of Cartagena. The book was published in 1647 and is held in National Library of Spain (public domain).



Roberto Hofmeister Pich with fellow researchers during the “Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil II” conference. Bonn, January 2025. From the left to the right: Prof. Dr. Marçal de Menezes Paredes (PUCRS), Prof. Dr. Luis Rosenfield (PUCRS), Prof. Dr. Roberto Hofmeister Pich (PUCRS), Prof. Dr. Emil Albert Sobottka (PUCRS), and Prof. Dr. José C. Curto (York University, Canada).





PROFESSOR

**DR. ALFONSO MÚNERA**

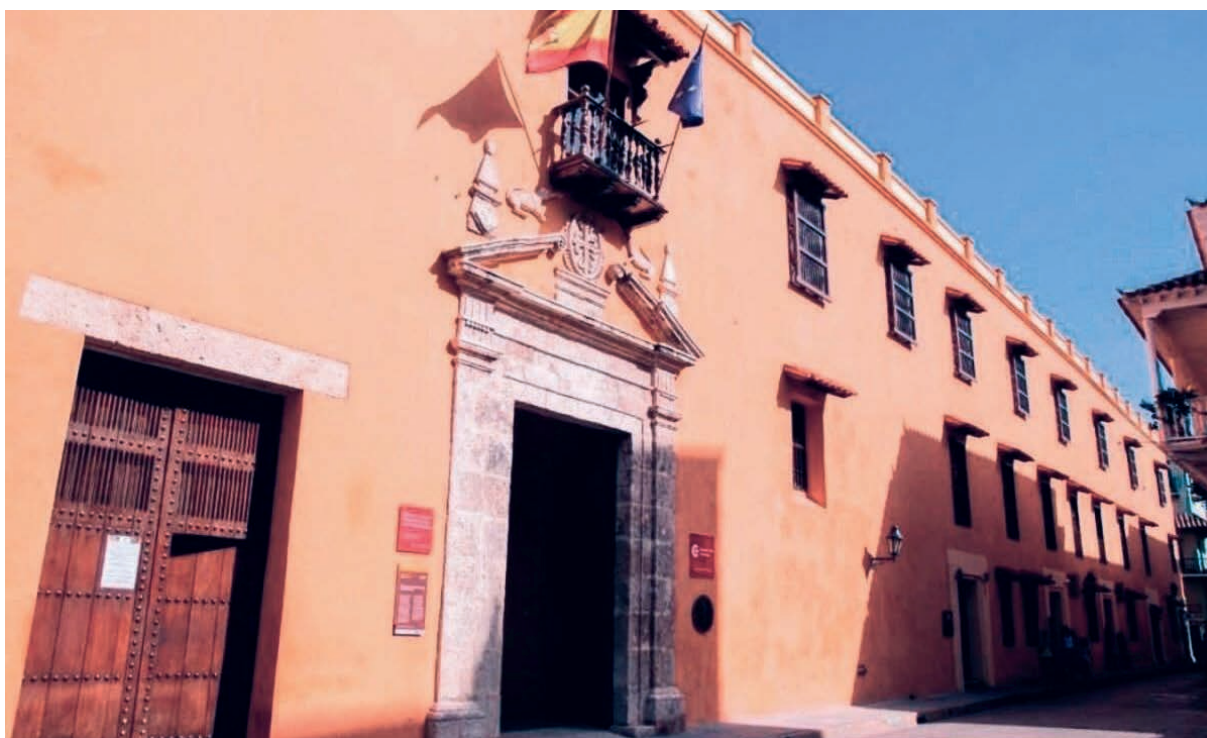
Director of El Instituto Internacional de Estudios del Caribe de la Universidad de Cartagena, Colombia (Institute of Caribbean Studies at the University of Cartagena, Colombia)  
BCDSS Cooperation Partner

At our Institute, we have developed a strong line of research on slavery, racism, and nation-building. We were pioneers in this field with the publication of my monographs, *Region, Race, and Class in the Making of Colombia and Fronteras imaginadas. La construcción de las razas y de la geografía en el Siglo XIX colombiano* ("Imagined Borders: The Construction of Races and Geography in Nineteenth-Century Colombia"). These works were among the first to systematically examine the role of both free and unfree Africans in the founding of the Colombian nation, as well as the construction of a deeply racist national identity in the nineteenth century.

Building on this foundation, we are now exploring forms of dependency related to migration and domestic labor, including the trafficking of women, girls, and boys – particularly in the context of Venezuelan migration.

Our collaboration with the BCDSS has opened new comparative perspectives and enabled us to pool economic, intellectual, and research resources for joint projects on slavery and dependency. The exchange of methodologies, experiences, and ideas has been mutually enriching and has strengthened both institutions.

We would also like to highlight our long-standing academic relationship with Professor Michael Zeuske, which spans more than two decades. Through the biannual International Seminar on Caribbean Studies, we have established a vital forum for sharing research on socio-cultural and economic issues in the Caribbean. Professor Zeuske has presented his work and engaged in discussions with our students and faculty, fostering dialogue and new avenues for collaboration.



The International Institute of Caribbean Studies at the University of Cartagena. Photo: University of Cartagena



PROFESSOR

**DR. EVELYN HU-DEHART**

Professor of History and American Studies/Ethnic Studies, Brown University, USA  
Senior Heinz Heinen Fellowship, Summer 2025

When I took up residence at the BCDSS during summer of 2025 as the Heinz Heinen senior fellow, I learned about "asymmetrical dependency," an unfamiliar term in the U.S. academic community. My research at Bonn concerned the status of Chinese contract workers recruited to work alongside a dwindling supply of enslaved African men and women on Cuban sugar plantations during the second half of the nineteenth century. Were they slaves like the Africans, or did they find a way to transition to freedom? Framed euphemistically as "*colonos asiáticos*," Asian settlers, in the Spanish language contract, but plainly as laborers on temporary assignment overseas in the Chinese language contract, this relationship between the Spanish colonial state and the 125,000 Chinese men under eight-year contracts can be regarded as a good example of the BCDSS's core working concept of "asymmetrical dependency." The challenge facing the Spanish colonial state and the planter class was to maintain social control in a slave society and ensure a sufficient labor force to sustain the prosperous sugar economy. Hence the state passed a new law that required the Chinese to re-contract indefinitely after they fulfilled their original eight-year contract. At the time, this move was clearly a ruthless ploy to extend the state of unfreedom or bondage of the Chinese, and underscored the planters' dependency on their labor.



A cigar wrapper showing Chinese contract laborers on a 19th c. Cuban sugar plantation (*'ingenio'*), Museum of Cuba.

That is, Spain secured her Caribbean colony's dependency on Chinese labor and sealing their fate by making permanent the unfree status, or asymmetrically dependent condition, of the Chinese. What Spain did not foresee was how the Chinese subverted their fate in an asymmetrical dependency: They opportunistically navigated the treacherous shoals of freedom and unfreedom to become free men in one lifetime, clearly not the destiny of slaves. My work demonstrates that it is not sufficient to identify and expose asymmetrical dependency, but also how this relationship can be disrupted.



Prof. Hu-DeHart giving a presentation on "Five hundred years of Chinese migration overseas, from Southeast Asia to the Americas and the Caribbean, and currently, to Europe and Africa" at Dies Academicus at the University Bonn. Photo: Daniela Berrio Domínguez, May 2025.





PROFESSOR  
**DR. SARAH ZIMMERMANN**

Professor of History, Western Washington University, US  
Senior Heinz Heinen Fellow, BCDSS, October 2023 – June 2024

Upon arrival in Bonn, I intended to advance a monograph on the gendered production of memory and history on Gorée Island – a Senegalese UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its role in the Atlantic Slave Trade – from 1677 to the present. This book would have used gendered analysis to examine representations of Gorée's *signares* within historical literature and Senegalese sites of public history. Signares was the term used for eighteenth-century multiracial African female island residents. At the BCDSS, my analytical lens shifted to consider how hallmarks of signareship – female-headed households, multi-partner conjugality, matrilineal inheritance, real estate and slave ownership – became incongruous with modern ideals of Senegambian womanhood.

The BCDSS provided a cohort of scholars and the intellectual space enabling me to reconceptualize the scope and orientation of my book. Now entitled *Before Gorée: Gendering Authority and Autonomy in Senegambia*, this manuscript reflects a deeper engagement with my cohort's theme, "gender and intersectionality," and the Center's focus on asymmetrical dependency. *Before Gorée* historically tracks

examples of matrilineality, conjugal legitimacy, and enslavability from fifteenth-century mainland Senegambia to mid-nineteenth-century Gorée Island – when signareship declined with the onset of French Republican colonialism. Matrilineality is an understudied feature of precolonial Senegambia. *Before Gorée* foregrounds this kinship system to challenge assumptions regarding the ubiquity of a patriarchal gendered order in West Africa, reconsidering how women superintended access to land, material wealth, and enslaved dependents. *Before Gorée* anchors signares' origins to gendered traditions of authority and dependency that began in the Senegambian hinterland.

At the BCDSS, I presented new research at the International Colloquium on "Gendered Segregation and Gendering Segregation" in April 2024. I contributed a chapter entitled, "Gendered Authority and Enslavability in Fifteenth- to Seventeenth-Century Senegambia," to *African Slavery Studies: An Actor-Centered Approach*, which is edited by BCDSS-affiliated scholars Mary Afolabi, Boluwatife Akinro, and Jutta Wimmeler and will be published in 2026.



A 1707 map of Senegambia by Guillaume Delisle. Wikimedia public domain.



Sarah Zimmerman during a Dies Academicus lecture on „Gender, Slavery, and World Heritage on Gorée Island (Senegal)“, May 2024. Photo: Niniane Waldmann.



PROFESSOR  
**DR. EMMA CHRISTOPHER**

Associate Professor, School of Humanities & Languages, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia  
Documentary Film Director and Producer for Unshackled Media  
Senior Heinz Heinen Fellowship, 01/2022 – 06/2022

Having worked with the people of the remote Yurumanguí palenque (a free village founded by escaped enslaved people) in Pacific Colombia for seven years, 'asymmetrical dependency' has helped me to interrogate and conceptualise the many and varied ways in which slavery and its aftermath have caused their disadvantage. It has allowed me to look at their experiences as a whole: the original trading of their ancestors across the Atlantic, their enslavement on the banks of the Río Yurumanguí, and the period afterwards; to interrogate how further asymmetry in freedoms, opportunity, and power were and are forced upon them. Despite their ancestors' courage in founding a palenque to live as free men and women, after emancipation their former enslavers and the society that these families dominated sought to maintain control through taking their land, by racially disadvantaging them, and by wreaking violence upon them. Today, Yurumanguireños continue to fight for their land and their freedom in the face of violent attack from armed actors and environmental destruction. Breaking down the simple binary between slavery and freedom has been essential to understanding peoples who defied enslavement, but whose freedom is still severely impinged upon by those who would like them to still be dependents.



Poster of Emma Christopher's latest film "Viva Yurumanguí", Australia/Colombia 2025.



At the film screening and discussion of Emma Christopher's previous documentary film "We the Cimarrons" (Colombia/Australia, 2021) at Kino in der Brotfabrik, Bonn, 2022. From left to right: Sergio Leyva (film photographer), Cécile Jeblawei (BCDSS), Sigrid Limprecht (Kino in der Brotfabrik). Photo: Niniane Waldmann





PROFESSOR

**DR. DEIRDRE COLEMAN**

Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor and Robert Wallace Chair of English, University of Melbourne

Cooperation partner and chief investigator of the joint research project "Unfreedom, Voices, Redress: Plantation Cultures of the Western Pacific" (since 2025)

Scholars of slavery, colonialism, and empire have increasingly turned to explore the links between transatlantic slavery and the forms of "unfreedom" which emerged in the post-emancipation Pacific. Our new Australian Research Council funded project, "Unfreedom, Voices, Redress: Plantation Cultures of the Western Pacific" (2025-2029), which includes as Partner Investigator, BCDSS Professor and Co-speaker Pia Wiegink, deploys "asymmetrical dependency" as its ruling methodology. In moving beyond the slavery/freedom binary which has long dominated studies of global slavery, this novel concept enables us to examine a spectrum of exploitation and coercion in the nineteenth-century Pacific, from enslavement and indentured servitude to "blackbirding" (kidnapping). Indeed, scholars in Australia have long disagreed about how best to describe the widespread "blackbirding" throughout the Solomons and Vanuatu for Queensland's sugar plantations. Was it slavery or was it something else? As is evident in the attached map, Australian South Sea Islanders, keepers of the stories of those blackbirded into Queensland, have no doubt that slavery is the correct term.

Our team presents a unique mix of international and Pasifika/Australian scholars and artists. Ambitiously we ask how the plantations of Queensland, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Sāmoa should be located within comparative Anglo and German empires, as well as within global debates around "unfreedom". A key focus within this broader investigation lies in the voices and stories of women, especially Indian Girmityas and Australian South Sea Islanders, heard in the indenture, shipping, and legal records. These traces of women's "plantation lives," together with letters and photos, expose "the deeper wrong" made famous by the autobiography of enslaved woman, Harriet Jacobs. Finally, we examine Oceanic artefacts, fellow-travellers with "labour traffic" flows. Many of these reside in the Queensland Museum and the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne, inspiring our project's residential artists and writers to imagine their untold journeys and stories.



Australian South Sea Islander Slave Trade Routes at the Australian Museum's new permanent Pasifika Gallery, Wansolmoana, Sydney. Photograph by Deirdre Coleman.



The team of the "Unfreedom, Voices, Redress: Plantation Cultures of the Western Pacific" project: Prof. Deirdre Coleman, Prof. Penny Edmond, Dr Oliver Lueb, Dr Kirsten McGavin, Ms Imelda Miller, Dr Margaret Mishra, Jasmine Togo-Brisby, Prof. Dr Pia Wiegink; photo courtesy of Deirdre Coleman

**DR. NITIN VARMA**

Postdoctoral Researcher, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin  
Heinz Heinen Fellowship, BCDSS, June 2025 - November 2025

My research trajectory has been significantly shaped by the field of asymmetrical dependency, and my association with the dynamic and intellectually stimulating research community at the BCDSS. The opportunity to engage in both formal and informal settings with the wonderful support of the institution has provided an ideal setting to develop and further ideas in new and productive directions. My two primary research interests, specifically coolies and servants, have undergone substantial revision as I have engaged with the core concepts of BCDSS. By situating coolie labour within this framework, I now realise how multiple axes of identity – race, caste, class, age, and gender – intersect to produce complex, historically contingent forms of dependent relationships. This intersectionality is institutionalised and perpetuated through colonial and post-colonial state mechanisms, which enforce and normalise these dependencies via laws, policies, and social norms. Thus, coolie labour, as I understand it now, is not a transhistorical category but rather a nuanced site where structural inequalities are produced and contested over time.

Similarly, my re-examination of the master-servant relationship through a longue durée lens has revealed how this asymmetrical dependency has been spatially and temporally articulated in South Asian history. This approach allows for an understanding of the master-servant dynamic beyond immediate economic or legal frameworks, emphasising its embeddedness within broader social and political transformations. Through a life history approach – as it has been very actively debated and developed at the BCDSS – I have been able to trace continuities and ruptures in the individual life trajectories of servants, illuminating how power and dependency have been historically constructed and maintained. I find this approach invaluable in studying social and labour relations, as it foregrounds the making as well as the enduring legacies of asymmetrical dependency in shaping contemporary inequalities.



Group photograph with fellow participants of the "Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia" conference, Bonn, May 2025.



Household servants in early nineteenth-century India. Photo: Public domain.



# LOOKING AHEAD

TO THE SECOND  
FUNDING PHASE  
(2026-2032)

The **New Research Program** is aimed at broadening the Cluster's collaborative scope and further intensifying interdisciplinary dialogue as a driving force for developing new research questions and methodologies.



OUR VISION FOR HISTORICALLY INFORMED DEPENDENCY STUDIES:

Researchers will systematically include the analysis of **Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SADs)** – how and why they emerge and endure – into the study of any social, economic and cultural aspect of societies.

THE NEW RESEARCH PROGRAM

Since 2019, the BCDSS has developed and applied its innovative concept of **Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SADs)** to a wide range of case studies across time periods and world regions. Our research explores both well-known forms of dependency — such as Roman, transatlantic, or Mamluk slavery, convict labor, and debt bondage — as well as more concealed forms like human trafficking and domestic servitude.

The concept of SADs allows for a comprehensive analytical framework to understand how power imbalances have historically shaped, and continue to influence, societies around the world. In the context of present-day global challenges — such as forced migration, socioeconomic inequality, and environmental exploitation — this research offers critical insights into the enduring legacies of dependency.

During Phase Two (2026–2032), the BCDSS will investigate the underlying causes and mechanisms that contribute to the persistence of Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SADs) across historical and contemporary contexts. We aim to further anchor **Historically Informed Dependency Studies** as a key interdisciplinary field in the humanities, encouraging scholars across the humanities and social sciences to systematically integrate the analysis of SADs into the study of social, economic, and cultural phenomena.

Platforms of Collaboration

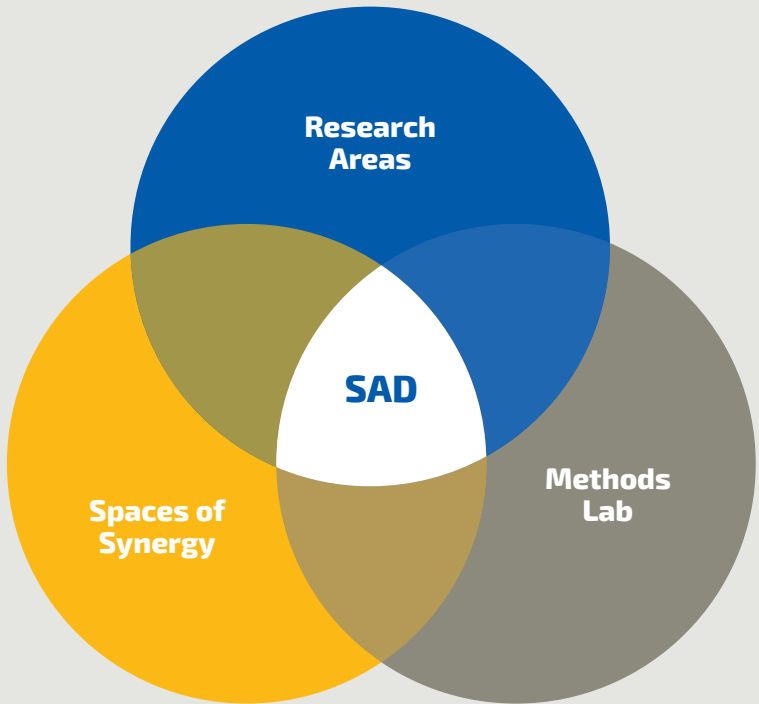
The BCDSS strives for productive and creative collaborations. Our research operates with low hierarchies, granting researchers maximum autonomy. We facilitate collaboration and invite researchers to leave their disciplinary comfort zones and explore new ideas and methods.

In order to foster joint activities, we will implement new formats of exchange that will enhance creative interaction across disciplines, for all status groups, and for scholars from different academic cultures.

For this reason, we designed three **Platforms of Collaboration** for Phase Two:

- Research Areas
- Spaces of Synergy
- Methods Lab

These three platforms also generate collaboration with our international fellows and act as catalysts for multi- and interdisciplinary international collaboration.



Research Areas (RAs)

Our RAs are the bedrock structure of our research and serve as interfaces between disciplines. They provide a relatively long-term, easily accessible, and stable research community space of exchange and cooperation for individual researchers.

To ensure that ideas and discourses will flourish not only within, but also across RAs, every PI, Postdoc, and PhD will join at least one of our five new RAs:

- Transitions and Transformations
- Economies of SAD
- Power – Violence – Trauma
- Cultural Heritage – Transitional Justice – Memory Cultures
- Alternative Archives and Life Writing

The members of the RAs will meet regularly in collaborative work formats and generate the core outputs of our research.

Spaces of Synergy (SoS)

This platform enables collaborations across RAs of various kinds. The aim of these SoS is to provide a dynamic and open collaborative space for bottom-up initiatives and productive activities such as working and reading groups, joint conferences, and special issues.

For example, this is the space where we can work together to design our three overarching conferences, which will take place in 2026, 2029, and 2032.

Methods Lab

Establishing the field of Historically Informed Dependency Studies in an interdisciplinary fashion requires innovation on the methodological level. We thus conceive of our new Methods Lab as an open, experimental, and exploratory communication platform for all members of the BCDSS, serving as a stimulus for innovation.

The methods include practical investigative procedures adopted across the more than 30 disciplines.

Furthermore, we want to encourage and enable researchers across disciplines to employ new methods subsumed under digital humanities. In doing so, they will receive support by the [Bonn Center for Digital Humanities \(BCDH\)](#).



# HISTORICALLY INFORMED DEPENDENCY STUDIES

## Phase One

Where do SADs exist and how do they function?

Investigation

In-Depth Analysis

Decentering Categories

Multidisciplinarity

Beyond Slavery vs. Freedom

Strong Assymetrical Dependency

compare

connect

pluralize

enhance

amplify

extend

## Phase Two

Why and how do SADs persist?

Systematization

Thoretical Framework

Polycentric Epistemologies

Interdisciplinarity

Multidimesionality

Dependency Studies



For image caption, see page 62

### Research Area B: Economies of SADs

RA B will examine how the partial or complete exclusion, by coercive means, from access to markets, resources, honor, and social relations shape economic behavior. Economists have long focused on the utility of inclusion into markets, anthropologists on inclusion into communities, while economic anthropologists insist that there are locally contextualized modes of inclusion into markets – such as ethical values, and institutions or extra-market modes of production and distribution – that frame economic behavior including subsistence or barter (Hann 2018). However, violence and social inequalities remain understudied under these approaches even though a paradigmatic shift in this area of research has been in the making ever since Eric Williams' pioneering study (1944) of the formative role of slavery in emerging capitalism. Research in this RA will build on this approach and contribute to meeting another research objective of Phase Two, i.e., examining how and why logics of efficiency and the increase of capital (economic, social, and moral) inform SADs and how they are embedded in the wider cultural context and belief system.



For image caption, see page 71

### Research Area C: Power – Violence – Trauma

RA C builds on another major insight from Phase One: physical coercion and emotional violence are key interconnected factors for establishing and upholding systems and relations of SAD. These systems and relations often entail enforced separation, and as such bring about the loss of cultural and social belonging within and across families and kin. They may also weaken society as a whole and lead to social change. Physical and emotional violence signify, in one way or another, systems of SAD as they occur across historical periods and cultural contexts (Ismard, Rossi, Vidal 2022). Research in this RA will focus on our third research objective of Phase Two, i.e., investigating the interrelated power dynamics in situations of, and communities structured through, SAD. The capacity to exercise physical and emotional violence on a daily basis, to threaten and to dominate discursive strategies in a given society, and the techniques employed for upholding power relations and their links to symbolic and religious order form the vantage point of this RA.



For image caption, see page 69

### Research Area A: Transitions and Transformations

RA A uses one of the major research findings from Phase One as its premise: while SADs are constitutive of all human societies, their forms are neither stable in themselves nor do they play out in static environments. Instead, SADs are shaped by continuities and changes at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of societies. The study of transitions is also closely related to the theory of path dependence, which postulates that current social forms at any given time are dependent on social conditions, institutional patterns, and individual choices in the past (Mahoney 2000). Research in this RA will contribute to meeting one of our research objectives for Phase Two, i.e., developing a concept of relational SAD and examining more systematically how different SADs not only interrelate but also co-determine each other.



D

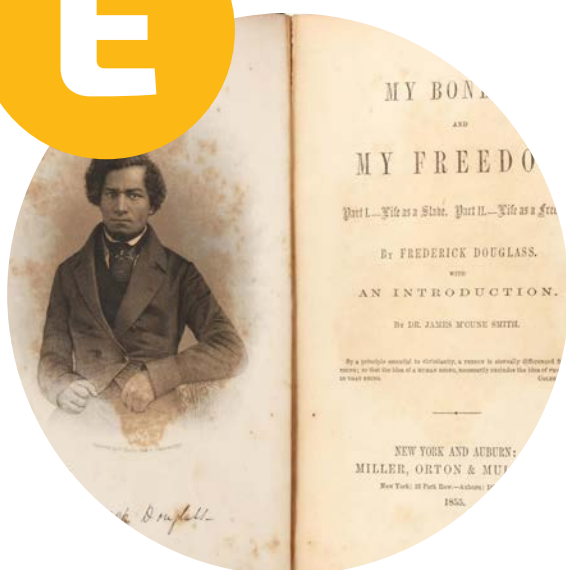


For image caption,  
see page 63

#### Research Area D: Cultural Heritage – Transitional Justice – Memory Cultures

RA D will focus on the interrelated and contested fields of cultural heritage, memory, and justice. The notion of cultural heritage is situated at the interface of competing concepts and traditions associated with national, regional, communal, and religious identities and senses of belonging (Higgins, Douglas 2021; Silverman, 2011; Osireditse Keitumetse 2016). Moreover, cultural heritage is inextricably linked with cultural memory and concepts of (in)justice, e.g., discussing contemporary notions of justice and considering how these notions address histories of colonial dispossession, enslavement, and other forms of SAD from the perspective of those who were colonized, enslaved, and dependent. Research in this RA will meet our fourth research objective of Phase Two, i.e., contributing to current public debates regarding these important social and political questions, benefiting from a dynamic research environment made up of several university and non-university institutions that share a strong interest in cultural heritage.

E



For image caption,  
see page 82

#### Research Area E: Alternative Archives – Life Writing

RA E will bring together researchers from different disciplines with a shared interest in exploring the words, actions, and archival traces of enslaved and dependent people and the question of which narratives of SAD and slavery emerge once lives of dependent people are put center stage. Not only were people living in social relations of SAD often prevented from learning how to read and write, but also archives of slavery and SAD usually privilege records of enslavers and of those in power. Attentive to how colonial and imperial epistemologies still determine Western (post-Enlightenment) narratives of freedom and progress, this RA aims to methodologically inquire into archives, their sources and uses, and the kinds of historical, visual, and literary narratives they produce, and seeks to identify and explore alternative sources on the lives silenced by these processes. Thus, research in this RA will be informed by our fifth research objective of Phase Two, i.e., developing innovative, creative, and imaginative methods to find, listen to, and restore the agency and the voices and experiences of people who bent to, were forced into, resisted, survived, and endured a life in SAD.

# PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

For its second funding phase, the BCDSS brings together 25 Principal Investigators from five faculties, spanning archaeology, anthropology, history, literary and cultural studies, art history, law, religious studies, and human geography, with regional expertise across five continents.





PROFESSOR  
**DR. JAN BEMMANN**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Expertise: Prehistory and Early Historical Archaeology



JUNIOR PROFESSOR  
**DR. JULIA BINTER**

UoB, Transdisciplinary Research Area (TRA) Present Pasts

Expertise: Social and Cultural Anthropology

**Pastoral Nomads, Agricultural Products, and China: A Long-term Inbuilt SAD or the *Wirkmacht* (influence) of the Memory Cultures of the Other?**

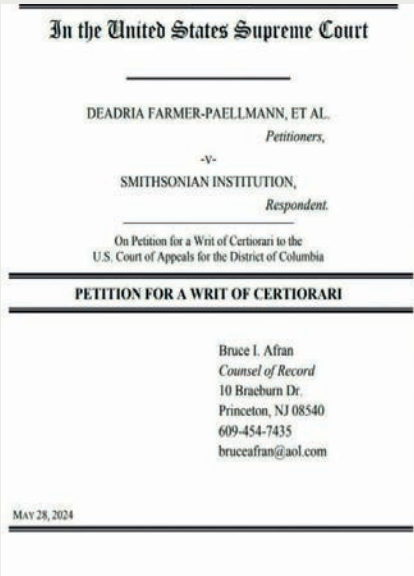
Pastoral nomadic lifestyles and associated technologies were central to military strength in open field battles before 1800 and to Silk Road trade, but left few written records. The master narrative on the herders of the eastern Eurasian steppe therefore remains shaped by sedentary scholars, who portrayed nomads as a threat of raids and domination, while defining “culture” as rooted in horticultural and agricultural cultivation. Based on biblical tropes, Marxist-Leninist evolutionary models and modern anthropology, nomads thus appear as dependent on Chinese products and incapable of solving crises or building empires without external support. The project will examine this narrative diachronically on the Mongolian Plateau, from the Xiongnu to the Mongol Empire, challenging it by systematically identifying and dating evidence of arable farming (field systems, tools, pollen, cereals) and, with the BCDH, mapping arable land through remote sensing. These independent sources, together with a contextualization of the narrative's origins, will help revise a trope shaped by the memory cultures of sedentary empires.



Belt Buckle, Mongolia or southern Siberia, 2nd–1st century B.C. Bronze (Xiongnu period). Depicting a traveling nomad family led by a man in belted jacket and trousers, pulling a nomadic cart. The Nasli M. Heeramanek Collection of Ancient Near Eastern and Central Asian Art, gift of The Ahmanson Foundation (M.76.97.582), Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Wikimedia public domain, uploaded December 23, 2021.

**Competing Legacies? Remembering Enslavement and Colonization in the Atlantic World**

In the BCDSS's second funding phase, Julia Binter will be pursuing two interconnected research avenues: *Competing Legacies in the Black Atlantic* and *Heritage Ecologies*. *Competing Legacies* examines political and cultural forms of remembering enslavement and colonization across the Black Atlantic, focusing on how these histories are narrated, contested, and institutionalized in different ways in Africa and its diasporas. Alongside this, Binter will develop a new research strand on *Heritage Ecologies*, which explores how colonialism, slavery, and extractivism have shaped human–environment relations. Her research foregrounds innovative transdisciplinary formats across academia, the arts, and global society, exploring how such approaches can contribute to more equitable and sustainable futures.



Restitution Study Group brings Benin Bronze Case against Smithsonian to US Supreme Court. Photo: Restitution Study Group, <https://rsgincorp.org/litigation/>, last accessed 22 December 2025.





PROFESSOR

**DR. STEPHAN CONERMANN**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Islamicate Studies



PROFESSOR

**DR. LEWIS DONEY**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Tibetan Studies; Literary Criticism; Cultural History

# SADs: A Global History since the Fifteenth Century

After Columbus's arrival in the Americas in 1492 and Vasco da Gama's voyage around the Cape of Good Hope six years later, global systems of exploitation expanded dramatically. From the sixteenth century onward, silver mines, sugar plantations, and the slave trade tied Asia, Africa, and Latin America into vast networks of dependency. Silver from Spanish-controlled mines in the Americas financed trade stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, while European powers developed plantation economies across the Atlantic world. Monocultures replaced subsistence farming, serving distant markets and enriching colonial elites. This project seeks to synthesize BCDSS research into a global history of strong asymmetrical dependencies (SADs). Using SADs as an analytical lens, it reinterprets how colonial and capitalist structures of extraction evolved into today's global value chains, sustained by large-scale copper, gold, and iron ore mining, energy production from fracking, oil and lithium extraction, and vast monocultures of soy, pine, eucalyptus, and oil palms. The central premise: SADs have long sustained the prosperity of a privileged minority; without them, the system would collapse.



Potosi, Bolivia, early 18th century. For centuries, Potosi was the location of the biggest Spanish colonial silver mine. Source: Herman Moll: Map of South America, London c.1715 (detail: Inset view of Potosi by Bernard Lens). Wikipedia public domain.

# Beyond a Binary of Devils and Deities on the Road: SADs in Tibetan Travelogues

In Phase Two I will compare travel writing by Tibetans with early modern foreign travelogues describing Tibet, to see how both differently translate power into literary and material culture. Tibetan Buddhists over the second millennium often created asymmetric power relations with the inhabitants of poorer areas through which they travelled, and foreshadowed the latter's conversion as representatives of weaker peripheries. Later, foreigners used similar structures of asymmetrical dependency such as corvée labour while underway in Tibet, and most brought colonial mentalities of cultural superiority with them. Using Digital Humanities techniques, I wish to uncover the formal qualities and undisclosed reliance on asymmetrical personal dynamics in both types of travel accounts—and bring together these often-siloed genres. I shall also identify, in Tibetan and European archives, what cultural heritage items travellers brought or took away with them on the road, due to the privilege accorded them by these asymmetrical power structures.



“Two coolies between Pok and Dunkur. Piti valley. Natives of Chinese Tibet. June 9 / [18]53.” An original water colour by British artist and Royal Navy officer Conway Mordaunt Shipley (1824-1888), pasted in a bound volume published in 1854.





PROFESSOR  
**DR. KRISTINA GROSSMANN**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Social and Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology

**Reconfigurations of  
SAD in Contemporary  
Resource Extraction in  
Southeast Asia**

SAD, social inequality and patron-client relationships are common among many countries in Southeast Asia, historically deeply rooted and especially prevalent in the natural resource sector. This sector is currently under immense transformation: Coal mining sites are being closed due to the green economy, and workers on oil palm plantations connect with transnational labor movements to demand more rights. Mega projects such as the construction of a new capital in Indonesia are increasingly expected to adhere to international standards of sustainability. In these processes, SADs are reinforced but long-existing patronage networks are also contested. New actors enter the stage and enlarge their agency, while others lose power. In these vibrant reconfigurations of SAD, new intersectional categories evolve and challenge established modes of access to social, cultural and economic resources. This research develops a multipolar model of relational SAD in Southeast Asia's resource extraction.



**Kalimantan, the largest coal mining area in Indonesia: Coal is extracted in remote and forested areas of Kalimantan and transported in small ships downstream to the seaports for export or energy production in Indonesia.** Photo: Kristina Großmann, 2017.



PROFESSOR  
**DR. NIKOLAI GRUBE**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Expertise: Mesoamerican Archaeology, Dependency Studies, Political Anthropology

**Belonging and SAD  
in Classic Maya Religious  
Practice**



The new project will examine how extreme asymmetrical dependencies in Classic Maya society (250-900 CE) were shaped and justified through religious practices. Classic Maya society was highly asymmetrical. Dependency was not limited to interpersonal relations but extended to bonds with supernatural entities that fostered emotional belonging and collective identity. While many deities protected entire communities, others were accessible only to kings, queens, or nobles—especially in acts of deity impersonation—thereby reinforcing social stratification. Despite the centrality of non-human agents in Maya life, their simultaneous role in generating cohesion and legitimizing elite authority remains understudied. Using a Dependency Studies framework, the project will analyze how rituals balanced inclusivity and exclusivity: they united communities through shared worship while granting privileged actors exclusive access to certain divine beings. By tracing these mechanisms, the project will reveal how religious narratives constructed and maintained strong asymmetrical dependencies in a context where public authority was fragile and required continual symbolic reinforcement.

**Incense Burner from the Guatemalan Highlands, Maya Culture, Late Classic (c. 600-900 CE). Guatemala, Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología.**  
Photo: Nikolai Grube.





PROFESSOR

## DR. MARION GYMNICH

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of English, American and Celtic Studies

Expertise: English Literature and Culture

### Reflections on SAD in Contemporary Fiction for Children and Young Adults

The aim of this project is to analyse depictions of strong asymmetrical dependencies across different literary genres, especially in (a) contemporary historical fiction for children and young adults that negotiates the legacies of Transatlantic Slavery or the situation of Indigenous children in Canadian residential schools, and in (b) contemporary speculative fiction for children and young adults, for instance Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* and Piers Torday's *The Last Wild* series. Such texts will be examined and compared with a view to how they incorporate and criticise strong asymmetrical dependencies. What historical fiction for children and speculative fiction for young readers have in common is that they often do not only look back but also seek to imagine possible futures.

Particular attention will be paid to if and how these literary texts address the idea of moving beyond strong asymmetrical dependencies and whether they present perspectives for reconciliation.



Pokiak-Fenton, M.-O., & Jordan-Fenton, C. (2020). *Fatty Legs* (10th Anniversary ed.). Annick Press.



PROFESSOR

## DR. JUDITH HAHN

UoB, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Seminar of Canon Law

Expertise: Canon Law Research

### Coercive Law: Submission and Resistance to Canon Law in the Local Churches

Contemporary canon law seeks to establish strong asymmetrical dependencies between the Roman centre of Catholicism and the local churches. The law is made in Rome. It is then implemented and enforced in the local churches. However, these asymmetrical legal transfers often encounter resistance in local contexts. Local agents employ various strategies, occasionally subversive, to challenge the law. While many local Catholics simply ignore laws that they feel are detrimental to their lives and faith, others modify global commands through interpretation or adaptation to meet local needs. My project will empirically examine these tensions between the global claims of canon law and its local implementation. Through expert interviews with legal practitioners from Asia, Australasia, the Americas, and Europe, I aim to shed light on how local agents respond to the law and negotiate legal claims to mediate between Roman directives and local demands.



Street sign at an unknown location. Unsplash. Photo: Isaac Mitchell 2023.





PROFESSOR

**DR. JULIA HEGEWALD**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Asian Art History

## Extreme Dependencies Expressed in Buildings and Paintings in South Asia and the Diaspora

Firstly, I will examine how religious and national dependencies are articulated in South Asian architecture in Asia and the diaspora. I am particularly interested in both colonial and contemporary government buildings, in religious edifices of the Buddhists in India and Nepal, which are often funded and stylistically influenced by foreign nations; and in Hindu, Jaina and Islamic places of worship in the western diaspora, which reflect the styles of the former home countries of their communities as well as local influences. Secondly, I will focus on religious dependencies in the context of Jaina belief. Probably the worst kind of dependency, besides slavery, is to be encountered in conceptions of hells. Jaina cosmography knows numerous hells, and paintings depict the souls of sinners suffering terrible torments inside them. A number of such depictions will form part of an exhibition at the Ashmolean museum, Oxford.



Burmese-style stupa at Lumbini, the birth place of the historical Buddha, Nepal. Photo: Julia A.B. Hegewald.



PROFESSOR

**DR. JULIA HILLNER**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of History

Expertise: Ancient History

## SAD, Gender and Criminality in Late Antiquity (c. 200–600)

This project examines the complex and shifting networks of SADs in late antique society by investigating gender differentiation in the definition of crime, criminal procedure, and punishment. Focusing on coercion and violence in criminal law during a period of transition, it lies at the intersection of Research Area A (Transitions and Transformations) and C (Power – Violence – Trauma). Late Roman law subjected people in SADs, such as slaves or tied peasants, to distinct definitions of "crime" and separate penalties, producing new forms of dependency, including convict labor and imprisonment. The project adds gender as a further axis shaping the "criminal body" and considers the growing influence of family and religious institutions in the redress of crime, especially for women and other minoritized people. Preliminary findings indicate new gendered SADs, such as forced celibacy. Methodologically, the project compares constructions of the female criminal in normative and literary texts with documentary evidence, especially Egyptian papyri, and uses sociological and anthropological models to contextualize how gendered discourses, including victim blaming, shaped female experiences within late antique legal systems.



Frescoes in a private chapel in fifth-century Rome, now under the church of St John and Paul on the Caelian hill. On the right hand side representation of an execution of men and women. Photograph of the Case Romane del Celio. Accessed December 03, 2026. Reasonable effort has been undertaken to obtain the copyright from the interior ministry and the diocese. <https://www.caseromanedelcelio.it/le-case-del-celio/>





PROFESSOR

**DR. CARLA JAIMES BETANCOURT**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Expertise: Indigenous Heritage Studies; Amazonian Archaeology; Biocultural Landscapes; Decolonial Methods

**Heritage and SAD:  
Indigenous Strategies for  
Resilience in the Llanos  
de Moxos**

This project examines biocultural heritage and Indigenous resilience in the Llanos de Moxos, one of Amazonia’s most diverse cultural landscapes. Building on long-term collaborative research, it explores how Cayubabas, Tacana, T’simane’, Mositén and other communities define, protect, and activate heritage beyond Eurocentric and material categories. Over the past years, community researchers have identified 204 biocultural sites – archaeological, ecological, historical, sacred, and “mystery” places – revealing a relational understanding in which nature, culture, and spirituality form an inseparable whole.

The next phase investigates how place-based knowledge, subsistence practices, and Indigenous cosmologies strengthen adaptive resilience amid environmental and political pressures. By combining collaborative and ethnographic archaeology with landscape history, the project seeks to rethink global heritage frameworks and extend them toward Indigenous concepts of care, co-governance, and living landscapes. Ultimately, it underscores heritage as a dynamic relational system that sustains identity, well-being, and the capacity of communities to shape their own futures.



Carla Jaimes Betancourt during a decision-making meeting with the Tsimane’ and Mositén community leaders.  
Photo: A. Bucheli, June 2022.



PROFESSOR

**DR. CLAUDIA JARZEOWSKI**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, BCDSS

Expertise: Early Modern History

**Trauma and  
Testimony**

Violence was a central instrument for establishing and maintaining systems and praxeologies of strong dependencies, including slavery, which were based on the perceived and real power to threaten subjects with physical violence and emotional suffering. In this complex constellation, torture and punishment served as important means of enforcing authority and deterring those who witnessed these events. Initial investigations show that witnesses to these events were deeply affected, including members of all social groups in a given space. Documented more frequently in colonial spaces, ceremonies of violence also took place in a comparable (though not identical) manner in European territories. This project therefore examines the emotional and, where applicable, psychological consequences that such violent practices had for those who witnessed them as children, partners or friends. The focus is on social and historical contextualisation; the same type of violence is experienced differently depending on the context. The source material consists of testimonials, based on written, visual and material sources. Methodologically, the project sees itself as a contribution to archival eloquence, if the concept of archives is cautiously expanded.



Peter Kolb: *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum: Vollständige Beschreibung des Africanischen Vorgebürgs der Guten Hofnung [...]. Nürnberg (Peter Conrad Monath) 1719.*





PROFESSOR  
**DR. HERMUT LÖHR**

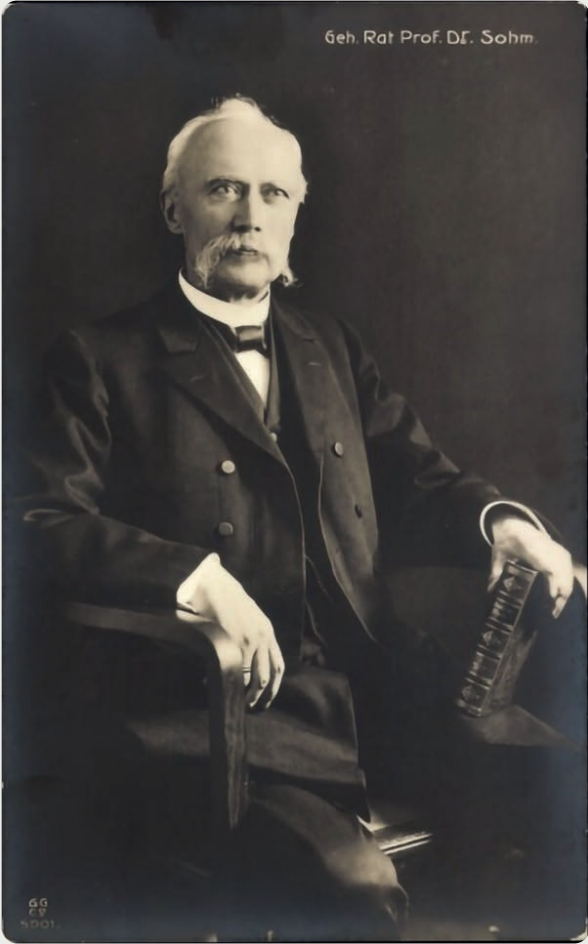
UoB, Faculty of Protestant Theology, New Testament Department

Expertise: New Testament, Ancient Judaism

**Charisma and SAD  
in Ancient Judaism and  
Emerging Christianity**

The project investigates notions of charisma to reconstruct key aspects of ancient Jewish and early Christian thought, especially in relation to ethics and morality. It brings the categories of "charisma" and "SAD" into dialogue, with particular attention to the dynamics and limits of SAD. Beginning with the idea of charisma as "gift of grace," the concept developed from Sohm's model of "charismatic organization" to Weber's influential theory of "charismatic authority," shaping twentieth-century social, cultural, and religious studies.

The project aims (1) to provide a critical history of the concept and its application to ancient Judaism (especially Second Temple Judaism) and early Christianity (first and second centuries CE); (2) to examine the value of terms such as charismatic leadership, groups, institutions, texts, or the "charismatic power of objects" for reconstructing ancient ethical and moral thought; and (3) to assess the relevance of charisma for advancing the concept of SAD, particularly regarding its dynamics, transformation, and dissolution.



**Rudolph Sohm. Photograph.** Wikimedia Commons, public domain: "Rudolph\_Sohm.jpg". He was of fundamental importance for the development of the concept of "charisma".



PROFESSOR  
**DR. LUDWIG MORENZ**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Expertise: Egyptology

**“Pharaonic” Internal  
Colonization in the  
Fourth Millennium**

The socio-economic dimension of internal colonization in the Nile Valley during the second half of the fourth millennium BCE has received insufficient attention in research on the emergence of the “pharaonic” territorial state. Neighboring desert areas, including wadis and oases, likely played a significant role. For several years, the Bonn Department of Egyptology, in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and the Inspectorate of Aswan, has conducted an archaeological project in Wadi Abu Subeira, twelve kilometers northeast of Aswan, extending into the Eastern Desert. The project examines internal colonization and the establishment of radical dependency relationships in the protodynastic period. An associated iconographic study traces the rhetoric of violence and subjugation, focusing on the motif of “slaying the enemy” as a visual formula of hegemony and asymmetrical dependency, which persisted for over 4,000 years and influenced classical antiquity and European imagery from the Renaissance onward. Future work will explore Wadi el Malik archaeologically, collect and analyze new finds, and systematically study the pathos formula through databases and case studies.



**Rock Tableau in Wadi Nacam, fourth millennium BCE: Ruler's boat; the potentate trampling on an enemy (inside yellow frame); with two decapitated heads in the background (inside blue frames).** Photo: Johann Thiele, Publication: L. Morenz, M. Abdelhay AbuBakr, Kultur und Macht im vorpharaonischen Ägypten, Berlin 2025.





PROFESSOR

**DR. BIRGIT MÜNCH**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Art History

Expertise: Visual Arts, Body History, Sex working, Prostitution, Trauma, Fabulous Fiction, Hypersexualization, Archival Silences, Medical Humanities, Colonial Medicine

## Sex and the Colony: Mapping Dependencies and Prostitution in European Metropolises and Colonies (1600-1878)

How can sex work be delineated in the many different media of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, especially as part of a history of entanglements that differ according to ethnicity and status? Different discourses existed on the sexuality of the "colonized" body, ranging from hypersexualizing metaphorization to asexualizing stylization, especially in contrast to the "femininity" in "white" colonies. An overarching goal of the project is to sharpen the different categories of SAD and sexuality, and to contribute to the global history of prostitution with its diverse connections to the history of the body of the "other", of emotions, and the medical humanities. To date the history of (colonial) sexuality is still a history of perpetrators. The project aims to overcome this by incorporating previously hidden archives, e.g., by adapting Saidiya Hartman's literary concept of "critical fabulation", which augments archive material with critical theory and fictional narrative, to visual media.



Joachim Beuckelaer: Brothel, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 26.6 x 35.5 cm, oil on panel, 1562. Wikimedia, public domain.

How can sex working be contoured in the diverse media of the 17th to 19th century, especially within a history of entanglement that differs depending on ethnicity and status? Different discourses were conducted on the sexuality of the "colonized" body, ranging from hypersexualizing metaphorization to asexualizing stylization, especially in contrast to the "femininity" of the so-called white colonies. An overarching goal is to sharpen the different categories of SAD and sexuality and to offer a contribution to the global history of prostitution with its diverse connections to the history of the "other" body, of emotions and the medical humanities. This can be achieved by incorporating previously hidden archives, as the history of (colonial) sexuality is still a history of perpetrators, e.g., by adapting Saidiya Hartman's literary concept of critical fabulation (2008) to visual media.



PROFESSOR

**DR. KARIN PETERS**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute for Classical and Romance Philology

Expertise: Romance Literature

## Textual Production and Material Circulation of the European Myth of the "Feeling Subject" in Latin America

Based on studies about the Black Atlantic and the transformations of the French novel *Paul et Virginie* (1788) the project investigates the eighteenth century European universalist myth of 'feeling' and how it was used to cement strong asymmetrical dependencies. It assumes that the promotion of virtuous demeanour can justify exploitation on different levels during the so-called "second conquest". In Latin American Studies, however, investigations often positivise references to French literature in the 'foundational fictions' of the Americas, dismissing the continuing asymmetry they involve. This project therefore aims to understand how sentimental narratives of European origin travelled to and were adapted in Latin American literature that cemented SADs between men and women and/or European and non-European subjects. It hopes to show how complicit narratives and praxeologies of sentimental SADs alike were used to redefine gender roles and social politics within the newly created national communities in Latin America.



Jean-Pol Grandmont, *Pendule Paul et Virginie dite "Au bon sauvage"* (photograph), 2019, French Consulate and Empire Style, early 19th century. File: 0\_Pendule\_Paul\_et\_Virginie\_dite\_au\_bon\_sauvage.JPG, Wikimedia Commons, CC 4.0. The clock is located at the Musée de la Compagnie des Indes à Port-Louis (Morbihan, France).





JUNIOR PROFESSOR

DR. MAGDALENA PFALZGRAF

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of English, American and Celtic Studies

Expertise: English studies, African literatures in English, mobility studies, narratology, literary studies



PROFESSOR

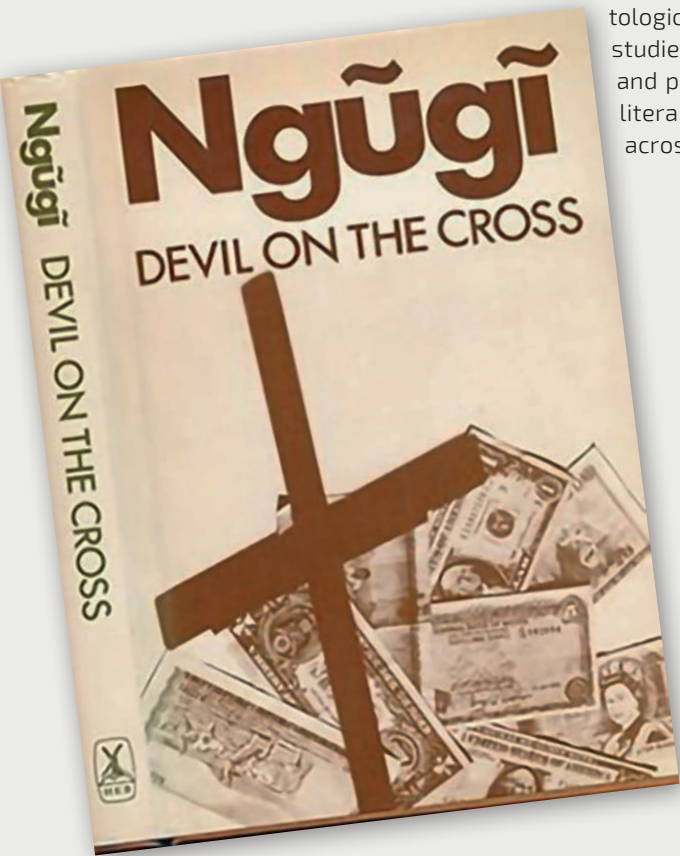
DR. MARTIN SCHERMAIER

UoB, Faculty of Law and Economics, Institute for Roman Law and Comparative Legal History

Expertise: Civil Law, Roman Law, Legal History

Anglophone African Literature’s Economies of Mobility: SAD and Countermobility in Selected Texts 1789–2020

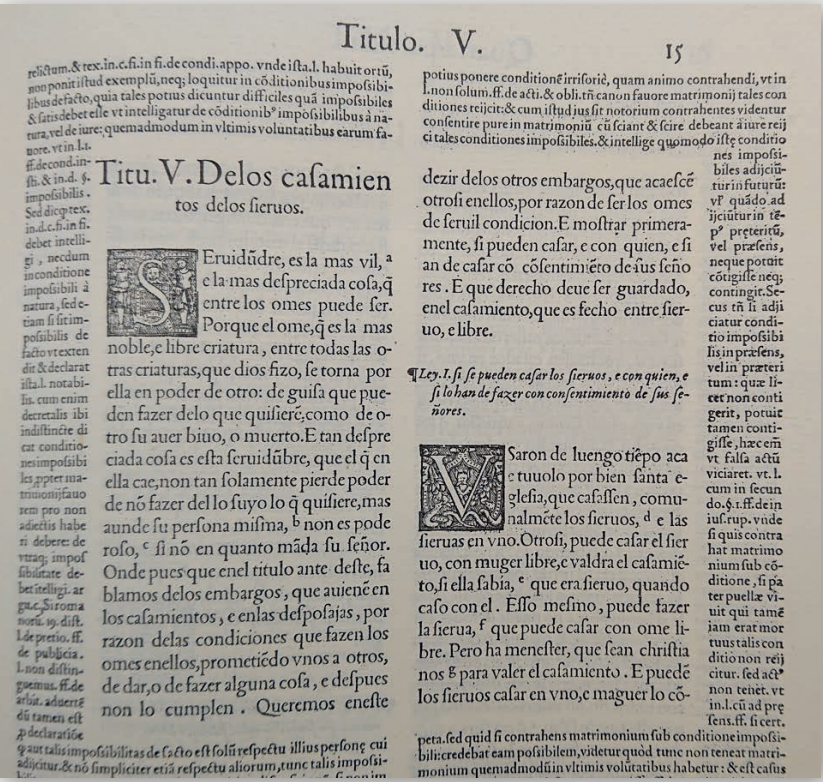
Depictions of movement and SADs have coincided in Africa's Anglophone literatures in seemingly paradox ways: Often, mobility happens not despite, but because of SAD. These literary mobility dynamics can be observed since the late eighteenth century and endure, in particular in depictions of sequestration of space and informalization of economies under authoritarian post-independence regimes. This project takes a diachronic perspective on Anglophone African literary mobility dynamics and aims to understand mobility *in* as well as *of* literature. It employs the term literary economy, which includes infrastructures from which texts emerge and in which they circulate. It takes a literary-historical and narratological approach, develops literary mobility studies by considering the component of SAD, and proposes countermobility as a distinctly literary form of agency which has endured across centuries.



Cover of the first English edition of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Devil on the Cross*. Original title: *Caĩtaani m tharaba-Inĩ*, Nairobi, 1980. The novel, written in the Kikuyu language and self-translated by the Kenyan novelist, was republished in 1982 as part of the Heinemann African Writers Series.

The Legal Framing of Asymmetrical Dependency: Examples from Late Medieval and Modern Jurisdictions

This project aims to excavate the ideological foundations used to justify modern forms of asymmetrical dependency in employment relations. In the late Middle Ages, there was a heated debate about whether people were allowed to enter permanent employment relationships. The background to this discussion was the principle that no one should enslave themselves. Lawyers and theologians developed rules to distinguish slavery from dependent labour. This laid the foundations for our modern understanding of employment contracts and developed the relevant criteria for what was considered "slavery" in the modern period. Despite the legal version of these two forms of SAD, the boundaries remained fluid. Roman law offered a differentiated "slave law", but hardly any rules for structuring employment relationships. This project is about discussing the distinction between slavery and employment relationships, and about the question of how an independent labour law was formed in the early modern period.



A page reproduced from "Siete Partidas", a Castilian law code from 1256/65, fourth part, title 5: "On the Marriage of Slaves", printed in Salamanca in 1555 by Andrea de Portonariis. Photo by Martin Schermaier.





PROFESSOR  
**DR. LISA SCHIPPER**

UoB, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Institute of Geography

Expertise: Geography, Development Studies, Anthropology



PROFESSOR  
**DR. CHRISTIAN SCHWERMANN**

University of Bochum, Faculty of East Asian Studies

Expertise: Chinese Language and Literature

**Path dependency:  
Unpacking the colonial roots  
of vulnerability to climate  
change**

Grounded in an understanding of climate as change being about failures in development, and the impacts of climate change as being caused by a vulnerability that has deep roots in power inequalities, this project takes a case study approach to explore how and to what extent colonialism and colonial dependency are directly responsible for climate change vulnerability. The project will examine the legacies of different models of colonialism in Benin, Morocco and Senegal (as well as in France) with a comparative case study of Ghana and Britain. We want to understand how colonialism influenced development path dependency, which amplifies the impacts of climate change. Methods for this study include qualitative data collection through interviews with relevant actors, including key informants in each country, development actors in and outside the country (also based in France and Britain), as well as analyses of historical documents and other archival information.



**Cattle in Senegal.** Livelihoods, farming and land use practices in Senegal are deeply influenced by the French colonial period. Some research suggests that the colonial food systems in Africa exacerbate people's vulnerability to climate change. Photo: Lisa Schipper 2025.

**Metaphors of Strong  
Asymmetrical Dependency  
in Chinese Economic and  
Political Thought**

Ancient Chinese political and economic writings are rich in metaphors that express notions of order, hierarchy, and strong asymmetrical dependency. For instance, human governance was often compared to the domestication or shepherding of animals. Unlike in the European tradition, however, "shepherding" in the Chinese context did not imply care and protection, but rather the efficient control and selection of productive subjects, and the exclusion of those deemed unfit. Such metaphors reveal not only how relationships of exploitation and dependency were imagined, but also how coercion and violence were justified as necessary tools of governance. What makes this topic especially relevant today is that these ancient images are being revived in modern Chinese political rhetoric. This project therefore examines how metaphors of dependency have evolved from early thought to the present, asking how analogies were used to conceptualize asymmetrical power, coercion was legitimized, and why these images are once again being mobilized in contemporary propaganda.



**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





PROFESSOR  
**DR. BETHANY WALKER**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Islamic Archaeology



PROFESSOR  
**DR. MATTHIAS WELLER**

UoB, Faculty of Law and Economics, Institute for German and International Civil Procedural Law

Expertise: Art and Cultural Property Law, in particular Restitution of Cultural Objects from different contexts of injustice; German and International Civil Procedural Law

# Tied to the Land? Coercive Labor and Resource Management in Late Medieval and Ottoman Syria

Unlike peasants in Europe, those in the medieval Islamic world were not by legal definition "tied to the land". However, the realities of practice were quite different, as different kinds of SADs developed between agrarian laborer and estate owner. Rather than conceptualizing the struggle for control over critical resources as a binary conflict between peasants and the state, this project is designed to identify as many factors as possible that influenced decision-making, determined priorities, and defined the SADs that developed, and at times disappeared, between human sources of labor and land owners. The focus is on holistic behavioral systems, and will use ABMs (agent-based modelling) as a tool to understand the complex mechanisms behind these relationships. The data sets for the modelling will come from archaeological excavations in Israel (funded by the DFG) and Jordan, which are rich in environmental data, as well as medieval Arabic texts related to land use, land tenure, and peasant life.



The modern village of Hisban in central Jordan, surrounded by wheat fields, with the archaeological site of Tall Hisban at the center. Photo: Bethany Walker.

# Post-SAD Remedies: What are Hermeneutics of the Restitution of Cultural Property

SADs result in the exploitation of the dependent part. In genocidal forms of SADs, such exploitation typically includes a systemic, unlawful taking of assets and, in particular, cultural property, which is both valuable and representative of the dependent part's identity which the aggressor seeks to eradicate. During the Holocaust, European Jews were systematically deprived of their assets, including their cultural property. After the war, the restitution of art and cultural property developed into a distinct field of post-Holocaust reparations. The restitution of cultural property taken in colonial contexts of injustice has similarly become a distinct field of post-colonial reparations (see in particular the case of the Benin bronzes). The central aim of this project is to explore the question of the hermeneutics of cultural property restitution as a post-SAD legal remedy. This will require interdisciplinary research on the "justificatory narratives"

for returning objects with the aim of either reversing unjust enrichments and/or achieving some form of "reconciliation". The overall objective will be to develop a first element of a general theory of post-SAD restitutions.



Display of Benin Bronzes at the British Museum. Photograph by user Geni. Wikimedia CC BY-SA 4.0.





PROFESSOR

**DR. PIA WIEGMINK**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, BCDSS

Expertise: North American Studies

## Nineteenth-Century Protocols of SAD in and beyond the United States

Focusing on the experiences, perspectives, and recollections of enslaved and dependent people in North America, this project will examine various forms of life writing, visual and memorial culture and anti-slavery literature of the nineteenth century. Drawing on recent scholarly approaches, I will explore what I will call the 'protocols of SAD.' By 'protocols', I refer to various relational configurations subject to social, political conventions – protocols – inherent in cultural narratives produced by (formerly) enslaved and dependent people. Enslaved subjects, this project will show, strategically drew on these protocols to negotiate the potential alliances and tensions inherent in cross-race, cross-gender, cross-class, and transnational relations, emphasizing how US-American slavery is inextricably related to other forms of SAD such as (women's) coverture, (coerced) labor, and the displacement of Native Americans. The core aim of this project is to write a cultural history of American abolition and slavery from the perspective of the formerly enslaved, as intersectional, entangled and interrelated with other forms of SAD.



PROFESSOR

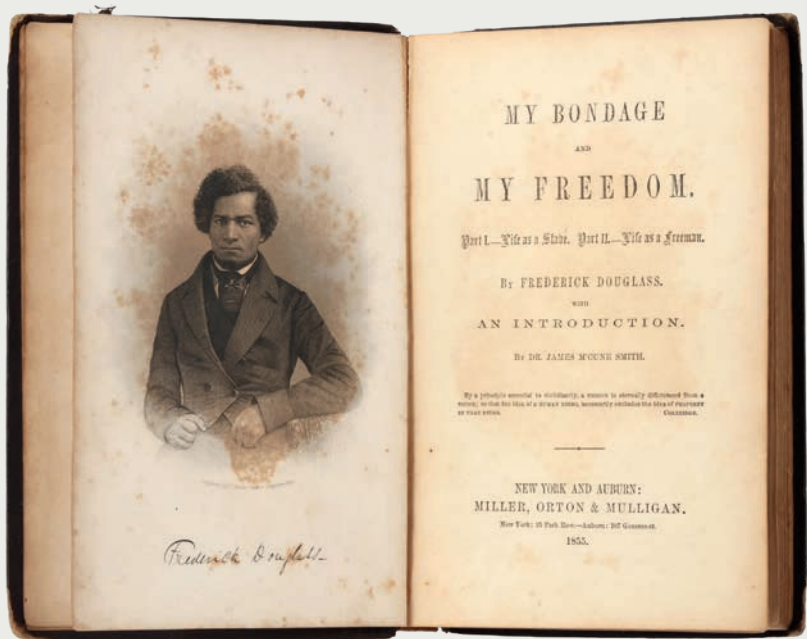
**DR. CHRISTOPH WITZENRATH**

UoB, Faculty of Arts, BCDSS

Expertise: Eastern European History

## The Slave Trade in the Russian Empire

The extent to which the "soul tax" rolls since Peter I reveal details of the extensive internal slave trade has been almost entirely overlooked. Despite mentions of this trade, such as an early-twentieth-century article on newspaper advertisements for the sale of humans, the "peasant myth" about the good treatment of "serfs" has been accepted by researchers ever since August von Haxthausen invented it in the nineteenth century and transferred it from Prussia to Russia, even though he knew no Russian and was therefore unable to verify if it corresponded to Russian realities. The "soul tax" rolls allow us to trace the whereabouts of every single inhabitant by province and estate in a twenty-year roster, giving details that include owners, names, gender and age. They show that all sorts of property transactions involving humans were common and frequent. In collaboration with the BCDH, the project will digitally transcribe and analyze the contents of the rolls.



**Frederick Douglass, ca. 1855.** Daguerreotype by an unknown American photographer. The Rubel Collection, Gift of William Rubel, 2001. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession No. 2001.756). Public domain.





PROFESSOR

**DR. REINHARD ZÖLLNER**

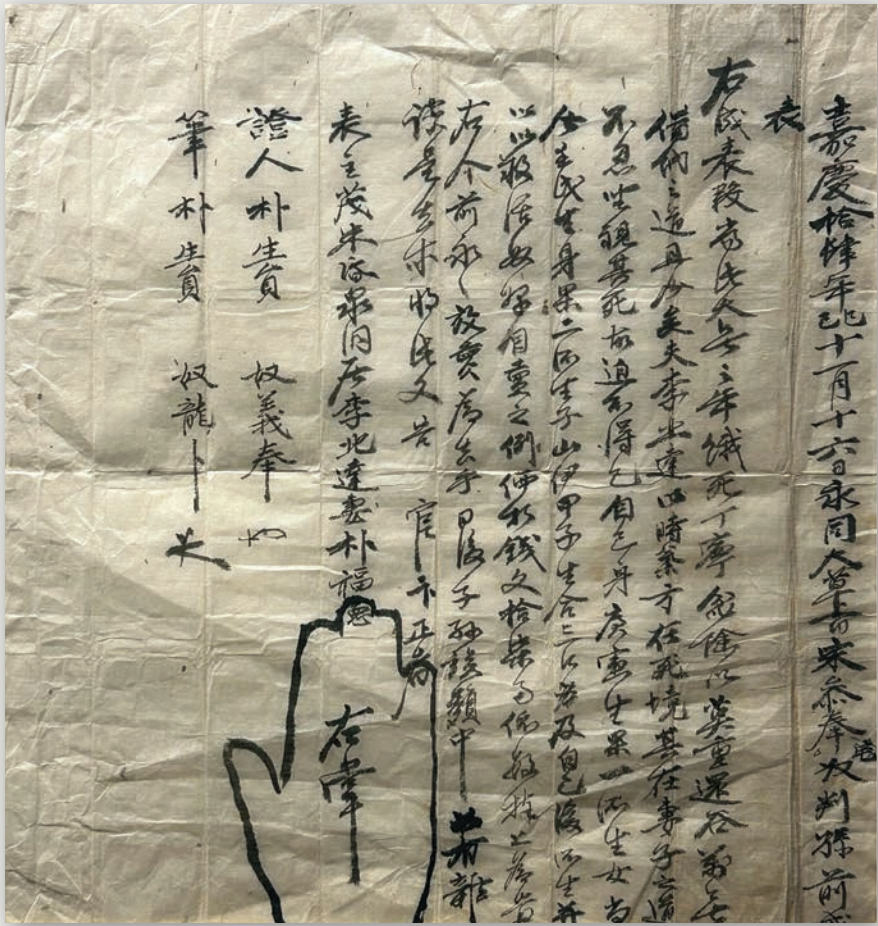
UoB, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

Expertise: Japanese and Korean Studies

**Patterns of Resistance and Agency in SADs in Pre-modern and Modern Korea and Japan**

Unlike peasants in Europe, those in the medieval Picture pre-modern Korea and Japan as twin neighborhoods where certain groups of people lived under severe personal restrictions. In Korea, *nobi* – usually translated as “slaves” – and in Japan, bonded peasants, both faced tight controls on movement. Running away without permission counted as desertion. Some Korean *nobi* even tried bold sea escapes to Japan – sometimes alone, sometimes in groups. Others rebelled by destroying slave registers to erase proof of ownership. In the nineteenth century, both Korean and Japanese groups turned to new religious movements to justify collective resistance. Meanwhile, in Japan, communities descended from Koreans abducted in the sixteenth century struggled to maintain cultural identity or converted to Christianity.

This project compares how these groups resisted, negotiated, and redefined their status. It also tracks how, even after formal abolition, their strategies echoed into modern emancipation movements – sometimes even linking across borders.



A contract dated October 1852 recording the sale of four children by their parents due to severe hardship. The margin contains the palm imprint of the mother, alongside the signatures of the father and the attestation by the witness-scribe, another slave. Kept at the National Museum of Korea. Photo: Reinhard Zöllner.

**EXPLORING STRONG ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

**NEW DIALOGUES FROM BOLIVIA**

by Carla Jaimes Betancourt,  
Stephan Conermann  
and Roberto Hofmeister-Pich



**In August 2025, a delegation from the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), consisting of Stephan Conermann, Roberto Hofmeister-Pich and Carla Jaimes Betancourt, traveled to Bolivia to open a new phase of collaboration grounded in mutual learning, shared perspectives, and co-produced knowledge. The visit was part of the Cluster's broader effort to explore Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies with the Global South – not as a distant object of study, but as a partnership in rethinking the very frameworks through which we understand dependency, resistance, and transformation.**

Located in the heart of South America, Bolivia extends from the high Andean plateau to the vast lowlands of the Amazon and the Chaco. Home to around twelve million people, it is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries on the continent, officially recognizing thirty-six national languages alongside Spanish. This diversity forms the foundation of its identity as a Plurinational State, established in 2009 to acknowledge the coexistence of multiple peoples, histories, and forms of knowledge within a single nation. In 2025, Bolivia celebrates two hundred years of independence – a moment that invites renewed reflection on its long and complex history of colonialism, interdependence, and resilience.

In Bolivia, however, the study of dependency is far from new. The country's research institutions have long examined the dynamics of domination and reciprocity through history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and political science. Questions of dependency, coercion, and resilience are deeply rooted in Bolivian scholarship, where the past and present are studied as interwoven dimensions of a shared historical process. Building on this intellectual tradition, the BCDSS now seeks to deepen dialogue and collaboration through a genuinely horizontal exchange of ideas and methods.

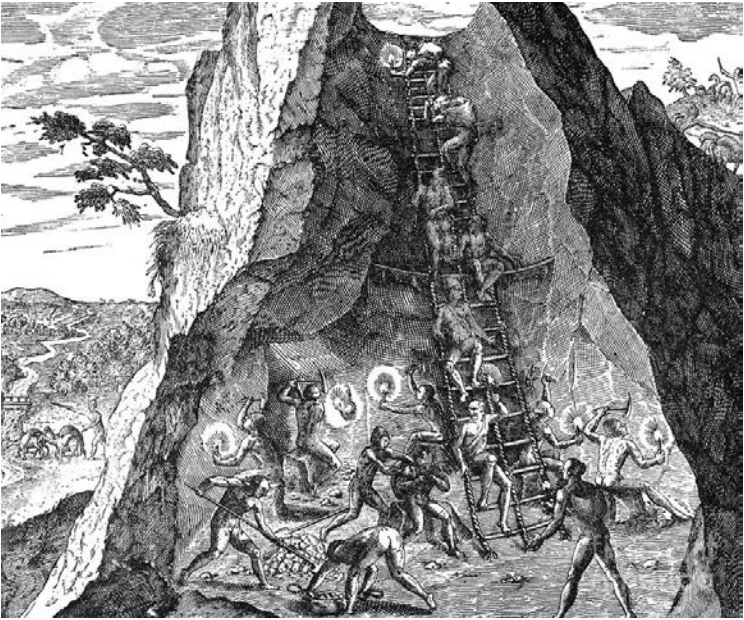
**Bolivia:  
A Living Archive of Dependencies  
and Resilience**

Bolivia offers one of the most insightful perspectives for understanding strong asymmetrical dependencies across time. From pre-Columbian mobilizations to modern popular economies, the country's history reveals how systems of extraction, redistribution, and coercion have long structured social life – while local people have continuously reinterpreted and resisted them.

Archaeological and ethnohistorical research in the Cochabamba valleys shows that dependency was institutionalized well before the colonial conquest. During the Inca expansion under Wayna Capac, thousands of *mitimaes* (members of ethnic groups forcibly resettled by imperial decree) and *mitayos* (laborers) worked in state-controlled *chacras* (farms) and filled vast networks of *qollqas* (storage buildings), sustaining an imperial order in which control over mobility and production was a key instrument of governance. These mobilizations created landscapes of dependency – flows of people, crops, and obligations that linked distant regions in unequal but interconnected ways.

Rather than replacing these hierarchies, the Spanish conquest reconfigured them. The *mita* of Potosí (a form of draft labor) continued earlier patterns of coerced labor to feed the emerging global economy. Mining depended on the adaptability of Andean families and especially on women's unacknowledged labor, weaving together free and unfree work into one of the first global circular economy. In rural regions such as Mizque in central Bolivia, communal lands supported collective strategies to meet tribute obligations while preserving the community's autonomy, transforming economic coercion into a form of resilience.

Other forms of servitude, legitimized through legal fictions such as *rescate* and *yanacozgo* (colonial-era forms of bonded indigenous labor), blurred the line between slavery and freedom, binding lowland and Andean peoples into enduring systems of domestic dependency. These internal forms of bondage reveal how coercion became normalized within everyday life – often reproduced even among the disempowered.



Indigenous people working in the silver mine at Potosí. Line Engraving by Theodor De Bry, 1590. Photograph: Wikimedia public domain.

During the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century, these structures of dependency persisted beneath the changing flags of empire and revolution. As recent research emphasizes, the conflicts that gave birth to the Bolivian Republic in 1836 were not a clean break, but rather a time of profound reorganization. Former royalists, insurgent armies, and local guerrillas all reassembled into new hierarchies of power, while indigenous and rural communities negotiated shifting alliances to defend access to land, labor, and authority. The creation of the republic thus emerged from the convergence of multiple dependent groups rather than their emancipation.

Today, echoes of these configurations remain visible. Bolivia's popular economies mirror older moral economies based on kinship, reciprocity, and circular mobility, coexisting with global logistics and capitalist competition. Dependency here is not static but constantly redefined – an enduring condition of negotiation, creativity, and resilience.

Across this long stretch of time, Bolivia stands as a living archive of interdependence: a place where studying strong asymmetrical dependencies means engaging with historical continuities that stretch from Inca granaries to colonial mines, from republican alliances to contemporary markets—histories lived, resisted, and reimagined over centuries.

**Collaborative Dialogues in La Paz**

The week in La Paz (August 3–9) was dedicated to deepening ties with three key institutions whose missions reflect a commitment to interdisciplinary, critical, and socially engaged scholarship: the *Centro de Investigaciones en Desarrollo Económico y Social* (CIDES), the *Instituto de Estudios Bolivianos* (IEB), both institutes of the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), and the *Instituto de Investigaciones Socio-Económicas* (IISEC) of the Universidad Católica Boliviana (UCB) San Pablo.

**CIDES–UMSA:  
Reimagining Development and Dependency**

The *Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias del Desarrollo* is one of Bolivia's most vibrant postgraduate centers, combining research and teaching with a strong sense of social responsibility. Its mission – to generate critical, plural, and intercultural reflections on development – resonates deeply with the BCDSS's goal of rethinking dependency beyond Eurocentric frameworks.

Meetings with Dr. Nico Tassi and Dr. Rossana Barragán opened new avenues for collaboration. Tassi's work on indigenous entrepreneurship and popular economies; entitled *Native World-System*; proposes an anthropology of capitalism that makes visible the agency of Aymara traders navigating global markets. (The

Aymara are an Andean indigenous people.) Barragán's new book *The Empire of Labor: A Social History of Silver Production in Potosí for the World (16th–18th Centuries)* offers a decolonial rereading of forced labor, showing indigenous agency within coercive systems.

Both scholars have been invited to participate in the *Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series* in 2026, contributing perspectives that bring together early modern global asymmetries with present-day inequalities. As a first joint initiative, BCDSS and CIDES are planning a conference titled "Other Capitalisms" in 2026, aimed at generating a collective publication that brings Bolivian and European researchers into a sustained dialogue.

**IEB–UMSA:  
Fifty Years of Interdisciplinary Knowledge**

Founded in 1972, the Instituto de Estudios Bolivianos has become a cornerstone of interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences. Its work on history, literature, linguistics, and culture reflects a long-standing commitment to Bolivia's intellectual autonomy and cultural diversity.



Visiting the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, La Paz, August 2025. Photo: Carla Jaimes Betancourt  
From left to right: Dr. Claudia Rivera (UMSA), Prof. Dr. Roberto Hofmeister-Pich (BCDSS - Uni Bonn / Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, PUCRS), Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann (BCDSS - Uni Bonn), Dr. Tito Estévez Martini (Vice Rector, UMSA), Prof. Dr. Carla Jaimes Betancourt (BCDSS - Uni Bonn), Dr. Diego Tamayo (International relations, UMSA)



In discussions with Dr. Ignacio Apaza and Dr. María Luisa Soux, we agreed to pursue two joint initiatives:

1. A Winter School at UMSA for students and young researchers interested in the study of strong asymmetrical dependencies, with a focus on Latin American perspectives; and
2. A Workshop, *Stand Bolivian: Perspectives on Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies*, to be held in La Paz, serving as a foundation for a collaborative publication.

These initiatives will embody the principle of working *with* rather than *on* the Global South – creating academic spaces for co-teaching, co-researching, and co-authoring.

**IISEC-UCB:**  
**Linking Economy, Society, and Justice**

The Instituto de Investigaciones Socio-Económicas at the Universidad Católica Boliviana celebrates five decades of rigorous and socially engaged research, playing a vital role in shaping Bolivia's debates on economy, inequality, and public policy.

Our meeting with Dr. Fernanda Wanderley and her team centered on transdisciplinary and community-based research, an approach that aligns with the BCDSS's methodological turn toward inclusive and participatory modes of knowledge production. Together, we outlined plans for a roundtable on transdisciplinary research in 2026, emphasizing the ethics of collaboration and co-production across institutions and communities.



Aerial view of the city of Cochabamba, September 2025. Photo by Parallelepiped09. Wikimedia public domain CC BY-SA 4.0.

**Expanding the Network:**  
**From La Paz to the Historical Heartlands**

The trip also included visits to Cochabamba and Sucre.

In Cochabamba the delegation had the opportunity to meet researchers from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS), founded in 1832. The UMSS is the third oldest university in Bolivia, after the Universidad San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca in Sucre (1624), and the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz (1830).

The delegation also met with colleagues from the Instituto de Investigaciones de Ciencias Sociales (INCISO) and its director Prof. Dr. Jhonny Limbert Ledezma Rivera, author of *Economía andina: estrategias no monetarias en las comunidades andinas quechuas de Raqaypampa (Bolivia)*, a work on non-monetary strategies in the Andean economy. The INCISO was created 2011. It focuses on sociological, anthropological and historical projects in the fields of Democracy, Politics, and Development; Culture, Public Space, and Conflict; Environment and Food Security; and Society and Health. Last, but not



Quadrangle of the historical University of San Francisco Xavier of Chuquisaca in Sucre (USFX), one of the oldest institutions of higher education in the Americas. Photo by Albaro2020, October 2023. Wikimedia public domain CC BY-SA 4.0.

least, we spoke to the Vice-Rector of the UMSS, Prof. Dr. Greby Uriel Rioja Montaña, and to Prof. Dr. Alber Quispe Escobar, a sociologist and historian who studies the sociopolitical organization of indigenous communities in Cochabamba since the eighteenth century.

In Sucre, the delegation had the chance to meet scholars from the Universidad Mayor de San Simón and the Universidad de San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca (USFX). Founded in 1624, USFX is one of the oldest universities in the Americas and a central institution in Bolivia's intellectual and political history. On August 12, a meeting was organized by Prof. Castro Torres, a psychologist and historian. It was attended by a large number of researchers and professors from Sucre and Potosí, who presented a significant number of their research projects, covering subjects such as the relationship between Spanish conquerors and indigenous populations and forms of servitude in the urban space of vice-royal Chuquisaca (Sucre); the Catholic Church and slave ownership in the Real Audiencia of Charcas; the legacies of indigenous knowledge in pharmacy, medicine, and nutrition; the use of archive resources for studying the history of asymmetrical dependencies in Chuquisaca and Potosí; and theological-philosophical debates on slavery in the preserved works (manuscripts) of professors of the USFX during the vice-royal period. These encounters were very productive and highlighted both the historical depth and the contem-

porary vitality of Bolivian scholarship, offering fertile ground for future collaboration. In particular, we want to support an initiative by Prof. Torres and his team. They are planning a postgraduate program in Bolivian Studies with three main areas of focus: slavery and other forms of asymmetrical dependencies, the history of the liberal arts in Latin America, and cultural heritage. This covers the fields of economic and social history,



Inspecting primary sources at the Archivo Nacional de Sucre, August 2025. Photo: Carla Jaimes Betancourt. From left to right: Dr. Sergio Manjón (Philosophy, USFX), Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann (BCDSS - Uni Bonn), Dr. Gonzalo Tinajeros (Lecturer in Philosophy, USFX), Prof. Dr. Roberto Hofmeister-Pich (BCDSS - Uni Bonn / PUCRS)



intellectual history, and anthropology (in the American understanding: cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics and biological anthropology). Together, we developed the idea of training a doctoral student in Bonn and/or Porto Alegre (at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, a partner institution of the BCDSS) in each of the three fields, who would then be offered a professorship at USFX. This would ensure the sustainability of the program.

On August 13, we visited the Archivo y Museo de la Catedral de Sucre as well as the Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales de Bolivia (ABNB). The ABNB, founded in 1836 and led by Dr. Maximo Pacheco, preserves more than 40,000 linear meters of archival collections and the country's most extensive documentary heritage, including colonial, republican, and ecclesiastical records.

Last, but not least, we also had a meeting with the university's rector, Prof. Dr. Walter Arizaga Cervantes. He stressed the importance of the meeting for the USFX and expressed his support of the continuation and improvement of the trilateral cooperation between USFX, PUCRS, and the University of Bonn.

**Rethinking Dependencies through Collaboration**

The Bolivia trip confirmed that strong asymmetrical dependencies cannot be fully understood through northern theories alone. They must be explored *with* those who experience, reinterpret, and transform them daily. Working with the Global South means creating conditions for epistemic reciprocity – recognizing diverse forms of knowledge, fostering mutual learning, and acknowledging interdependence as both a historical condition and a methodological principle.

This collaboration marks not only a new phase of exchange but also a quiet shift in perspective – toward understanding dependency not as something observed from afar, but as a shared history that continues to shape how we think and work together.

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**At the Universidad San Francisco Xavier, Sucre, August 2025.** Photo: Carla Jaimes Betancourt. From left to right: Prof. Dr. Roberto Hofmeister-Pich (BCDSS – Uni Bonn / PUCRS), Dr. Gonzalo Tinajeros Arce (Lecturer in Philosophy, USFX), Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann (BCDSS - Uni Bonn), Prof. Dr. Carla Jaimes Betancourt (BCDSS - Uni Bonn), Prof. Dr. Mónica Calani Choque (Dean of the Faculty of Humanities), Prof. Dr. Walter Arizaga Cervantes (Rector), Prof. Dr. Dr. Mario Castro Torres (Director of Psychology), Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Rojas Vidovic (Director of International Relations), Daniel Bernardo Oropeza Alba (President of the Historical Research Society of Potosí, Consultant of Administration of the Cultural Foundation of the “Banco Central de Bolivia”), and Sergio Manjón (Philosophy, USFX)



# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

## BCDSS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

Our Fellowship Programs invite excellent researchers from around the world, building an international network of experts in slavery and Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SADs).

All of our Programs offer funding and involvement in all of the BCDSS's research activities. They comprise a monthly stipend (graded according to status group), a travel allowance for the outward and return journeys, an additional lump sum for accommodation, and a workspace. Furthermore, fellows can apply for funding and administrative support to organize an event (workshop, conference, etc.) at the BCDSS.

The **Heinz Heinen Fellowships** unite outstanding international scholars whose research centers on various aspects of SAD and slavery across different historical periods and cultural contexts. It is open to scholars of all levels (from doctoral students to senior researchers).

Together with the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition (GLC), Yale University, the BCDSS offers an annual **Bonn Yale Fellowship**. The Fellowship is open to all postdoctoral and senior scholars with expertise in the history of racial slavery in the United States from the colonial period through to the American Civil War.

The annual **Euthenia Fellowship** is aimed at early-career researchers (including doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, as well as non-tenured postdocs and tenure-track assistant and associate professors) specializing in Ancient History or related subjects. Fellows benefit from access to the Library of Ancient Slavery (LAS), one of the world's largest collections on the subject of ancient slavery. Formerly the centerpiece of the Mainz Academy of Sciences and Literature project 'Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei' ('Research on Ancient Slavery'), it is now located in Bonn and available to students, fellows and faculty members of the BCDSS.

Our **Internal Fellowships** are open to our Principal Investigators (PIs) and offer them the opportunity to focus intensively on their BCDSS research project for one or two semesters.

All of our fellows have the opportunity to present their research at our Research Seminar Series, held on Thursdays from 12pm to 2pm.

To learn more of our Fellowship Programs, please check our website: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/fellowship-programs>



Participants of the BCDSS Fellows Seminar 2023. Photo: Jan Hörber, BCDSS, 2023.



BCDSS fellows Sarah Zimmerman, Sara Eriksson, and Natalie Joy (from left to right) with BCDSS PhD researcher David B. Smith after their Dies Academicus lecture in 2024. Photo: Buğra N. Duman, BCDSS, May 2024.



BCDSS members, fellows, and guest researchers at the BCDSS summer party 2023. Photo: David B. Smith, BCDSS, July 2023.

## BCDSS DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Starting with the first new cohort of Phase 2 in October 2026, we will continue with our Doctoral Program, which was established in 2019. The aim of this four-year program is to provide PhD researchers with thorough preparation and support during their doctoral dissertation work, as well as to help them prepare for participation in the international research community. We ensure these aims are met through our monitoring system, which offers regular supervision and feedback, and a clear timeline with defined milestones.

From 2026 onwards, our Doctoral Program will include mandatory coursework and interdisciplinary training between November and January of the first year. This coursework will introduce the latest state of theoretical and methodological approaches, concepts, and terminology in Dependency Studies and provide an overview of different forms of Strong Asymmetrical De-pendency (SAD). Furthermore, each new cohort will learn more about the BCDSS's research structures, including the five Research Areas and the Methods Lab. In addition to these foundation courses, seminars on good academic practice, research ethics, and academic writing will form part of the mandatory coursework, alongside presentation training and an introduction to science communication and knowledge transfer. By placing this coursework at the beginning of the Doctoral Program, we aim to ensure that all PhD researchers are equipped with excellent research skills and a sound knowledge of key elements in Dependency Studies right from the outset.

During years two and three, PhD researchers are encouraged to acquire additional skills through training provided by the BCDSS and the University of Bonn's Graduate Center, Career Service, and Human Resource Development.

As full members of the BCDSS research community, our PhD researchers are invited to participate in all research activities and to benefit from our funding opportunities and institutional support. They can take part in all forums for exchanging research, including Research Areas, Working Groups, and conferences. Furthermore, they are

encouraged to initiate and organize new forums and platforms for exchange, thereby expanding their networking opportunities.

PhD researchers at the BCDSS also benefit from our international network, which helps them to advance their careers both inside and outside academia. In addition, we will be launching further joint activities with partner institutions that are specifically designed for PhD researchers.

At present, a total of three cohorts are scheduled for October 2026, 2027 and 2028, respectively.

For more information on our Doctoral Program, please check our website: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/academic-and-master-programs/doctoral-program-at-the-bonn-center-for-dependency-and-slavery-studies>



PhD Forum 2023: Brunch with participants of the BCDSS PhD program. Photo: Laura Hartmann, BCDSS, May 2023.



Watch out for calls for our

### DOCTORAL PROGRAM

University of Bonn, Germany

Four-year program  
Starting: each October

**WHAT WE OFFER:**

- Regular supervision & feedback
- Interdisciplinary training & course work
- Networking opportunities
- Funding & institutional support
- Clear timeline & milestones
- Preparation for careers both inside and outside academia

**Information and advice:**  
Laura Hartmann (Lhartmann@dependency.uni-bonn.de)

[More about our Doctoral Program](#)



Doctoral Program - Schedule					
Year	Onboarding	Course Work	Monitoring	Supervision	Participation in BCDSS Events & Activities
Year 1			• Individual Meetings • Project Description		
Year 2	Working on Dissertation	Acquiring Additional Skills	Monitoring • Individual Meetings • Written Proof of Progress + Supervisor Statement • Research Colloquium		
Year 3			Monitoring • Individual Meetings • Research Colloquium • Supervisor Statement		
Year 4	Finalizing Dissertation	Submission, Oral Examination, Preparation for Publication	Monitoring • Individual Meetings • Mock Oral Examination (Stage 1)		



# BCDSS MASTER'S PROGRAMS

A one-year Master's program in "Slavery Studies" is offered to students who have completed a four-year BA program (240 ECTS points), a two-year Master's program in "Dependency and Slav-ery Studies" to those who hold a three-year bachelor degree (180 ECTS points).

These Master's degrees will provide students with new insights into area studies and historically and philologically oriented subjects. They will offer access to newly developed and empirically proven analytical tools for the investigation of complex dependency problems and resulting op-tions for actors.

The cluster professors and researchers will bring their teaching and research experience into the Master's programs by jointly focusing on interdisciplinary questions and topic areas. With the establishment of those two relevant

international Master's programs, the cluster will strive to promote the University of Bonn as an attractive destination for German and international students.

## When and how to apply for a Master's?

The next intake will be for October 2026. For any details, please visit our [Master's Programs website](#).



BCDSS study trip to the exhibition "Amt 45i" by artist Cameron Rowland in Frankfurt, Germany, organized by Prof. Dr. Pia Wiegink as part of the M.A. programs in Dependency and Slavery Studies. The exhibition addressed German entanglements and involvements in transatlantic slavery. Photo: Susanne C. Soellinger, summer 2023.



M.A. students from Bonn and Ewersbach with PhD researcher David B. Smith during an excursion to St. Antonius Coptic Monastery as part of the "Dependency and Religious Freedom" Seminar, held at the Theologische Hochschule Ewersbach in 2023. See also BCDSS blog post: Exploring the Intersections of Religious Freedom and Dependency. Photo: Matthew R. Robinson, Dec. 2023.

### DEPENDENCIES

global - multifaceted - persisting

#### Master's Program in Dependency and Slavery Studies

University of Bonn, Germany

Two-year program  
Starting: October 2026

Admission requirements:

3-year BA studies in the fields of  
Archaeologies, Asian or Islamic Art History, Comparative Religious Studies, Egyptology, Jewish Studies, German Studies, History, History of the Islamic World, History of the Americas, Latin American Studies, Korean Studies, Latin American Studies, Ocean Studies, South Asian Studies, Theology, Tibetan Studies, or similar disciplines

C1 proficiency in English

Subject-specific information and advice:  
Sarah Dugend (ma-program@dependency.uni-bonn.de)

Find out more

UNIVERSITÄT BONN

### SLAVERIES

global - multifaceted - persisting

#### Master's Program in Slavery Studies

University of Bonn, Germany

One-year program  
Starting: October 2026

Admission requirements:

4-year BA studies in the fields of  
Archaeologies, Asian or Islamic Art History, Comparative Religious Studies, Egyptology, Jewish Studies, German Studies, History, History of the Islamic World, History of the Americas, Latin American Studies, Korean Studies, Latin American Studies, Ocean Studies, South Asian Studies, Theology, Tibetan Studies, or similar disciplines

C1 proficiency in English

Subject-specific information and advice:  
Sarah Dugend (ma-program@dependency.uni-bonn.de)

Find out more

UNIVERSITÄT BONN

# NEWS

## NEW AT THE CLUSTER

### Fellows



**Dr. Michelle Liebst**  
10/2025 – 12/2025  
"African Interpreters in Coastal East Africa's Abolition Era, 1822–1926"

### PhD Researchers



**Elise Kendall**  
(DFG Emmy Noether Junior Research Group)  
"Local Labor Struggles in Global Value Chains with a Focus on Malawi"



**Luis Basquero**  
(DFG Emmy Noether Junior Research Group)  
"Local Labor Struggles in Global Value Chains with a Focus on Colombia"



**Jorma Apelt**  
(DFG Emmy Noether Junior Research Group)  
"Local Labor Struggles in Global Value Chains with a Focus on the Philippines"



**Viviann Wilmot**  
"Remembering Female Indentured and "Liberated" Africans in the Anglophone (Post-) Colo-nial Caribbean"

### Guests Researchers



**Prof. Dr. Madhavi Jha**  
Birla Institute of Technology and Science  
07/2025  
"The Ocean against the Empire: Costly yet Disposable Indian Construction Labour on the Uganda Railway"



**Dr. Kseniya Tserashkova**  
Vilnius University, Lithuania  
(The Economic Recovery and Re-silience Plan "New Generation Lithuania" Grant)  
09/2025  
"Silent Tragedy: Infanticide in Lithuania in 19th and Early 20th Centuries"



**Ezequiel M. T. Costa**  
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil  
(DAAD/CDEA Grant)  
09/2025 – 11/2025  
"Amefricanics as an Analytical Category: Preliminary Reflections on Eugenics in Latin America"



**Bernardo Bonifácio Ferreira**  
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil  
(DAAD/CDEA Grant)  
09/2025 – 11/2025  
"Impacts of Algorithmic Racism: Inequalities and Exclusions in the Age of Artificial Intelligence"



**Dr. Darlan Lorenzetti**  
(National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq/Brazil) Grant)  
08/2025 – 01/2026  
"The Reception of Augustine of Hippo's Theory of Slavery in Co-lonial Scholasticism in Latin America in the 16th and 17th Centuries"



**Júlia Sant' Anna Horn**  
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil  
(National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq/Brazil) Grant)  
11/2025 – 02/2026  
"Slavery in the 17th Century: Restitution Claims and the Medieval Background"



**Ari Schuller**  
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil  
10/2025  
"The Invisibility of Black People in Brazilian Higher Education"



**Nilza M. S. de Freitas**  
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil  
(DAAD Grant)  
11/2025  
"Precaution as a Fundamental Right in the Psychosocial Health of Workers"



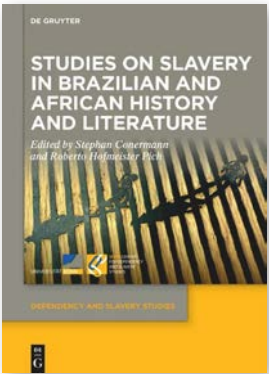
**Marina S. Pereira**  
Center for European and German Studies in Brazil (CDEA – Brazil), established by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul – (ZDE-UFRGS-PUCRS)

(DAAD Grant)  
10/2025  
"Legacies of Slavery: Challenges and Resistance in Obstetric Care for Afro-Descendant Women in Brazil"



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

## STUDIES ON SLAVERY IN BRAZILIAN AND AFRICAN HISTORY AND LITERATURE



Stephan Conermann and Roberto Hofmeister-Pich, eds., *Studies on Slavery in Brazilian and African History and Literature* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025) ISBN: 9783112206027

**Volume 21 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)**  
**Edited by Stephan Conermann and Roberto Hofmeister-Pich**  
**With articles by Roberto Hofmeister Pich, Stephan Conermann, Michael Zeuske, and Paulo Cruz Terra**

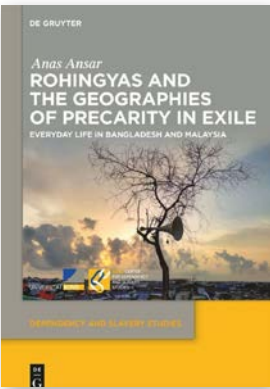
Historically, Latin American political entities were structured by different forms of slave-labor that until the 19th century depended on transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas. In this volume, scholars from Brazil, Germany, and Africa characterize different forms of serfdom in colonial times, picture slavery-based societies and explore aspects of dependency relations that emerged in the aftermath of abolition in Brazil and Africa.



Download via open access:

## ROHINGYAS AND THE GEOGRAPHIES OF PRECARIITY IN EXILE – EVERYDAY LIFE IN BANGLADESH AND MALAYSIA

**Volume 22 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)**  
**By Anas Ansar**



Anas Ansar, *Rohingyas and the Geographies of Precarity in Exile – Everyday Life in Bangladesh and Malaysia* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025) ISBN: 9783111661513

Focusing on Myanmar’s Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Malaysia, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the contribution of historical legacies of exclusion, along with contemporary practices of marginalisation and otherisation to the transcendence of the precarity landscape. In light of the 2017 displacement of over a million Rohingya from Myanmar’s Rakhine state to neighbouring Bangladesh, the book offers a nuanced and empirically driven analysis of precarity across a wide spectrum at discrete and overlapping scales, shaped by statelessness, vulnerability, uncertainty, onward migration and everyday practices of exclusion. Bringing together the diverse manifestation along the lines of identity, status, space, mobility, gender and labour, the study proposes a comprehensive understanding of precarity, conceptualised as the ‘interconnected geographies of precarity’. Elucidating the intricate web of structural constraints that predate (in Myanmar) and are continually reconstructed and actualised (in exile), the book examines the continuum of precarity in extended transnational spaces – a phenomenon that is complex, non-linear, transitional and multi-faceted.



Download via open access:

## CHILD LABOUR OPPONENTS AND THEIR CAMPAIGNS IN THE AMERICAS – A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE (1888–1938)

**Volume 23 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)**  
**By Nina Schneider**



Nina Schneider, *Child Labour Opponents and Their Campaigns in the Americas – A Global Perspective (1888–1938)* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025) ISBN: 9783112208229

This book delves into the past and examines the origins of activism against child labour. It addresses a hitherto under-examined question: how and why did child labour develop into a key concern between the 1880s and 1930s? Who were the protagonists who first raised the issue of child labour as a global concern? The study aims to provide the first account of the history of diverse and locally grounded – but nationally and frequently globally connected – child labour opponents in the Americas, their motivations and campaigns, at the turn of the 20th century. I argue that, for the period between 1888 and 1938, one can identify similar protagonists, a joint goal, a broadly similar timing, common platforms, comparable campaigning mechanisms and many types of connections or entanglements across regions. Nevertheless, in contrast to the global anti-slavery movement, child labour opponents formed a loosely institutionalised network which lacked an international organisation that focused specifically on child labour. A global history approach to child labour opponents helps reveal large-scale patterns across societies and highlight similarities and differences between cases.



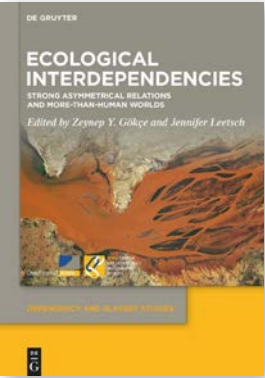
Download via open access:



# ECOLOGICAL INTERDEPENDENCIES – STRONG ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONS AND MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLDS

Volume 24 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)

Edited by Zeynep Y. Gökçe and Jennifer Leetsch. With articles by Zeynep Y. Gökçe, Jennifer Leetsch, Paul Graf, Kristina Großmann, Alexander Rothenberg, Julia A.B. Hegewald, Stefan Feuser, Dita Auzuña, Taynã Tagliati, Lewis Doney, David Brandon Smith, and Alissa Kautz



Zeynep Y. Gökçe and Jennifer Leetsch, eds., *Ecological Interdependencies – Strong Asymmetrical Relations and More-Than-Human Worlds* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783112217764

This volume interrogates the environmental humanities through the lens of asymmetrical dependencies: it is interested in investigating the relationship between the environment and asymmetrical power dynamics, an approach that sheds light on how historical and contemporary inequalities have shaped and still shape our social, political and cultural realities as they intersect with their respective ecosystems. In an attempt to bridge disciplines, the volume synthesizes diverse perspectives from the humanities and social sciences – anthropology, art history, cultural studies, archaeology, religious studies, political science, and literary studies –, attending to the tangled and often thorny relationships that form human and more-than-human existence. By incorporating ecological viewpoints and recognizing the agency of non-human actors, the book aims to amplify the often-overlooked voices of the marginalized, including those beyond the human realm. Understanding the intersections of power dynamics and human history requires acknowledging our deeply interconnected existence within a broader planetary context and this edited volume's contributions offer a lens through which to rethink enduring questions of difference and dependency. These considerations are framed not as abstract or theoretical exercises but as deeply grounded in material realities shaped by histories of asymmetry, inequality and exploitation, thus challenging us to critically reframe notions of ecological interdependencies beyond the universalizing narratives of the Anthropocene.

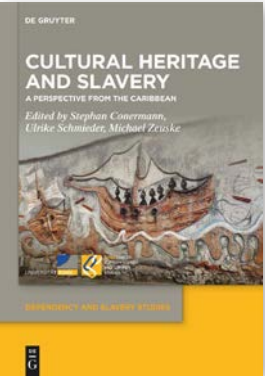


Download via open access:

# CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SLAVERY – A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE CARIBBEAN

Volume 25 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)

Edited by Stephan Conermann, Ulrike Schmieder and Michael Zeuske



Stephan Conermann, Ulrike Schmieder and Michael Zeuske, eds., *Cultural Heritage and Slavery – A Perspective from the Caribbean* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783112223055

In the context of the global cultural heritage boom, community-based and national identity projects in the Caribbean intersect with the interest in cultural tourism to the region, including sites commemorating enslavement. In former plantation slavery societies, in which descendants of enslavers and descendants of enslaved Africans live together, power and property relations are still marked by the slavery past. Calls for reparations made on European states and local descendants of enslavers for the enslavement of African people are a source of political and social conflicts. This volume, appearing at the beginning of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, refers to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of enslavement and its long-term consequences in the Caribbean and Circum-Caribbean, such as Anti-Black racism and racialized social inequality. It treats sites of commemoration and of denial, the representation of enslavement and of African cultures in museums, and dominant discourses on national history as well as in counter-narratives of the descendants of the enslaved and Maroons. Chapters on Jamaica, Martinique, French Guiana/Suriname, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Colombia reflect the diversity of collective memories and public history approaches towards material and immaterial vestiges of slavery. The book is intended for scholars, students, teachers and the wider public.

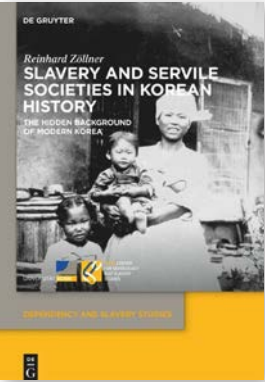


Download via open access (Forthcoming):

# SLAVERY AND SERVILE SOCIETIES IN KOREAN HISTORY – THE HIDDEN BACKGROUND OF MODERN KOREA

Volume 26 in the BCDSS series “Dependency and Slavery Studies” (DSS)

By Reinhard Zöllner



Reinhard Zöllner, *Slavery and Servile Societies in Korean History – The Hidden Background of Modern Korea* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783112210079

This study examines the long-overlooked institution of slavery in Korea, challenging its erasure from historical narratives and reassessing its role within the country's socio-political structure. It explores how slavery, deeply embedded in a lineage-based aristocracy, functioned not only as an economic driver but also as a hereditary status system that reinforced elite dominance and self-preservation. Using the concept of “servile society” (a society in which strong asymmetrical dependency is linked to hereditary social status in law and custom), the book examines how hereditary dependency shaped elite power, governance, and social hierarchies over centuries. The study combines political and legal history, social structures, and ideological frameworks to present the latest research on slavery in ancient Korea. It examines how slaves were constructed as a “special species” in the Korean Middle Ages, analyzes the role of slavery in the yangban-dominated society of the early modern period based on political-intellectual discourses and statistical data, and tracks the expansion of slavery discourses in Japanese and Western reception after c. 1800 based on texts and photographs; and examines the aftermath of slavery in the present.



Download via open access:

# TRACKING DEPENDENCY IN LATE-ANTIQUE ROMAN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE 'DOMUS DEL NINFEU' AT OSTIA (III, VI, 1–3)

Volume 27 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series

by Alessandra Batty



Alessandra Batty, *Tracking Dependency in Late-Antique Roman Domestic Architecture: The Example of the 'Domus del Ninfeo' at Ostia (III, VI, 1–3)* (Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783868935059

This short text focuses on the Domus del Ninfeo at Ostia as a case study of how built structures can be read as a powerful metaphor for the in/visibility of social classes within Roman society. The structural transformations undergone by the Domus del Ninfeo were more than mere architectural changes; rather, they can be seen as a testament to the evolving practices of class distinction and gaze craftsmanship. The spaces within the house reveal a microcosm of Roman society where social boundaries were both erected and eroded, offering a unique lens through which to investigate the relationship between master and slaves, and provide an example of the subtle yet powerful architectural cues that dictated the lives of its inhabitants.

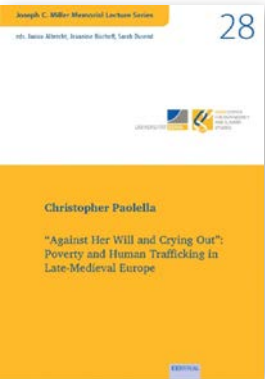


Download via open access:



“AGAINST HER WILL AND CRYING OUT”: POVERTY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN LATE-MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Volume 28 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series  
by Christopher Paoletta



Christopher Paoletta,  
*“Against Her Will and Crying Out”: Poverty and Human Trafficking in Late-Medieval Europe*  
(Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783868935066

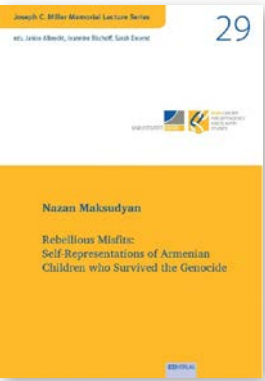
During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the status of prostitution evolved from being seen as a trade or a profession, however marginalized, into a source of malignant temptation; the prostitute ceased to be a sex worker who sought to alleviate her economic insecurity through commercial sex, and became a vain, selfish woman who desired wealth and opulence, and who led upstanding married men astray and thus threatened their souls and the moral and civic orders of a reformed society. Sex workers became the literal embodiment of the decadence and corruption that threatened to engulf the world as epitomized by the richly attired Whore of Babylon astride the seven-headed Beast. Yet, the study of late-medieval human trafficking makes clear that vanity, selfishness, and spiritual malignance had little to do with prostitution and the commercial sex industry. Instead, the commercial sex industry thrived upon poverty, limited employment opportunities for women, and attitudes of male entitlement, all of which led to vulnerability, and thus to victimization, as women and girls struggled to alleviate their economic duress.



Download via open access:

REBELLIOUS MISFITS: SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF ARMENIAN CHILDREN WHO SURVIVED THE GENOCIDE

Volume 29 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series  
by Nazan Maksudyan



Nazan Maksudyan,  
*Rebellious Misfits: Self-Representations of Armenian Children who Survived the Genocide*  
(Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783868935073

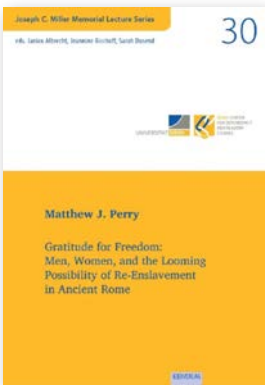
This study examines the self-representations of Armenian child survivors during the Armenian genocide, while engaging with new historiography on children and youth. Armenian children survived under paradoxical circumstances: they were targets (and hence victims) of direct violence, sexual exploitation, and the erasure of identity, but they were also agents who resisted through escape, deception, and defiance. Their agency was neither limitless nor transformative, but primarily a means of endurance, shaped by age, gender, and social bonds. Relying on various works in the self-narrative and testimonial genres as primary sources, including oral histories, memoirs, and diaries written at different points in time in the twentieth century, I analyse how child survivors depicted themselves as heroes—rebellious misfits who resisted authority, protected the weak, retaliated against oppressors, and embarked on perilous journeys. These narratives highlight survival, play, friendship, and solidarity amid trauma. I argue that, though often used as evidence of Armenian victimhood, survivor testimonies also reveal a parallel narrative: one of agency, resilience, and self-determination, thus challenging traditional portrayals of genocide survivors solely as passive victims.



Download via open access:

GRATITUDE FOR FREEDOM: MEN, WOMEN, AND THE LOOMING POSSIBILITY OF RE-ENSLAVEMENT IN ANCIENT ROME

Volume 30 in the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series  
by Matthew J. Perry



Matthew J. Perry,  
*Gratitude for Freedom: Men, Women, and the Looming Possibility of Re-Enslavement in Ancient Rome*  
(Berlin: EBVERLAG, 2025)  
ISBN: 9783868935097

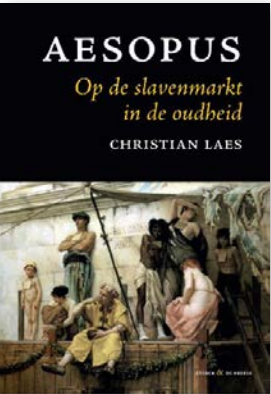
According to the Roman jurist Gaius, the foundational divide (summa divisio) in the law of persons was that all individuals were either free or enslaved. From a legal perspective, there was no greater distinction in status for human beings. Nonetheless, this clear-cut division was traversable, as individuals regularly moved between these conditions. This lecture explores the permeable boundary between freedom and enslavement through the lens of gratitude and obligation, particularly through the figure of the “ungrateful freed person.” There was a prevalent cultural assumption that manumitted individuals were perpetually indebted to their former enslavers, making the release from slavery something less than a full ascension to complete autonomy. Roman law granted patrons the ability to bring a formal charge of ingratitude against any of their freed persons who violated prescribed standards of respectful conduct, potentially resulting in a range of penalties, including re-enslavement. Ultimately, the intertwined notions of gratitude, debt, and liberty help to explain the enduring modes of both citizenship and slavery in the Roman world.



Download via open access:

AESOPUS.  
OP DE SLAVENMARKT IN DE OUDHEID

New book  
By Christian Laes



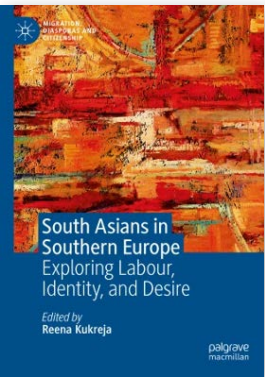
Christian Laes,  
*Aesopus. Op de slavenmarkt in de oudheid* [Aesop. At the slave market in antiquity]  
(Gorredijk: Sterck & De Vreese, 2025)  
ISBN: 9789464713541

In the first or second century, an anonymous author wrote *The Life of Aesop: a mischievous picaresque novel about the life of a Greek slave, anti-hero, and fabulist*. Although seen as one of the most remarkable and sparkling products of ancient Greek literature, it has remained largely unknown.

Using this novel as a starting point, Christian Laes takes readers into daily life of the time. Slaves speak out, complaining about their fate and creatively seeking ways to build a better existence. Body and desire, physicality and sex, are striking themes, as are food and culinary pleasures. Intellectuals and their conceit appear unabashedly on stage. And, of course, the relationship between men and women in an elite household cannot be overlooked.



NETWORKS OF DEPENDENCIES:  
UNDOCUMENTED PAKISTANI MIGRANTS IN THE 'PUBLICITA'  
FIRMS OF THEIR CO-ETHNICS IN ITALY



Ayesha Hussain,  
"Networks of Dependencies:  
Undocumented Pakistani  
Migrants in the 'Publicita' Firms  
of Their Co-Ethnics in Italy"  
in South Asians in Southern  
Europe: Exploring Labour,  
Identity, and Desire  
ed. Reena Kukreja (London:  
Palgrave Macmillan, 2025)  
ISSN: 26622610

Book chapter of edited volume  
By Ayesha Hussain

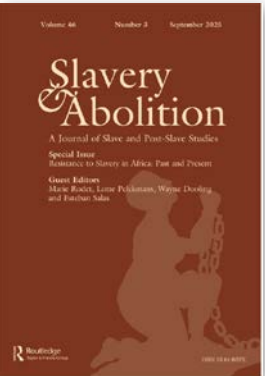
Migration specialists use the term "social capital" to refer to social networks. This chapter uses ethnographic data collected from Pakistani migrants living in Brescia to illustrate the impact of limited opportunities in formal employment, participation in the segmented informal sector among established migrants, and reliance on labour provided by undocumented migrants of the same ethnicity. It focuses on the implicit significance of social networks, particularly ethnic bonding networks, as a form of social capital for newly arrived migrants, thereby facilitating their incorporation into small-scale entrepreneurial endeavours. The chapter employs Floya Anthias' (Translocations 4, no. 1 [2008]: 5–20) conceptual framework of "translocational positionality" to explain the disparities and inequities observed in a variety of locations and the emergence of asymmetrical dependencies between various migrant groups of Pakistani descent.



Download via open access:

RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY IN AFRICA

New Special Issue of *Slavery & Abolition*  
Edited by Lotte Pelckmans, Marie Rodet, Wayne Dooling, and Esteban Salas  
With contributions by Lotte Pelckmans



Marie Rodet, Lotte Pelckmans,  
Wayne Dooling, and Esteban  
Salas, eds.,  
Resistance to Slavery in Africa  
Special Issue of *Slavery &  
Abolition* 3, no. 46 (2025)  
ISSN: 17439523

This introduction to the special issue "Resistance to Slavery in Africa: Past and Present" offers a pan-African perspective on the diverse forms of resistance to slavery across time and space. In addition to the pioneer scholarship on Atlantic transformations in African societies, it examines resistance in West, Central, West Central, East and Southern Africa, including responses to the trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean slave trades, local slavery systems and their post-abolition legacies. A central contribution is its integration of Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, Arabic and Ottoman scholarships, bridging historiographical divides. Furthermore, the issue foregrounds the role of resistance within customary, Islamic and colonial legal frameworks, showing how enslaved people asserted rights, claimed freedoms or mitigated exploitation. Gendered resistance is also a key focus, highlighting how women fled sexual violence, defended kinship ties and built new communities. Methodologically, the collection employs an interdisciplinary approach, from oral history, microhistory, social history to digital humanities, to recover subaltern voices and reinterpret archival silences. It challenges linear narratives of abolition by revealing resistance as a struggle not only for formal emancipation but also for reshaping social relations and asserting relative autonomy within oppressive systems. Finally, a distinctive feature is the inclusion of contemporary resistance, such as grassroots anti-slavery activism using digital platforms like WhatsApp mobilize marginalized communities. Overall, by linking historical and present-day struggles, the volume underscores that resistance to slavery is a continuous and evolving process. Together the contributions reframe African resistance as locally grounded, historically sustained and globally relevant.



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SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM IN GERMAN CULTURAL  
MEMORY: DISCOURSES, DEBATES, AND PRACTICES

New Special Issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*  
Edited and co-authored by Pia Wiegink and Heike Raphael-Hernandez



Pia Wiegink and Heike Raphael-Hernandez, eds.,  
Slavery and Colonialism in German Cultural  
Memory: Discourses, Debates, and Practices  
Special Issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*  
22, no. 4 (2025) ISSN: 17404649

The special issue Slavery and Colonialism in German Cultural Memory: Discourses, Debates, and Practices' published in vol. 22, issue 4 of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* brings together contributions that examine contemporary practices of remembering German colonialism and entanglements with slavery. The volume offers interdisciplinary perspectives and highlights current debates, scholarly approaches, and evolving practices in the field.



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DAS PAENITENTIALE DUSSELDORPIENSE.  
EDITION, ÜBERSETZUNG UND KOMMENTAR ZU DEM UNVOLLSTÄNDIGEN  
BUSSBUCH AUS DER DÜSSELDORFER HANDSCHRIFT MS. B 113

Journal article  
By Julia Winnebeck, Henriette von Harnier,  
Julia Beier and Johanna Schwarz



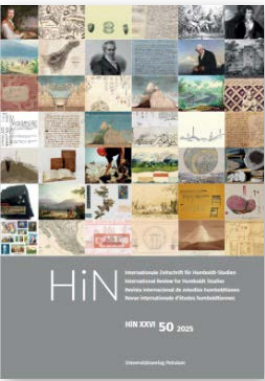
This work offers the first edition and translation of an incomplete penitential that can be found in a ninth century manuscript preserved in the University Library of Düsseldorf. In his *Studien zu den Quellen der frühmittelalterlichen Bußbücher*, Ludger Körntgen was able to prove the relationship between this penitential and two other early medieval handbooks of penance, the so-called Paenitentiale Pseudo-Romanum and the Paenitentiale in duobus libris. In its surviving form, the *Paenitentiale Dusseldorpiensa* largely consists of canons, which form the core of many early medieval Frankish penitentials. Its translation and critical commentary should therefore be a welcome resource for anyone interested in the history of penance and the social history of early medieval Francia.

Julia Winnebeck, Julia Beier, Johanna Schwarz and Henriette von Harnier,  
"Das Paenitentiale Dusseldorpiense. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar zu dem unvollständigen Bußbuch aus der Düsseldorfer Handschrift MS. B 11 [The Paenitentiale Dusseldorpiense: Edition, Translation, and Commentary of the Incomplete Penitential in the Düsseldorf Manuscript Ms. B 113]" *Historisches Jahrbuch* 145 (2025)  
ISSN: 9783451074653



# EL 'AFRO' DE DON FERNANDO ORTIZ Y LOS 'AFRICANOS' DE HUMBOLDT.

'AFRO', 'ÁFRICA', AFRO-LATINIDAD EN LA HISTORIA, MEMORIA Y HERENCIA CULTURAL DE LA AMÉRICA IBÉRICA Y EL CARIBE



Journal article  
By Michael Zeuske

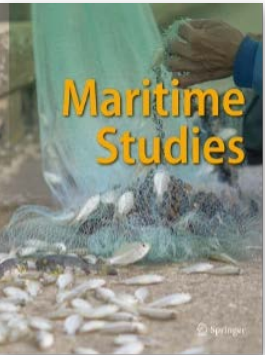
This article examines the naming of large population groups in the Americas, such as former slaves and their descendants. The group that today shapes discourse on slavery and its consequences is often called "Afros." Not only in English-speaking countries, but also in Iberian regions (where most people were brought from Africa). The culture of these territories is referred to as "Afro-Latinidad." This historicization examines the naming of these groups during the period of slavery (USA until 1865, Cuba until 1886, Brazil until 1888) and the invention of the term "Afro" by Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969). Ortiz's conceptualization lends itself to comparison with Humboldt's concepts (and its contemporary translations). At the same time, the article traces the self-designations of those who are referred to as Afro-descendants, primarily by scholars of culture.

Michael Zeuske, "El 'afro' de don Fernando Ortiz y los 'africanos' de Humboldt. 'Afro', 'África', Afro-Latinidad en la historia, memoria y herencia cultural de la América ibérica y el Caribe [The 'Afro' of Don Fernando Ortiz and the 'Africans' of Humboldt. 'Afro,' 'Africa,' Afro-Latinity in the history, memory, and cultural heritage of Iberian America and the Caribbean]" *HiN – Alexander von Humboldt im Netz* 26, no. 50 (2025): 227–247. ISSN: 25683543



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# AFTERLIVES OF RECLAMATION: COASTAL PRIVATIZATION, DISTANCED DISPOSSESSION, AND MORE-THAN-HUMAN CALCIFICATIONS IN JAKARTA BAY



Journal article  
By Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa Muhammed Soufi Cahya Gemilang, As-Syahidah Al-Haq, Muthmainnah Rama and Annisa Ananda Sari

Coastal reclamation in North Jakarta unsettles colonial, terracentric, and anthropocentric understandings of private property. This paper foregrounds two intersecting yet contrasting landmaking practices: elite, ethno-racialized, capital-intensive geoengineering for gated luxury developments, and small-scale *kampung* shoreline extensions shaped by everyday material improvisations with rubble and calcified mussel shells (*Perna viridis*)—among other aims, to stake claims to tenurial security. Introducing "distanced dispossession" as an analytical concept, the discussion moves beyond dualistic framings of urban property relations as either state-controlled or privately owned. Instead, it highlights historically sedimented inequalities, ontological erasures, and the material agencies shaping Jakarta's terra-aqueous urbanization. By centering more-than-human infrastructures and submerged histories, the paper complicates dominant narratives of land, belonging, and exclusion in a rapidly subsiding megacity.

Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa, Muhammed Soufi Cahya Gemilang, As-Syahidah Al-Haq, Muthmainnah Rama and Annisa Ananda Sari, "Afterlives of Reclamation: Coastal Privatization, Distanced Dispossession, and More-Than-Human Calcifications in Jakarta Bay" *Maritime Studies* 24, no. 56 (2025) ISSN: 22129790



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# WHAT MAKES A MARKET IN PREINDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES? A COMPARATIVE, SPECTRUM-BASED ANALYSIS OF BYZANTIUM AND THE PREHISPANIC ANDES

Journal article  
By Christian Mader and Katerina Ragkou

This article reconsiders the nature of marketplace exchange in premodern economies by comparing two distinct cases: the monetized system of the Byzantine Empire and the exchange networks of the prehispanic central Andes. We compare these two contrasting cases to explore the applicability of a spectrum-based approach to markets. Drawing on theories from institutional economics, economic anthropology, and political economy, the paper challenges the traditional market/non-market dichotomy that has long dominated the field. By adopting a comparative and interdisciplinary methodology, we argue for a more flexible and integrated framework that recognizes the diversity and embeddedness of exchange systems across cultures. Using archaeological and historical evidence, we examine how coin-based markets in Byzantium coexisted with legal institutions and state infrastructure, while Andean exchange, though largely lacking formal currency or marketplaces, often relied on socially embedded networks. Our study demonstrates that market-like behavior does not require monetization or formal institutions and that both regions offer valuable insights into the resilience and variability of preindustrial markets and economic systems. This analysis contributes to broader debates in economic archaeology and history by reframing what constitutes a "market" and advocating for a spectrum-based understanding of exchange mechanisms across time and space.

Christian Mader and Katerina Ragkou, "What Makes a Market in Preindustrial Societies? A Comparative, Spectrum-Based Analysis of Byzantium and the Prehispanic Andes" *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 7 (2025) ISSN: 26732726



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# POINTS, PATTERNS, AND PREDICTIONS IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTLEMENT DATA: SITE-ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIPS OF PARACAS AND NASCA COMMUNITIES IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES

Journal article  
By Christian Mader, Giacomo Bilotti, Markus Reindel and Johny Isla



This paper provides a framework for studying settlement patterns during pre-Inka times in the western Andes, using Point Pattern Analysis (PPA). The technique has found limited application in the Andean region, partly due to data availability and historical research trajectories. This study aims to fill this gap and employs PPA to analyze settlement patterns and site-environment relationships in the Palpa valleys of the western Andes during the Paracas (800–160 BCE) and Nasca (160 BCE–620 CE) periods. Our analysis examines the spatial structure of prehispanic settlements in relation to landscape features, identifying factors influencing site location choices and their evolution over time. Furthermore, we use the results from PPA to predict site intensity in nearby regions that were only marginally investigated archaeologically in order to identify the most relevant areas for future research activity. The performance of the model proposed here is tested at different levels in order to improve our knowledge and increase the fit of the final model. The results show changes over time in the occupation of the landscape, most of which were directed towards optimizing agricultural production. However, we have also detected a strong impact of mobility during certain periods and inter-site interaction.

Christian Mader, Giacomo Bilotti, Markus Reindel and Johny Isla, "Points, Patterns, and Predictions in Archaeological Settlement Data: Site-Environment Relationships of Paracas and Nasca Communities in the Peruvian Andes" *Journal of Archaeological Science* 183 (2025) ISSN: 03054403



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HAIR AS SENSORY SKIN: SENSITIVE BODIES, RITUAL SHAVING, AND THE MAINTENANCE OF BODILY BOUNDARIES IN HINDU SURINAME



Sinah Kloß,  
"Hair as Sensory Skin: Sensitive Bodies, Ritual Shaving, and the Maintenance of Bodily Boundaries in Hindu Suriname"  
Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 32, no.1 (2025)  
ISSN: 13590987

Journal article  
Sinah Kloß

Hair is an integral part of the skin's interface and has sensory capacity. It actively contributes to processes of bodily materialization and facilitates transactional exchange with other social actors and environments, particularly regarding energies and vibrations that can be perceived as subtle matter. Many Surinamese Hindus conceptualize practices such as cutting, shaving, and tying hair as ways to reduce the body's connectivity to other entities. In this context, hair serves as a means of regulating the body's boundaries, which are understood to be based on a dynamic, energetic state. From this perspective, hair can enhance the body's openness, particularly during processes like pregnancy and mediumship, which require heightened sensitivity and increased permeability. To balance and maintain these 'hot' and 'sensitive' bodies, practices that cool the body, including specific hair modifications, are employed. Based on ethnographic research conducted in Suriname and the Netherlands, this article argues that since bodies are always in a state of exchange, they require not only the maintenance of boundaries but also acts of separation. In this context, shaving the head during rites of passage is seen as a means of separation, particularly during significant transitions such as the gradual process of birth.



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JULIAN'S BATAVIAN CAMPAIGN, AN EMBEZZLEMENT TRIAL ON BRITAIN, AND BARBARIAN ACCESS TO THE ANNONA MILITARIS



James Harland,  
"Julian's Batavian Campaign, an Embezzlement Trial on Britain, and Barbarian Access to the Annona Militaris"  
Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion 80 (2025)  
ISSN: 21665508

Journal article  
By James Harland

In his *Epitaphios* for the emperor Julian, composed in Antioch at some point between 365 and 368, Libanius describes an embezzlement trial that was held most likely in 359, in which Julian ruled against the accused, defying the wishes of Constantius II's praetorian prefect, Florentius. Libanius puzzlingly suggests that the trial prompted Julian's campaign to rebuild fortresses in Batavia and to restore shipments of British grain blockaded by barbarian forces. Scholars have yet to explain the causal and chronological relationship between these events. This article suggests that Libanius's narrative is a propagandistic representation of several distinct stages of the taxation dispute Julian fought with Florentius. With the aid of recent advances in our archaeological understanding of agricultural practices in Britain and on the lower Rhine, the article argues that in response to this dispute, Julian's Batavian campaign was intended to disrupt longstanding access by barbarians on the lower Rhine to the later Empire's military supply mechanisms.



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EVENTS & PREVIEW

1<sup>ST</sup> HALF OF 2026



9-10 April

**HERMENEUTICS OF RESTITUTION, REPARATION, AND REDRESS**

**WORKSHOP**

organized by  
Matthias Weller

6 May

**GEWALT ÜBERWINDEN: BEWÄLTIGUNGS-STRATEGIEN UND UNTERSTÜTZUNG GEFLÜCHTETER FRAUEN**

**(UN)ABHÄNGIGE ANSICHTEN**

in cooperation with VHS Bonn

organized by Cécile Jeblawei  
and Benjamin Etzold

May or June (tba)

**VIOLENCE, POWER, TRAUMA**

**WORKSHOP**

organized by  
Claudia Jarzebowski

16 June

**INDENTURE, BLACKBIRDING AND WOMEN'S CULTURES OF RESISTANCE IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC**

**BOOK TALK, FOLLOWED BY OPENING OF A CORRESPONDING ART EXHIBITION AT P26**

organized by Pia Wiegink  
and Julia Binter

17-19 June

**PLANTATION LIVES, GENDER AND MATERIAL CULTURE: QUEEN EMMA'S NETWORKS AND THE (POST) COLONIAL ANGLO-AMERICAN PACIFIC**

**CONFERENCE**

organized by  
Pia Wiegink

18 June

**JUNETEENTH LECTURE BY TSITSI ELLA JAJI**

Duke University, USA

organized by Pia Wiegink  
in cooperation with  
North American Studies  
Program, Uni Bonn, and  
AmerikaHaus NRW e.V

24-26 June

**OTTOMAN SLAVRIES AND TYPOLOGIES OF UNFREEDOM**

**CONFERENCE**

organized by  
the Ottoman Slavery  
Working Group

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SAVE  
THE DATES  
MONDAYS  
16:15-17:45

January

(hybrid) \*

JANUARY 12, 2026

"DEGREES OF FREEDOM AND CHINESE CONTRACT LABORERS ('COOLIES') ON CUBAN SUGAR PLANTATIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY: EXTENSION OF SLAVERY OR TRANSITION TO FREE LABOR?"

EVELYN HU DE-HART  
(Brown University, USA)

JANUARY 26, 2026

"FROM STATELESS TO REFUGEEHOOD: A CASE OF ROHINGYA 'SUBHUMAN' LIFE"

NASIR UDDIN  
(Visiting Professor, Department of Anthropology, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany)

March

(hybrid) \*

MARCH 16, 2026

YALE DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND HISTORY

RESEARCH FIELD: THE HISTORY OF THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

NOEL LENSKI  
(Yale University, USA)

April

(hybrid) \*

APRIL 20, 2026

RESEARCH FIELD: AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES, CULTURAL LEGACIES, AND THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE AMERICAS AND EUROPE

TEMITOPE FAGUNWA  
(Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS) at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany)

APRIL 27, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

RESEARCH FIELD: HISTORY OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD AND GLOBAL HISTORY, WITH INTERESTS IN LEGAL HISTORY, THE HISTORY OF EMPIRES, AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

JAKE RICHARDS  
(The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK)

May

(hybrid) \*

MAY 04, 2026

ERMERITUS, DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

RESEARCH FIELD: ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

RACHEL ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ  
(Tel-Aviv University, Israel)

June

(hybrid) \*

JUNE 08, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

RESEARCH FIELD: UNWRITTEN LANGUAGES ORAL LITERATURE TRIBAL CULTURE DOCUMENTATION TRANSLATION & ANALYSIS OF ENDANGERED FOLK DRAMA OF WEST BENGAL

INDRANIL, ACHARYA  
(Department of English Literature, Language and Cultural Studies, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal, India)

JUNE 22, 2026

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MICHAEL E. SAWYER  
(University of Pittsburgh, USA)

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PICTURE CREDIT TITLE

From foreground to background (clockwise) Hand, iStockphoto/ Spencer\_Whalen. See cover page of DEPENDENT issue 1 (2020-1). Kneeling sculpture from the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, 5th century BCE. Olympia Archaeological Museum. iStockphoto/Susan Vineyard, 2018. Belt Buckle, Mongolia or southern Siberia, 2nd-1st century BCE Bronze (Xiongnu period). Depicting a traveling nomad family led by a man in belted jacket and trousers, pulling a nomadic cart. The Nasli M. Heeramanek Collection of Ancient Near Eastern and Central Asian Art, gift of The Ahmanson Foundation (M.76.97.582), Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Wikimedia public domain, uploaded December 23, 2021. Incense Burner from the Guatemalan Highlands, Maya Culture, Late Classic (c. 600-900 BCE). Guatemala, Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología. Photo: Nikolai Grube. Clock, Jean-Pol Grandmont, *Pendule Paul et Virginie dite "Au bon sauvage"* (photograph), 2019, French Consulate and Empire Style, early 19th century. File: 0\_Pendule\_Paul\_et\_Virginie\_dite\_au\_bon\_sauvage.JPG, Wikimedia Commons, CC 4.0. The clock is located at the Musée de la Compagnie des Indes à Port-Louis (Morbihan, France). Fragments of a page reproduced from "Siete Partidas", a Castilian law code from 1256/65, fourth part, title 5: "On the Marriage of Slaves", printed in Salamanca in 1555 by Andrea de Portonariis. Photo by Martin Schermaier. Fragments of a 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). Picture taken in Fuzhou in 1904. Public domain. Harvard-Yenching Library of the Harvard College Library, Harvard University. Votive tablet showing workers in a clay pit (reproduction from S. Scholl – D. Grassinger – E. Ambros (eds.), *Die Rückkehr der Götter, Ausstellungskatalog Berlin, Pergamonmuseum (Regensburg 2008)* 313 upper fig. See cover page of DEPENDENT issue 4 (2021-2). Background: Secker Street entrance to St Patrick's Catholic school, London Waterloo, 2012. Above the door is a sign reading "Girls and Infants". Presumably the door is no longer just for the use of girls and infants. Photo: Tom Morris, Wikimedia CC BY-SA 3.0. See cover page of DEPENDENT issue 9 (2024-1).

The DEPENDENT magazine is published bi-annually by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS). It is aimed at laypeople with an interest in dependency and slavery related topics, as well as students and scholars of related disciplines. Contributions are drawn from BCDSS professors, principal investigators, fellows, PhD and postdoctoral researchers, Masters students, as well as guest contributors from partner organizations. Together, they provide insights into current research projects while proposing "Strong Asymmetrical Dependency" as a new concept to explore all shades of human bondage between "free" and "unfree" across time and space.

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