

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

DEPENDENT

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REAL**

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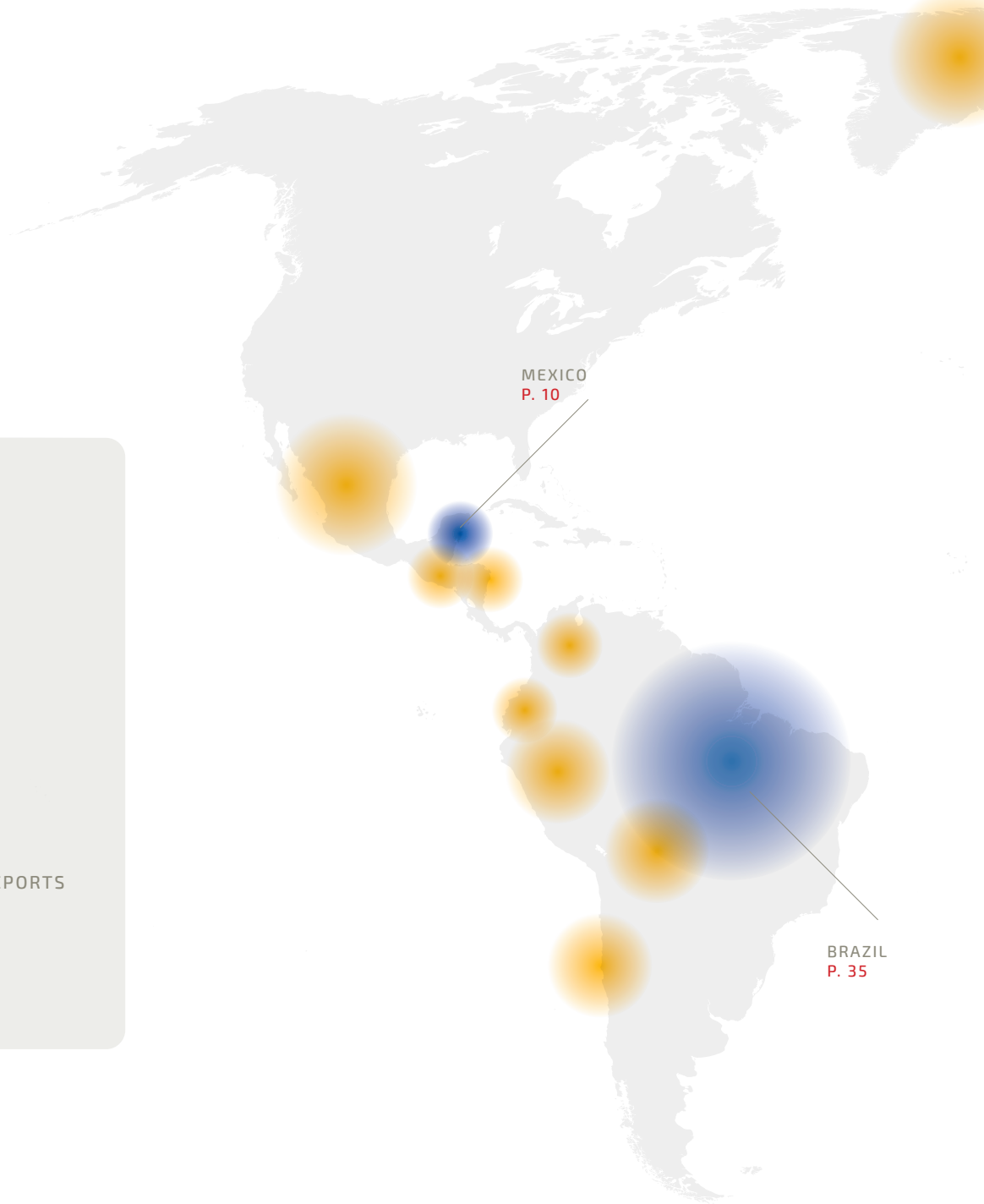
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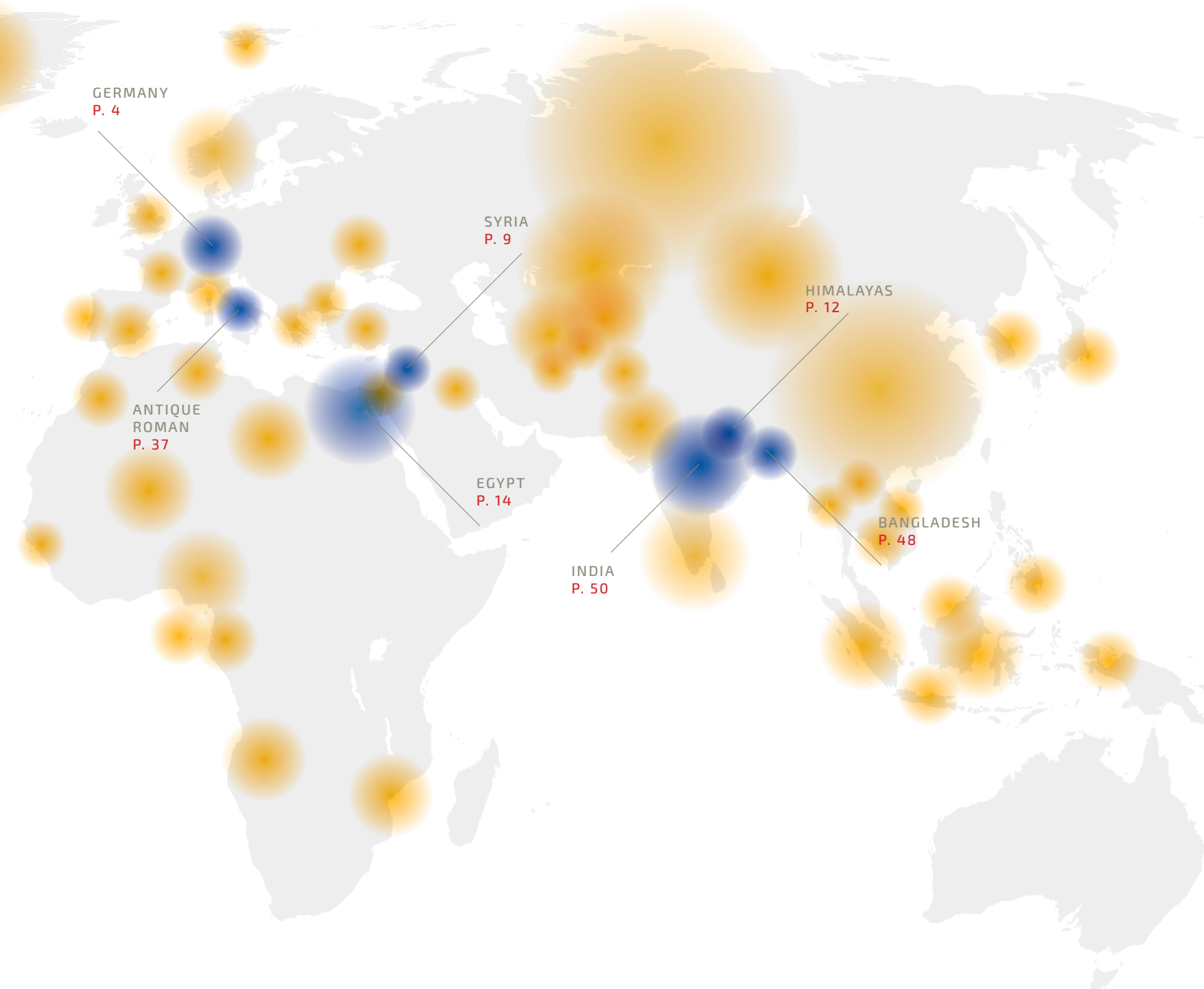
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Our research will contribute to the academic debate on numerous and varied expressions of **strong asymmetrical dependencies** from a trans-regional and deep-time perspective. We are interested in social processes in order to better understand why and how distinct forms of asymmetrical dependencies emerged in different places and periods. Our aim is to identify the factors behind their development over time. Therefore, our research looks at a diverse range of places across the world. In this magazine, we focus on the blue-colored regions; the ones marked in yellow are ongoing projects of other of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies' scholars.

A photograph showing two people in full-body pink pig costumes walking on a paved path. They are holding a large white banner that reads "EUROPAS GROSSE SAUEREI" and "www.buendnis-gegen-die-toennies-erweiterung.de". In the background, there is a white building with a brown tiled roof and a green bush. A road sign on the left indicates a 250m distance to a junction.

DOCUMENTING EXPLOITATION IN THE GERMAN MEAT INDUSTRY

**What Does Asymmetrical Dependency
Have to Do With Us?**

Adrian Hermann

One of the most striking examples of strong asymmetrical dependency in contemporary Germany became visible during the first months of the COVID-19 crisis. In June 2020, high numbers of coronavirus infections were reported by several meat-processing plants, owned by large companies such as *Wiesenhof* or *Tönnies* and employing migrant workers. A further outbreak occurred in early December. This stirred up great media interest in the working and living conditions of the migrant workers.

Mostly on temporary contracts, workers from Eastern European countries like Romania and Bulgaria are employed by subcontractors. These not only organize their transfer to Germany and the logistics of the long shifts they work; frequently the crowded apartments in which the workers live in poor hygienic conditions are also owned and let by the subcontractors. One of the central aspects of this public health scandal was the realization that right here in Germany workers were living in deplorable conditions that many media reports compared to "slavery". A long-time local activist who had been calling attention to the plight of the workers for years is Peter Kossen, a Roman-Catholic priest. In May 2020 he staged a protest outside one of the plants, calling for an end to these conditions of "modern slavery".



The rampant coronavirus infections at the plants put the topic back on the political agenda, with the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs quickly promising to outlaw temporary contracts (*Werkverträge*) for the main activities of workers in the meat-processing industry, and to increase overall measures for health and safety. After the first few weeks of political activity, the legal process became bogged down for



months in conflicts about political details until a new law was finally adopted that took effect in January 2021.

In addition to changes brought about by political regulations and the work of national trades unions, local activists like Father Kossen and other civic initiatives have been working to address the issue for years. In a sermon he preached in May 2018, Father Kossen talked about the "total exhaustion" of migrant workers who often work fifteen-hour-days, six days a week, for months on end. Even when they fall sick or suffer injuries after a work accident, they continue to go to work, scared to be sent back home if they call in sick. "They toil and suffer in silence like modern slaves", he says. There was intense mass-media coverage of the outbreak and the working and living conditions, which generated a significant level of public outrage about a situation that activists had been highlighting as urgent for years. But the outrage and the blame directed towards corporate leaders does not exhaust the possible perspectives a dependency studies approach can bring to this situation. We must instead focus on the broader social context of the asymmetrical dependencies we can observe. Many media reports portray the situation as a conflict between vulnerable victims and "evil" corporate management. But this squarely locates the blame away from society at large, and avoids asking hard questions of ourselves.



Father Peter Kossen with a sign „End Modern Slavery“, May 2020.

One of the most visible contributions to the public debate during summer 2020, and one that we could draw on for such a shift of perspective, is the film "Regeln am Band, bei hoher Geschwindigkeit," ("Rules of the Assembly Line, At High Speed", Germany 2020, 92 min.) by filmmaker Yulia Lokshina, who is also a research assistant at the *Forum Internationale Wissenschaft* at the University of Bonn. In this documentary, she explores not only the lives and living conditions of Eastern European migrant workers in and around the picturesque North Rhine-Westphalian town of Rheda-Wiedenbrück, but also their broader societal context.



Activist Bultschnieder (film still).

Lokshina's film, which won a number of awards at documentary film festivals this year and was widely discussed in the German media, differs from many other reports on the situation by attempting to avoid a voyeuristic gaze. It does this in two ways. One, by focusing on what lies beyond the meat plants: the places where the workers live, the German-language classes they attend, the local politicians attempting to address the situation, and in particular those middle-class activists such as Inge Bultschnieder, who for years has been trying to instigate change. The film also introduces a second element, a series of theatre rehearsals at a secondary school in a well-off neighborhood outside of Munich, where a dedicated teacher encourages his students to engage with Bertold Brecht's anti-capitalist play, "*Saint Joan of the Stockyards*".



In doing so, they risk becoming aware of how intolerable their own society really is, and how entangled their affluent, suburban lives are with the plight of the workers. They slowly begin to ask themselves why nobody is doing anything to really change conditions. Lokshina's film shows up these parallel realities in striking ways. By employing contrasting montages, she creates an experimental, artistic research arrangement that explores our embeddedness in the asymmetrical dependencies created by our economic system.

The film challenges us to think about the society in which this situation is allowed to continue. Who are we, the people who let this situation continue? Lokshina's gaze is focused not primarily on the workers or the corporations, but on ordinary, middle-class Germans: on the people who become activists and those who stand by doing nothing. Her film makes clear that such dependencies cannot be critiqued without a general critique of our own society, and the capitalist economy we live in.



Migrant workers living in temporary accommodations (film still).

The film's exploration of asymmetrical dependency culminates in a scene in which activist Inge Bultschnieder tells of how pressures and hopelessness drove one worker to abandon her newborn child after giving birth in a parking garage. The haunting description of the worker's actions, recounted by Bultschnieder as she walks along the streets through which the woman carried her baby to the place where she left it, is particularly striking. It is mediated through the reflections of the middle-class activist who tries to confront the harshness of the woman's experience and to understand how her situation led her to this point. Instead of showing the events in a voyeuristic manner, Lokshina asks us to listen and to relive them in our imaginations.

Regeln am Band is a testimony to the power of documentary film to explore relations of asymmetrical dependency and to contribute to our research perspectives. Lokshina's film is one of a number of other recent and historical films that have explored these topics. *A Woman Captured* ("Egy nő fogságban," Hungary 2017, 89 min.), for example, tells the story of Marish, a woman who for ten years worked in a Hungarian family in conditions the filmmaker, Bernadett Tuza-Ritter, describes as "modern slavery". It paints a haunting portrait of the scars that a life lived in dependency inscribed on a person's body and face. At the same time the investigation of historical transatlantic slavery through the medium of documentary film has become an important aspect of slavery studies over the last decade, as Francesca Declich and Marie Rodet

observed in their article, "African Slavery in Documentary Films" (2020).



All of this urges us to reflect on the ways in which the medium of documentary film is particularly suited to a public-history approach to dependency studies, and valuable as a research instrument for investigating contemporary asymmetrical dependencies. I hope that over the next couple of years the BCDSS can explore this, both by screening and discussing particularly relevant films among scholars and with the wider public, and by conducting research into and through the medium of documentary as a tool for dependency studies.

Further Reading

Bettina Wagner, Anke Hassel: Posting, Subcontracting and Low-wage Employment in the German Meat Industry. *Transfer* 22(2), 2016, 163–178.

Alexandra Voivozeanu: Precarious Posted Migration: The Case of Romanian Construction and Meat-Industry Workers in Germany. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 8(2), 2018, 85–99.

Gerhard Bosch, Frederic Hüttenhoff, Claudia Weinkopf: *Corona-Hotspot Fleischindustrie: Das Scheitern der Selbstverpflichtung*, IAQ-Report Juli 2020. <http://www.iaq.uni-due.de/iaq-report/>

Francesca Declich, Marie Rodet: African Slavery in Documentary Films: Why Now? *Journal of Global Slavery* 5(1), 2020, 1–21.



Prof. Dr. Adrian Hermann is Professor of Religion and Society at the University of Bonn and Director of the Department of Religion Studies at the *Forum Internationale Wissenschaft*. His research focuses on the history of religion in the globalized world, on documentary film studies, and the intersections of religion and digital media. In December 2019 he joined the Cluster of Excellence as a Principal Investigator. He is currently engaged in a project on representations of asymmetrical dependencies in historical and contemporary documentary films.



MATERIAL EXPERIENCE MAKES DEPENDENCIES REAL

A RESOURCE PERSPECTIVE

“Thoughts may be free, but action in the physical world is not, and limited resources may impose serious limits on human choice and engender cultural change.”

[Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, *It's A Material World: History, Artifacts, and Anthropology*, *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 2003. 32:207]

We have been living in webs of asymmetrical dependencies in the past as well as in the present: for example, through the way we use resources of every kind. This gives rise to questions of hierarchy: who has access to which resources, and why? The same is true for the production and consumption of material things. Often it is precisely material experience that makes dependencies real for people.

While objects such as shackles certainly give direct evidence for strong asymmetrical dependencies, the relations between people and their material world, and the ways in which they use resources, also provide an analytical framework for studying dependency. Just the things a person wears and eats, for instance, can indicate their social position. So, at second glance, asymmetrical dependencies are evident in all sorts of complex settings – such as the environment or the social and economic structure (the two are often indistinguishable in premodern societies) – but have been understudied by scholars.

“Just the things a person wears and eats can indicate their social position in a system of asymmetrical dependencies.”

It is precisely these dependencies which come under archaeological, art historical and anthropological scrutiny in our Research Area “Embodied Dependencies”. Within a framework of material, environmental, and socio-economic dependencies our researchers hope to fill some of the gaps in the long history of slavery and strong asymmetrical dependency that is part of the human condition. Because dependency manifests in so many ways the range of research projects spans not only regions, eras, and societies, as is typical of the BCDSS, but also, of course, disciplines!

FOOD INSECURITY AS A FORM OF ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCY IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC SYRIA

Bethany J. Walker

The United Nations define food security as the physical, social, and economic access of all people to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. According to the UN, nutrition should also meet people's food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life. Outside of the vagaries and extremes of climatic conditions, it is political and socio-economic factors that lead to food insecurity.

Much can be learned about this phenomenon in a historical perspective by studying the very unequal, mutual dependencies that have always existed between the state and those who produced food. The archaeological record, which we are investigating in more detail in this research project, is uniquely positioned to document the changing relations between peasants and the imperial state. They have led to differing levels of control over land and water. We also hope to assess what "fair access" meant in the past. The issues of health and healthy diet can also be explored.



Chibouks from Jerusalem and central Jordan.

Photo by Harbiye Erdogan

The research collection of the Islamic Archaeology Unit at the University of Bonn is comprised of artifacts from excavations in modern-day Jordan and Israel (both of which were part of the medieval Mamluk Sultanate, as was Syria) exported to Bonn. The focus of the collection is the material culture of the daily life of peasant communities in medieval Syria. These include the tools and vessels used in farming and food processing. Interpreted against the textual record, which is rich for the medieval Islamic period, and by



Hisban cookpot, Citadel town.

Photo by Harbiye Erdogan

making use of botanical analysis, we can trace the changing relations between state and peasants as regards agricultural labor, how land was used, why it was used that way, and how those decisions impacted the well-being of local producers and consumers. By focusing on the ongoing struggle over control over natural resources, cooking pots, tobacco pipes, sugar jars, and grinding stones "come to life" and speak to asymmetrical dependencies in food production and consumption.

“ This evaluation and analysis of everyday objects complements the work of historians, which is purely text-based. ”

The evaluation and analysis of everyday objects complements the work of historians, which is purely text-based. This is also very much the case for research into many aspects of Maya society.



Prof. Dr. Bethany J. Walker

is Professor of Islamic Archaeology and Director of the Research Unit in Islamic Archaeology. The agency of dependent small-scale, rural communities to

negotiate advantages, carve out niches of autonomy and make decisions on a local level that had the potential to impact imperial regimes is at the heart of Bethany Walker's research. The political focus is the Mamluk Sultanate, a Muslim state founded and maintained by a political elite of manumitted military slaves in Egypt and Syria in the thirteenth through early sixteenth centuries.



A Q'eqchi'-Maya wanders through modern milpas. During my preparatory fieldwork he walked with me to the archaeological site Arroyo de Piedra, passing modern milpas where corn and beans grow together. Unlike in the past, this form of cultivation is no longer sustainable, as forests are being cut down to a large extent for this purpose instead of being regenerated in the cycle of shifting cultivation.

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES AS BODIES OF DEPENDENCY IN CLASSIC MAYA SOCIETY

Paul Graf

Essential resources are commodities necessary for survival: such as food, water and materials for house construction. In the tropical environment of Classic Maya society (250–900 AD) on the Yucatan Peninsula, these resources were highly vulnerable. They were exposed to difficult storage conditions or could become very scarce in particularly dry periods. They could become altogether inaccessible in extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes, floods, and landslides. Control of these resources by a single social group could easily lead to loss of autonomy of other groups in the vicinity, and as such to asymmetrical dependency.



The settlement structure of Classic Maya communities was characterized by a spatial hierarchy. Settlements were divided into a monumental core with an urban character and a rural hinterland where most of the food resources were produced. However, the elite's residential areas were not limited to the center, but were dispersed to the periphery. The question is how they affected the access of commoners to their milpas (fields for growing corn and other crops), to forest resources, to water, etc. Another question is how the dependent dealt with these unequal power relations. Did they accept them? Did they rebel? Or were they completely unaware of these conditions?

This last question is related to the emic understanding (i.e. the view from inside the society, as opposed to the etic or outsider's view) of what is considered to be essential. Whether a particular resource is thought to be vital or not depends on the cultural ideas of a given society, which can differ greatly from our own, western way of thinking. What people consider to be vital does not depend only on the biological necessities (these tend to be the same for all

humans, everywhere). Ideologies and moral codes can lead to certain objects, practices and behaviors being perceived as essential. Mental well-being can be manipulated to create socially enshrined needs, and thus unconscious asymmetrical dependencies.

“Mental well-being can thus be socially manipulated to create unintended needs and thus unconscious asymmetrical dependencies.”

This is another instance that demonstrates how close scrutiny by a trained observer of the actual structural make-up of the residential areas of elites and dependents can provide important insights – something that written sources may simply not contain. Up next is a look at a higher order. What observations can we make there that go beyond written evidence?



Paul Graf

is a PhD candidate at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Research Associate in Research Area B “Embodied Dependencies”.

He is interested in environmental archaeology and pre-Columbian dependencies based on essential resources in societies located in tropical environments in the Americas, especially the southern Maya lowlands in Mesoamerica. His doctoral thesis considers certain essential resources as bodies of dependency which can influence settlement patterns, the social system and the political economy.

Plate 1: The Somnatha Temple in Prabhas Patan, India, built out of massive blocks of stone.



DEPENDENCY ON BUILDING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE IN THE HIMALAYAS

Julia A. B. Hegewald

Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture find their origins in the Gangetic plains in the north of India. In order to honor enlightened beings and gods, religious communities aimed to erect sacred structures out of the most expensive and special materials, in order to express their deep devotion. On the flat land of the plains, large blocks of stone could be transported over long distances on roads and rivers. Traditionally, the temples were assembled out of massive blocks and the statues and decorations were carved out of them *in situ*, similar to carving out of a natural rock surface (Plate 1).



Plate 2: Carved and painted wooden temple in Wamrong in eastern Bhutan.

The situation is very different in the extremely hilly terrain of the high Himalayas, where for centuries only narrow footpaths and small trails provided access to remote settlements. In these localities, people were – and often still are today – strongly dependent on using locally available resources, as the only means of transport were – indeed often still are – mules, horses, and human porters.

This has led to an architectural tradition of constructing in naturally occurring, regional materials. Dependent on the area, this can be wood – e.g. on the lower rain-showered hills of Bhutan (Plate 2) –, coarsely broken stone, and mud – used e.g. in Ladakh and Tibet (Plate 3) –, or locally available clay, from which fired bricks can be made, combined with limited amounts of wood – typical of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal (Plate 4). Unfortunately, the stone of the hills is often brittle and not suitable to be cut into large chunks, in the manner of the Indian tradition of the plains.

Specialist builders rarely visited these isolated areas, so local populations were also strongly dependent on the construction expertise of indigenous villagers. Most were farmers, who from spring to autumn worked the fields or guarded animals. During the winter months they were able to invest some time in building and repairing temples and other sacred structures, such as monasteries and the residences of priests.

“ *The dependency on the locally available building fabrics has led to a close connection between domestic and religious architecture throughout the Himalayan ranges.* ”

This dependency on the locally available building fabrics and construction expertise has led to an unusually close connection between domestic and religious architecture throughout the Himalayan ranges. This connection is not known from the low-lying areas of the South Asian subcontinent. The dependency in this case is material rather than interpersonal, but this art-historical comparison yields valuable insights of a sort that written sources probably could not, or only to a limited extent.

In Egyptology, another crucial research area of the BCDSS, scholars investigate access to resources by means of the colonization of peripheral resource-rich areas. The political and intercultural conflicts arising from this access to resources are the subject of research, as is the reflection of these conflicts in political iconography.



Plate 3: Samye Monastery in central Tibet, employing locally available coarsely dressed stone.



Plate 4: The Dattatreya Temple Bhaktapur, Nepal, constructed mainly out of red burnt bricks.



Prof. Dr. Julia A. B. Hegewald

is Professor of Oriental Art History. She focuses on artistic and architectural expressions of different forms of dependency

in Asian, particularly South Asian, art and architecture. She employs the theory of 're-use' to show how different people reacted in a variety of situations of extreme dependency, frequently in very creative ways, to integrate the old and the new, to bridge divides and eventually to contribute to cultural processes which are able to heal and mediate between at times wide and violent disparities of cultural expression. Her general research topic is called "Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia: Dependencies and Freedoms".

EGYPTIAN COLONIZATION OF RESOURCE-RICH SOUTH WESTERN SINAI IN THE FOURTH AND THIRD MILLENNIA BC

Ludwig D. Morenz

The image of a pharaoh who slays strangers or enemies expresses a claim to absolute dominance (see picture below).



Pharao smites a Canaanite, detail from picture printed on next page.

This image was employed for over 4,000 years, from predynastic times (3800 BC) to the Roman era (first centuries AD), making it probably the longest-lived visual formula in political iconography in global history. Recent years have seen a substantial expansion both of the source basis and the observation period. The historical background are the copper and turquoise expeditions in which the Egyptians colonized south-western Sinai from the predynastic period, i.e. the second half of the fourth millennium BC, onwards.

This image of the smiting king (the phrase is Aby Warburg's) does not remember a real event, but is conceptualized as a performative, enduring image. It can be analyzed as a strong expression of asymmetrical dependencies in three ways. Firstly, as the enactment of an absolute claim to dominance by the emerging pharaonic state during this period. Secondly in terms of the colonization of the resource-rich areas mentioned above, i.e. not only the south-western Sinai, but also the eastern and western deserts, which at that period were not part of the Egyptian state. And thirdly from the perspective of the recipients, i.e. those "to be conquered" – the colonized.

One of the methodological problems of interpreting these performative scenes of smiting is the cultural representation, which dichotomously contrasts the social practice. There are virtually no sources that tell us about the perspective of the local population from this period. So one question we need to ask is to what extent these highly ideologically charged representations of the slaying of enemies express an Egyptian colonization of peripheral, resource-rich areas. Another question concerns the local Canaanites: why did they accept this visual practice? Looking at "the colonized" also raises the following questions: was visual power a form of symbolic capital that could be converted cross-culturally and, in this case, led to the toleration of Egyptian superiority? Did "the colonized" have an interest in the imagery they encountered? Or was it so culturally alien that it simply did not speak to them at all? Did "the subjugated" read it in a completely different way?

“ Was visual power a form of symbolic capital that could be converted cross-culturally and, in this case, led to the toleration of Egyptian superiority? ”

The researchers at the BCDSS are active in a dizzying array of disciplines across different eras and places. This brief glimpse into case studies of Research Area B "Embodied Dependencies" from medieval Mamluk Syria, pre-colonial Mesoamerica, and predynastic

as well as dynastic Egypt, shows that asymmetrical dependencies cannot be fully examined without taking into account their material conditions. All researchers involved strongly favor a comparative view to analyze types of asymmetrical dependency, combining archaeological, art historical, anthropological, and text-based perspectives.



Monumental Egyptian rock image in Wadi Maghara (SW-Sinai), early third millennium BC.

“Asymmetrical dependencies cannot be fully examined without taking into account their material conditions.”

Lessons we have learnt from our case studies include (1) that human beings and societies depend on resources of various kinds, involving raw materials, food, building material, labor, knowledge, technology, finance, other investments such as time, and the human body itself; (2) that resources and the control over resources are a source of power, wealth accumulation, exclusion, and strong asymmetrical dependencies; (3) that relationships of dependency are multidimensional, encompassing people and things; (4) that the material foundations of asymmetrical dependencies can be studied, displaying their complex socio-political and economic dynamics; and (5) that things can act, referring to their social meaning and the possibility of material agency. And these are only the starting points for our collaborative reflections on the question of how strong asymmetrical dependency is embodied in different societies.

Framework text by Christian Mader



Prof. Dr. Ludwig D. Morenz

is Professor of Egyptology and Director of the Department of Egyptology as well as of the Egyptian Museum Bonn. His research focuses on different forms

of dependency in Pharaonic history and its expression in archaeological and textual material. He studies the relationship between the Egyptian economic expeditions organized by the Pharaonic state and the local Canaanites on various levels.



Dr. Christian Mader

is Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group “The Archaeology of Dependency (ArchDepth): Resources, Power and Status Differentiation”.

His research is driven by the question of how to identify forms of asymmetrical dependency in the archaeological record. Integral to this question is the concept of resource dependencies embodied in a wide range of material culture. Resource dependencies imply two significant sorts of strong structural dependency within a larger ecological and sociopolitical context: the first concerns the dependency of people on resources of every kind, which is a crucial basis for the second, which is dependencies between humans. His regional focus is on Andean South America.

INTERVIEW: “A WINDOW ON OUR RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES”

There is hardly any example of one, perfect word for a coerced person that does not come with caveats, is not subject to geographic changes or shifts, or would mean slightly different things to different actors depending, for example, on status or gender.

You are all researching in the field of dependency and slavery studies. But what new insights will or should your research provide on current research opinions in this field?

Lisa Hellman:

I hope my research will be able to nuance ideas of coerced mobility and migration, a key issue within dependency studies; and further integrate the case of premodern Central Asia, and European captives in non-European regimes of coercion. I would also like to argue for a meeting between slavery studies and intellectual history, where there are excellent studies on the development of ideas of slavery and freedom, but fewer studies on how slaves and other coerced actors actively shaped other parts of intellectual and technological developments across the globe.

Sinah Kloß:

In my research I focus on the history of touch, practices of (not) touching, and different forms of body modification from an anthropological and historical perspective. I particularly focus on the role of bodies, body politics, and embodied experiences of dependency in Caribbean Hindu communities. By examining what I refer to as “haptic regimes”, I theorize the multiple and interacting forms of oppression and empowerment that form the basis for net-

works and systems of asymmetrical dependencies, and that are embodied through tactile and other sensory practices. My research contributes to Dependency and Slavery Studies from the innovative angle of sensory history, challenging the ocularcentrism (i.e. the privileging of visual elements) of much contemporary research. A central role in my project are tattoos and tattooing practices, which – as embodied and gendered acts – visualize, materialize, and performatively (re-)create power relations and asymmetrical dependencies among social actors, who may be human or non-human, individual or communal, subject or object.

Christian Mader:

Research on slavery and dependency has so far tended to be text-based, with only a few exceptions. Our research group, “The Archaeology of Dependency (ArchDepth): Resources, Power, and Status Differentiation” – that is, Claire Conrad, Tamia Viteri, and myself – decided to take a different approach. We use archaeological data, mainly material finds and evidence such as ancient agricultural terraces and burial contexts, which we analyze to gain information about asymmetrical dependencies. We then contextualize these different strands of information in a larger analytical framework. Strong asymmetrical dependencies between individuals

are defined to an extreme degree by material conditions, and experienced by means of these material factors. This is very obvious with something like a labor camp or objects like shackles, but the basic idea of our ArchDepth Research Group is that less obvious examples can give us information about dependencies – such as agricultural terracing which I mentioned earlier, which enables us to draw conclusions about crops, working conditions and, in a larger context, social structures. That is precisely where our work and the new perspectives and insights of our research come in.

“A key problem is how we define “slavery”, and how we demarcate it from other forms of asymmetrical dependency.”

Jutta Wimmeler:

A key problem is how we define “slavery”, and how we demarcate it from other forms of asymmetrical dependency. In my research, I look primarily at how “slavery” is constructed in a particular corpus of texts: where is the term mentioned and where is it not; what is the story being told, so to speak, and so forth. I’m interested in the thoughts and acts that are unlocked or enabled

by means of this term. What I want to highlight is the fact that the word "slavery" does not unambiguously signify a particular thing. It always needs to be seen in the context of a discourse. Taken seriously, this finding will have a significant impact on historical research into "African slavery" – and beyond.

Julia Winnebeck:

I hope to contribute to a greater awareness of the fact that slavery and other forms of dependency continued to exist throughout late antiquity and the early middle ages. While we now know that slavery did not end shortly after the arrival of Christianity, there is still a widespread belief that there was a continuous and largely homogenous trend towards the ending of slavery in the Christian West. My research will show, however, that at least the late antique and early medieval Western Church, by and large, did not only accept existing dependencies but in fact incorporated them into its own system of penance, e.g. by integrating the concept of penal enslavement.

The fields in which you are conducting your research are very different. What do you think is the connecting element?

Lisa Hellman:

I think the workshops and conferences over the past year have shown that rather than being very different, the Cluster houses projects that are strikingly similar. Time and again we have been confronted with the complexity of past power relations, a complexity that only increases with the attempt to make it comparable. That complexity is also etymological: there is hardly any example of one, perfect word for a coerced person that does not come with caveats, is not subject to geographic changes or shifts, or would mean slightly different things to different actors depending, for example, on status or gender. It just follows nat-

urally that we would also be hard pressed to ever find a natural translation of any term – and I don't think we need one. So I think the connecting element of the Cluster – the very relationship of coercion and dependency – works very well.

“What interests all of us is how dependencies are created, maintained, and subverted. The relationship between the individual and society plays an important role in these processes.”

Sinah Kloß:

Asymmetrical power relations and dependencies have influenced and continue to influence motifs and practices of body modification such as tattooing. For example, tattoo designs are transmitted within a context of cultural exchange, which was and is subject to transcultural flows and processes of migration and globalization. As global power relations continue to be asymmetrical they necessarily impact socio-cultural and economic relations between social actors and communities, as well as the transmission of their cultural goods and practices. The diverse range of research groups and research projects in the Cluster allows us to look at these dynamics and histories not in isolation, but to understand them as entangled, and to compare concepts associated with them from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Christian Mader:

I see the concept or rather concepts of dependency as a connecting element and as part of a process of negotiation between the members of the BCDSS. In collaborative projects that combine a variety of disciplines and approaches it can be quite difficult at first to have a conversation about case studies or particular data or sources. Theoret-

ical concepts, research strategies or methodological approaches tend to be easier because there's more common ground there.

Jutta Wimmeler:

What interests all of us is how dependencies are created, maintained, and subverted. The relationship between the individual and society plays an important role in these processes.

“We rely on the contribution of each and every Cluster member to demonstrate that asymmetrical dependency is indeed a ubiquitous phenomenon.”

Julia Winnebeck:

I think what unites all of us is the interest in looking at various forms of dependency, and attempting to understand what links and what separates them. To do this, interdisciplinary cooperation is vital: we have to learn from one another about different types of sources and methods; we need each other's expertise in translating foreign texts and deciphering cultural codes. But what is vital above all else is the input of each and every Cluster member to demonstrate to the scholarly community that asymmetrical dependency really is a ubiquitous phenomenon.

To what extent are the control and the circulation of knowledge decisive factors for dependencies?

Lisa Hellman:

That is an interesting question. I think there are many ways in which knowledge has been used to create asymmetries: a classical one would be the chance of learning how to read and write, where pre-modern Japan is an example of how the division between scripts that were

coded male or female also gave rise to a gender separation of knowledge. However, my Research Group is not focused on this issue, but almost its opposite: that is, I study how people in a state of asymmetrical dependency nevertheless were active participants in the circulation of knowledge. My focus lies on slaves, prisoners and captives who circulated elements of knowledge such as mapping, translating, casting iron, or textile work. That way, coerced actors can be seen not just as a discursive topic for intellectual debates, but as actually partaking in the intertwined creation and circulation of new knowledge.

“Coerced actors can be seen not just as a discursive topic for intellectual debates, but as actually partaking in the intertwined creation and circulation of new knowledge.”

How is knowledge still being used today in order to create or maintain dependencies, and what ways were and are there to break out of these patterns?

Lisa Hellman:

Well, this is certainly nothing I am an expert in. As I said, I actually work on the opposite idea. However, perhaps the well-known notion that “knowledge is power” is also something we need to examine more closely. If we look at both the present and the past, there are plenty of examples in which conscious ignorance, or the willful silencing of facts, the so-called science of *agnotology*, can be just as powerful as the spread of knowledge itself. That might be something to consider in this age of Fake News.

In the past, breaking out of such patterns was often associated

with a shift of the ruling powers as well as with changing global power relations – both are of course part of the logic behind such willful silences or misrepresentations. The way I see it, if the power relations of the world shift, the knowledge world will shift with it, but I do not think we should too readily assume a causal relationship – or how rapidly we would be able to identify such a connection.

How did different cultures use tattoos to symbolize social affiliations and dependencies?



Sinah Kloß:

Dress and body modifications such as tattoos are among the means that create both similarities and differences among people and groups. They produce and reinstate boundaries between self and other, individual and society, and create group insiders and outsiders. Depending on context and modes of application, they may forge a sense of community and identity, or they may mark and construct a group and oppose it as “other”.

“Tattoos, their representations, practices, and narratives have always been of relevance in the social construction of otherness.”

Tattoos, their representations, practices, and narratives have always been of relevance in the social construction of otherness, asymmetrical dependencies, and notions such as being “uncultured” or “uncivilized”.

For instance, European colonialism had a strong influence on the tattooing practices of colonized people, seeking to eradicate those practices as part of a “civilizing mission”. European colonizers interpreted tattoos as visible markers that differentiated “savage” from “civilized” people, distinguishing the rulers from the ruled. Another example are punitive tattoos in European antiquity, which were used to mark people as slaves and to demonstrate the authority and control of dominant groups over enslaved people.

The modes of differentiation facilitated by tattoos have not always had a negative or stigmatizing function, however. In fact, in some cultural and historical contexts, the process of tattooing has been considered to be of greater relevance than the tattooed marks, constituting communal or individual rites of passage that created group identity. In yet other contexts, tattoo designs defined as “other” may be perceived as something that enabled social distinction, applying “exotic” tattoo images as cultural capital for status enhancement.



To what extent were – and perhaps still are – tattoos stigmatizing? And what changed over time to make tattoos so trendy and popular again?

Sinah Kloß:

Tattooing existed in various historical and cultural contexts, so we need to differentiate and to reflect on different socio-cultural approaches to tattoos, as well as the great variety of motivations to tattooing and becoming tattooed in the past and the pres-

ent. Tattoos and tattooing cannot be assumed to have a universal function and a linear history, even though they are often portrayed as such in the public discourse. In these contexts, they continue to be commonly linked to an alleged stigmatizing or subversive potential. But that is a one-sided way of looking at it that does not take into account the various meanings and the transcultural histories of tattooing.

Similarly, the discourse on the growing popularity and fashion of tattooing in twentieth-century Europe, the so-called "tattoo renaissance", has to be questioned when taking into account the continuous history of tattooing in Europe or, more broadly, the "West" – exemplified for instance by Christian pilgrimage tattoos or Celtic tattooing practices. These narratives have to be provincialized and reflected on as being influenced by a specific Euro-American perspective. They may silence the histories, knowledges, and experiences of non-European or subalternized groups and people.

Your field of research, Archaeology of Dependency, is totally new. Why is that?

Christian Mader:

For one thing because there simply are no specifically archaeological approaches to the study of strong asymmetrical dependencies. So far, archaeological material and data have been used primarily to illustrate dependencies about which we already knew from written sources.

“We work mainly on periods for which there simply are no direct written sources. So we have no choice but to focus on the archaeological data.”

But in our research group we work mainly on periods for which there simply are no direct written sources. So we have no choice but to focus on the archaeological data. To do this, we employ a new theoretical and analytical concept that we call resource dependency. In short, resource dependencies entail two significant forms of structural dependency within their particular sociopolitical and ecological setting: the first concerns human dependencies on resources of every kind and the accessibility of those resources, which is critical to the second, dependencies between people, reflected for example in cooperation and exploitation. These two forms of dependency profoundly affect each other, since the way humans interact will, in turn, also shape their dependency on resources. This rather broad approach, which can be applied to all sorts of very different case studies, breaks new ground for both archaeology and dependency research.

In what ways do you and your research group plan to establish this new research field, and by means of which archaeological approaches? Are there any success stories you could tell us about?

Christian Mader:

In primarily two ways: first, we will employ resource dependencies as our analytical framework; second, we are also developing a kind of methodological apparatus in the ArchDepth Research Group with which to identify resource dependencies in the archaeological record. The key to this research is a holistic

approach, which combines three principal lines of archaeological evidence: (1) landscapes, architecture, and households, (2) artifacts and ecofacts, and (3) funerary contexts.



Detail of the main mural at the Huaca Cao Viejo (Moche archaeological culture) on the north coast of Peru.

In our research group, we cover this spectrum of materialities and look at them from different angles and pre-Columbian time periods through our trans-Andean case studies: Tamia Viteri's work in the Upper Amazon of Ecuador, Claire Conrad's work in the Vilcabamba region in the Peruvian highlands, and my own work in the northern Nasca Drainage of southern Peru.

The research along the three interconnected lines of evidence integrates quite a variety of classical and modern archaeological documentation techniques, and archaeometric methods such as geochemical characterization of lithic artifacts, stable isotope analysis, and phytolith and pollen analysis. We obtained initial and very exciting results by looking afresh at data we had obtained in previous projects. This shows that our approach is extremely promising. If we take, for example, the Paracas archaeological culture in the first millennium BC in southern Peru, we can clearly see that asymmetrical dependencies that existed at that time cannot be analyzed in isolation from resource use. Our research group has only just come into being, and the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we have been unable to carry out any fieldwork in the Andes. So we have not yet been able to implement our methodology in the field or collect new data. We are hopeful that this will change



The main mural at the Huaca de la Luna (Moche archaeological culture) on the north coast of Peru.

soon, because in archaeology we are, as it were, dependent on field research to collect our data.

You said that slavery has been a – if not the – dominant concept in the historiography of sub-Saharan Africa, and probably still is for many people. Why is that?

Jutta Wimmeler:

You always have to look for the function a historical narrative has in a given society. When historians "discovered" Africa as a topic for historiography in the mid-twentieth century, the system of colonialism was about to collapse – most African states gained their independence in the 1960s. Focusing on their shared experience of the slave trade generated solidarity. At the same time a "guilt narrative" emerged in Europe and North America that paradoxically justified further intervention in Africa, only this time in the form of overseas aid. To this day Africa and Africans are being cast as passive victims: a role which fits perfectly with the conventional historical narrative.

“To this day Africa and Africans are being cast as passive victims: a role which fits perfectly with the conventional historical narrative.”

What aspects do we miss or overlook if we associate Africa primarily with slavery and the slave trade? And how does that affect our understanding of the African continent and its people?

Jutta Wimmeler:

Take schoolbooks, for example. These days, school textbooks tell us about the Mayas and the Incas, but Africans still don't appear until you get to the chapters about the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism in general. Most people have no idea that there were many great empires in African

history, extensive trade networks on the continent and trade routes across the Sahara Desert and the Indian Ocean, flourishing textile and metalworking industries. The same is true for the many forms of social organization, or the fact that before and even into the nineteenth century, African men and women were in very strong positions in local contacts with Europeans. This unawareness reinforces the "passivity narrative" and, in my opinion, leads to a lack of respect – after all, history is very important in how Western societies perceive both themselves and others.

Your research group is looking into dependency structures within the late antique and early medieval Church. What types of dependencies have you detected there?



Julia Winnebeck:

Our research group is particularly interested in asymmetrical dependencies that can be observed in the Church's system of penance and ecclesiastical judiciary. Access to courts, exemption from torture, and even the type of punishment for a crime or a sin depended on factors such as ethnicity, gender, wealth, and, last but not least, religion. There is plenty of evidence that the late antique and early medieval Church developed a legal system of its own, which offered sinning or criminal Christians an alternative road to redemption. On the one hand, this alternative legal system both perpetuated and transcended existing structures of dependency. On the other it created new structures of dependency within which bishops and priests acted as judges and mediators.

“The late antique and early medieval Church developed a legal system of its own: This alternative legal system both perpetuated and transcended existing structures of dependency and created new structures of dependency within which bishops and priests acted as judges and mediators.”

You are looking specifically at how the Church handled homicide in late antiquity. Can you give us an example of how structures of dependency came into play here?

Julia Winnebeck:

Homicide along with other severe crimes or sins was often punished with exile and/or forms of enslavement in the early medieval penitentials. Sometimes, the service for God, e.g. in a monastery, is presented as an alternative punishment to "human slavery", or as the lesser punishment in comparison with exile which raises interesting questions about the existence of forms of penal servitude under the supervision of the Church.

From a theological perspective, one would expect all homicides to be condemned as equally bad. However, the sources reveal that sentences for homicide varied greatly depending on who was killed by whom, and for what reasons. The punishments for the different types of homicide were chosen accordingly – both in the secular and the ecclesiastical judiciary, and in the system of penance. This is fascinating, because it reveals that in the view of the Western Church for pragmatic or other reasons 1) not all lives were considered equally valuable, and 2) some homicides were indeed considered legal – among them not only warfare and execution but also the legal killing of dependents, such as women, children, and slaves.



Dr. Lisa Hellman

is Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group "Coerced Circulation of Knowledge" and a *Pro Futura Scientia* XV fellow at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study. She works in the intersection between social, cultural, maritime and global history, with a special interest in gender. Her research spans the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, with a regional focus on early modern Central and East Asia. The core question driving her is how intercultural interaction changed the lives of the men and women involved. In her current research project, she follows eighteenth-century prisoners of war in Siberia and Central Asia.



Dr. Sinah Kloß

is a Social and Cultural Anthropologist and Leader of the Research Group "Marking Power: Embodied Dependencies, Haptic Regimes and Body Modification". Her research project discusses the sensory history of body modification and the interrelation of permanence, tactility, religion and servitude in Hindu Indian communities of colonial Suriname, Trinidad and Guyana. It focuses on the tattoos and tattooing practices of Indian indentured laborers in the Caribbean as well as contemporary Caribbean Hindu women.



Dr. Christian Mader

is Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group "The Archaeology of Dependency (ArchDepth): Resources, Power and Status Differentiation". His research is driven by the question of how to identify forms of asymmetrical dependency in the archeological record. Integral to this question is the concept of resource dependencies embodied in a wide range of material culture. Resource dependencies imply two significant sorts of strong structural dependency within a larger ecological and sociopolitical context: the first concerns the dependency of people on resources of every kind, which is a crucial basis for the second, which is dependencies between humans. His regional focus is on Andean South America.



Dr. Jutta Wimmeler

is Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group "The Concept of Slavery in African History" and is currently writing a book about the European imagination of African Slavery 1500–1900. She holds a PhD in history and an MA in Comparative Religion, both from the University of Graz, Austria. From 2011 to 2020, she was a Research Associate at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), where she also coordinated the DFG-funded project "The Globalized Periphery. Atlantic Commerce, Socioeconomic and Cultural Change in Central Europe (1680–1850)". She is interested in Africa's impact on Europe, both intellectually and economically.



Dr. Julia Winnebeck

is Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group "Structures of Dependency in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Western Church". She explores structures of asymmetrical dependencies within the late antique and early medieval Church and similar structures linking the Church of this period to its surrounding societies. Her current project, "Handling Homicide", focusses on the occurrence of such structures in the ecclesiastical judiciary and the system of penance. She pays special attention to what might be called "ethical grey-area cases", such as abortion, suicide, and self-defense.

NEWS

HOW LANGUAGE DEFINES DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIPS

BCDSS Annual Conference, October 1–2, 2020

The Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" at the University of Bonn concluded its first thematic year with a conference.

How do asymmetrical dependencies and slavery manifest in language, narratives and lexical fields? Scholars at the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom", located at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies at the University of Bonn, worked intensely on this question in their first thematic year, which culminated with a discussion of their research on October 1 and 2, 2020, at the Cluster's annual international conference. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all papers were delivered digitally.

"Asymmetrical Dependencies" is the new key research concept devised by the Cluster, which includes not only slavery but also other constellations such as debt bondage, convict labor and exploitative forms of wage labor. In their conference contributions, the researchers rethought and questioned key concepts, terminologies and categories that structure how we conceptualize and talk about asymmetrical dependencies and slavery. The research area "Semantics – Lexical Fields – Narratives" hopes to establish a new analysis of language with this approach.

The scholars' declared aim is the exploration of semantics, narrative patterns and discursive structures. This will include an evaluation of how historical actors spoke about asymmetrical dependencies across a variety of situations. By employing historical semantics, scholars can gain insights about the use of certain terminologies. At the same time, historical semantics encourages us to question the vocabulary we use today to analyze dependency structures. Defining slavery is challenging, because it has existed for several thousand years, spread worldwide and taken on different forms.

The conference was divided into seven thematic blocks covering a wide range of epochs and regions.

Organizers: Jeannine Bischoff, Stephan Conermann, Marion Gymnich

Detailed conference report on [page 32](#)



CONFERENCE ABOUT THE WORLD'S LARGEST SLAVE MARKET

**International Conference „Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil“
December 10–11, 2020**

Scholars from the University of Bonn discuss research trends about slavery in Brazil
with international colleagues.

Until a few years ago, there was a general trend to portray slavery in Brazil as the humane counterpart to plantation slavery in the U.S.-American south. This view needs to be vigorously contested: until the abolition of the institution in 1888, Brazil was the largest slave market in the world. That is why scholars from the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies based at the University of Bonn, which coordinates the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom", came together with leading Brazilian scholars to exchange their views about current trends in scholarship on slavery in Brazil at an international online conference on December 10 and 11, 2020.

Slavery Studies is one of the most consolidated fields in Brazilian historiography. It is estimated that of the approximately twelve million people taken from Africa and transported to the plantations of the New World under brutal conditions between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, one third were taken to the Portuguese colony of Brazil. From these facts arise fundamental research questions that were discussed at the international conference "Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil".

Leading scholars from Brazil presented their research with a focus on the debate about how the situation of enslaved people in Brazil was conceived legally. Contributions included Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado's (University of São Paulo) "Slavery, Motherhood and the Free Womb Law" and Carlos Alberto de Moura Ribeiro Zeron's (University of São Paulo) "Slavery and the Concept of Justice Shared in Portuguese America". Another focus was the abolition of slavery from a variety of viewpoints, such as, on the one hand, "Black Political Strategies at the Time of Abolition in Brazil (1878–1909)" by Wlamyra Albuquerque (Federal University of Bahia), and on the other, "Lynching, Abolitionism and Justice in Brazil (Nineteenth Century)" by Ricardo Pirola (University of Campinas, São Paulo). The aim was to stimulate interdisciplinary discussions with the researchers from Bonn and so hopefully to initiate further collaborations.

**Organizers: Stephan Conermann, Paulo Cruz Terra,
Mariana Armond Dias Paes, Roberto Hofmeister-Pich**
Detailed conference report on [page 35](#)

THE CLUSTER GOES ABROAD: INSTITUTE FOR HISTORY, LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

**Cluster members present their research to colleagues abroad
November 25, 2020**

The idea behind this series of events is that Cluster members present their research to colleagues abroad. We would, of course, have liked to be in Leiden at the Institute for History, but the pandemic meant the event had to take place online. All Cluster members were cordially invited to attend the presentations and learn more about the research conducted by the Research Groups "Punishment, Labor and Dependency" and "Dependency, Gender and Labor in the Household".

Detailed conference report on [page 40](#)

SOCIAL STATUS OR NORMATIVE DIFFERENCE? THE RANK OF SLAVES IN ANTIQUE ROMAN SOCIETY

International Conference, August 28-29, 2020

It is well known that Roman slaves did not form a homogenous group but belonged to different social ranks, depending on which kind of tasks they performed. Did private or public law reflect such differences? Did it help to institutionalize them? Did legal provisions or decisions even foster them? These are the main questions dealt in the papers that were presented by renowned experts in the field of Roman slave law.

Detailed conference report on [page 37](#)



MARIANA ARMOND DIAS PAES AWARDED THE OTTO HAHN MEDAL

June 22, 2020

Mariana Dias Paes, Researcher and Coordinator of the Research Group "Law and the Creation of Dependency in the Ibero-Atlantic" of Research Area C has been awarded the Max Planck Society's Otto Hahn Medal for her PhD dissertation.

Her research examined the social construction of legal relations between people and objects in Brazil between 1835 and 1889. To this end, she analyzed 74 legal proceedings in the Court of Appeals of Rio de Janeiro that discussed dominion and possession over slaves and land. Mariana assessed the contours that the legal category of possession acquired in nineteenth-century Brazil and analyzed the role of social recognition in the configuration of property situations. Her dissertation describes how new interpretations of possession theories delegitimized acts of land usage which certain groups – above all indigenous peoples and *agregados* – employed as possessory acts.

Mariana Dias Paes also turned to the debates on domain titles and the process of document production undertaken by parties in legal proceedings. She identifies the role of judicial demarcations in this production process and how courts often dis-considered titles issued to married women. Last but not least, her work features cases of illegal and irregular acquisitions of slaves and land. The nineteenth-century process of constructing property rights in Brazil, Mariana Dias Paes concludes, was built upon pre-existing structures of *ius commune*. Her book will be published soon.

The Otto Hahn Medal is awarded annually by the Max Planck Society to thirty distinguished young researchers in honor of their outstanding PhD dissertations.

NEW CLUSTER MEMBERS

December 4, 2020



Prof. Dr. Kristina Großmann

Professor of the Anthropology of Southeast Asia at the University of Bonn. Her research project *Dependency and Agency* will focus on asymmetrical dependencies, patronage networks and agency in the course of current contentious natural resource use such as mining and palm oil production in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia.



Prof. Dr. Sabine Feist

Professor of Christian Archaeology at the University of Bonn, will analyze the formative role of the Christian veneration of saints in late antique and early medieval societies. She will examine the value of relics, their distribution and importance, and who was able to afford them.



Prof. Dr. Birgit Münch

Professor of Art History at the University of Bonn, will investigate the visualization of illness in Dutch and French art in the early modern period. She intends to work on images of prostitutes from the colonies in Amsterdam.



Dr. Dennis Mario Beck

Senior Researcher for Classical Archaeology at the University of Bonn, will look at *Personal Dependence Criticism*. He wants to define the role of personal dependencies within an ancient economy in terms of the distribution of resources and the social landscape.

CONTEMPORARY ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: COVID-19, MIGRATION AND GLOBAL LABOR

Call for Papers for International E-symposium, March 25–26, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the world has dramatically altered global supply chains, labor markets, and society as a whole. COVID-19 and its aftermath created and reinforced economic, social and structural inequalities, disparities and therefore asymmetrical dependencies that impacted almost all workers, but particularly migrant workers.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold, this e-symposium aims to shed light on the dynamics between the twin aspects of global migration and labor processes. This also includes much-needed reflection on how the pandemic has increased racialized inequalities in many societies. This e-symposium is being organized by the Working Group Contemporary Asymmetrical Dependencies (CAD) and focuses on this nexus between the pandemic, migrant labor and vulnerabilities. It aims to highlight some of the major challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide a direction for future research and policy engagement.

Organizers: Working Group Contemporary Asymmetrical Dependencies (CAD)

**FURTHER NEWS
AND ANNOUNCEMENTS OF
BCDSS EVENTS CAN BE FOUND
ON OUR WEBSITE:**

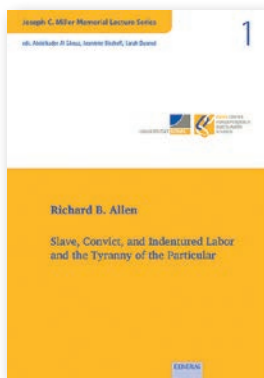
<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/press-releases>

<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/events>

NEW PUBLICATIONS

NEW BOOK SERIES: JOSEPH C. MILLER MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

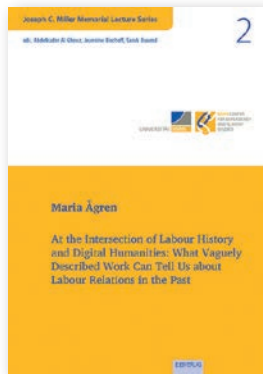
Slave, Convict, and Indentured Labor and the Tyranny of the Particular



Richard B. Allen:
Slave, Convict, and Indentured Labor and the Tyranny of the Particular.
Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lectures Series #1.
Berlin: eb Verlag 2020.

Abstract: In *Slave, Convict, and Indentured Labor and the Tyranny of the Particular*, distinguished historian Richard B. Allen draws on forty-five years of research on slavery and indentured labor in the Indian Ocean world and Asia to challenge scholars to look beyond the chronological, conceptual, and geographical confines of the specialized case studies that characterize research on slavery and related forms of migrant labor and situate their studies in more fully developed local, regional, pan-regional, and comparative contexts. As this, the inaugural, Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies demonstrates, the globality of European slave trading and abolitionism and the connections between the slave, convict, and indentured labor trades in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial world highlight the need to adopt more holistic approaches to studying the nature, dynamics, and impact of the human experience with slavery and cognate forms of forced labor in both the past and the present.

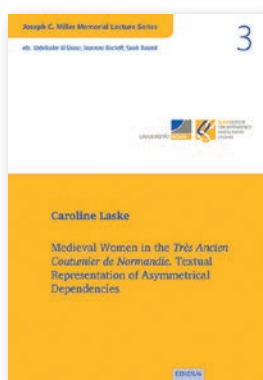
At the Intersection of Labour History and Digital Humanities: What Vaguely Described Work Can Tell Us about Labour Relations in the Past



Maria Ågren:
*At the Intersection of Labour
History and Digital Humanities:
What Vaguely Described Work
Can Tell Us about Labour
Relations in the Past.*
Joseph C. Miller Memorial
Lectures Series #2.
Berlin: eb Verlag 2020.

Abstract: We can describe work in many ways: as income, prestigious titles, and concrete tasks. We can also describe work vaguely, simply as "working", "serving", "helping" or "being". In the past as today, this was often true for work carried out by people in subordinate positions. However, the work of those in leading positions could also be talked about in unspecific and blank terms. While the vagueness of historical sources with respect to work can be annoying to the historian of labour, the good news is that sources can instead be more vocal about the social and economic relations that people were entangled in because of their work: with and for whom they worked and under what rules. This book uses evidence from early modern Sweden to discuss these patterns, showing that a common way of talking about one's work was to specify whom it benefitted: an employer, a family member, a relative. Maria Ågren suggests ways in which historians and computer linguists can join forces efficiently to uncover the many dependencies that work has created over time.

Medieval Women in the Très Ancien Coutumier de Normandie: Textual Representation of Asymmetrical Dependencies



Caroline Laske:
*Medieval Women in the Très
Ancien Coutumier de Nor-
mandie: Textual Representation
of Asymmetrical Dependencies.*
Joseph C. Miller Memorial
Lectures Series #3.
Berlin: eb Verlag 2020.

Abstract: This paper examines the legal capacity which secular women enjoyed or lacked in late medieval Normandy. The issue is particularly relevant to decoding asymmetrical dependencies, since a lack of legal capacity was the quintessential expression of women's inferior position and dependency in society and in the eyes of the law. The research discussed in this paper reveals the extent of that legal dependency in real, rhetorical and linguistic terms. It involves examining the textual and semantic representation of women in Norman customary law texts, by using diachronic linguistics and terminological methodologies. The study confirms the assumption that women in thirteenth-century Normandy had relatively low legal capacity and found themselves in asymmetrical dependencies on men, especially on their husbands. The narrative told in the *Coutumier* of men is not only more substantial but also considerably more varied and thus contextually richer. The approach has allowed us to go beyond content analysis and gain a better understanding of the actual social experience of women's legal capacity by compounding information and data from analysis of content, meanings, terminology and discourse and, hence, providing a contextualized understanding of the dependencies in which women existed in their daily lives.

NEW BOOK CO-EDITED BY BCDSS RESEARCHER IMOGEN HERRAD



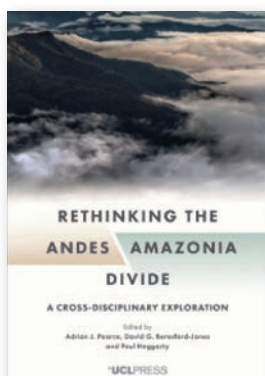
Transgression und Devianz in der antiken Welt [Transgression and Deviance in the Ancient World]

Abstract: Norms facilitate and regulate social coexistence. Particular actions are designated and sanctioned as transgressive as the result of a process of negotiation. Transgressions and deviance may both stabilize and undermine established norms. The papers in this collection analyze select case studies from Classical Greece to Imperial Rome with the aim to generate impulses for the debate on norm and deviance in ancient societies. They focus on transgressive acts in, respectively, the cult of Artemis, the tragedian Agathon, and the writings of Cicero, Lucan and Tacitus.

Lennart Gilhaus, Imogen Herrad, Michael Meurer and Anja Pfeiffer (eds.):
Transgression und Devianz in der antiken Welt. [Transgression and Deviance in the Ancient World.]
(Schriften zur Alten Geschichte)
Berlin: Metzler 2020.

NEW BOOK BY BCDSS FELLOW DAVID G. BERESFORD-JONES

Rethinking the Andes – Amazonia Divide: A Cross-disciplinary Exploration



Abstract: Nowhere on Earth is there an ecological transformation so swift and so extreme as between the snow-line of the high Andes and the tropical rainforest of Amazonia. The different disciplines that research the human past in South America have long tended to treat these two great subzones of the continent as self-contained enough to be taken independently of each other. Objections have repeatedly been raised, however, to warn against imagining too sharp a divide between the people and societies of the Andes and Amazonia, when there are also clear indications of significant connections and transitions between them.

Rethinking the Andes – Amazonia Divide: A Cross-disciplinary Exploration brings together archaeologists, linguists, geneticists, anthropologists, ethnohistorians and historians to explore both correlations and contrasts in how the various disciplines see the relationship between the Andes and Amazonia, from deepest prehistory up to the European colonial period. The volume emerges from an innovative programme of conferences and symposia conceived explicitly to foster awareness, discussion and co-operation across the divides between disciplines. Underway since 2008, this programme has already yielded major publications on the Andean past, including *Lenguas y Sociedades en el Antiguo Perú* (2010, PUCP), *History and Language in the Andes* (2011, Palgrave Macmillan) and *Archaeology and Language in the Andes* (2012, Oxford University Press).

Adrian J. Pearce, David
G. Beresford-Jones and
Paul Heggarty (eds.):
*Rethinking the Andes –
Amazonia Divide: A Cross-
disciplinary Exploration*
London: UCL Press 2020.



Katharina Gröne, Boris Braut, Sinah Kloss, Martin Schüller, Michael Bollig (eds.): *Fairer Handel – Chancen, Grenzen, Herausforderungen*. oekom Verlag: Berlin 2020.

NEW BOOK CO-EDITED BY BCDSS RESEARCH GROUP LEADER SINAH KLOSS

Fairer Handel – Chancen, Grenzen, Herausforderungen
[Fair Trade: Chances, Limits, Challenges]

Abstract: This volume presents the current state of research in the arts and social sciences across the German-speaking world on the topic of Fair Trade. Despite an increased need for ethical consumption, Fair Trade has been discussed primarily in terms of consumer research, but only rarely in the arts and social sciences. Nine papers by scholars from a wide spectrum of different disciplines and stances explore Fair Trade and its alternatives as a cultural phenomenon, analyze its value chains, and discuss its social, economic, and environmental impacts. In focussing particularly on the Global South, the volume breaks new research ground.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Anas Ansar: *The Unfolding of Belonging, Exclusion and Exile: A Reflection on the History of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia.* In: Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs.

Published online: September 17, 2020. DOI: [10.1080/13602004.2020.1819126](https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2020.1819126)

Christian De Vito, Juliane Schiel and Matthias van Rossum: *From Bondage to Precariousness? New Perspectives on Labor and Social History.* In: Journal of Social History 54 (2), 2020, 644–662. DOI: [10.1093/jsh/shz057](https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shz057).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDITED VOLUMES

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CURRENT PUBLICATIONS
OF THE BCDSS:

<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/publications>



We want our conference reports to showcase the wide thematic range covered by our Cluster of Excellence. Researchers from various disciplines approach the topic of strong asymmetrical dependency through a variety of questions and perspectives across different epochs. Throughout the year, the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies organizes conferences with international scholars to enable this multi-disciplinary approach, flanked by series of workshops, seminars, lectures and panel discussions. The core questions and findings of these events will be found in the following pages.

For the duration of the coronavirus pandemic most of our events are being held online. We regret this – but we are happy that this medium allows us to reach many more researchers around the world than we could have had otherwise. The resulting exchanges across continents and time zones are very stimulating and enriching.

CONFERENCES LECTURE AND OTHER EVENTS

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE?

Online
via Zoom



SERIES





ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE BCDSS

Marion Gymnich

UNIVERSITY OF BONN
OCTOBER 1-2, 2020

The annual conference of the BCDSS on October 1-2, 2020 marked the end of the first of the five "thematic years", which serve as milestones for the progress of research activities in the BCDSS. The conference was structured around the three key terms "semantics", "lexical fields" and "narratives", which inform especially the individual and collaborative projects pursued by the members of Research Area A, whose contributions to the overarching goal of writing a new history of asymmetrical dependencies were highlighted in this first thematic year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual conference took place as an online event. All participants surely missed the academic discussions (and small talk) which coffee breaks and conference dinners afford and for which Yotribe, which was used during breaks, provides at best a partial compensation. Nevertheless, the conference proved a success: the thirteen lectures brought us a step closer to achieving the research goals of the BCDSS, and the digital format did not prevent the participants from all over the world from joining in a very lively and fruitful discussion.

In his welcome address, the Rector of the University of Bonn, *Michael Hoch*, expressed his wholehearted support for the BCDSS. He also encouraged everyone to continue to make use of the opportunities offered by digital communication. After a short welcome and introduction by the organizers (*Jeannine Bischoff*, *Stephan Conermann* and *Marion Gymnich*), the conference started with the first of three sections: semantics.

SEMANTICS

This section was opened by *Chris de Wet* (University of South Africa, Pretoria) with a lecture on "The Discourse of Slavery and the Making of Early Christian Identity: A Case Study from Late Antique Syria". Focusing on Syrian Christianity, he discussed a region that has been largely ignored in slavery studies. His analysis of the complex ways in which Syrian Christian theology integrated notions of slavery showed that ascetic practice was conceived of as a form of enslavement. This idea gave rise to the motif of the captive monk – a figure that appears to be situated at the intersection of a fear of real captivity, the exploitation of labor, and theological discourses of the time.

Caroline Laske (Ghent University, Belgium), who has been a Visiting Fellow at the Heinz Heinen Kolleg for Advanced Studies at the BCDSS since the beginning of the first thematic year, illustrated what can be gained by applying corpus-linguistic tools and methods in the context of research on asymmetrical dependencies in

general and specifically in a contrastive analysis of men's and women's legal positions. In her case study of a customary law text from the thirteenth century, the *Très Ancien Coutumier de Normandie*, she argued that the language ought to be seen as a reflection of women's social experience in medieval societies. The findings of her corpus-linguistic analysis substantiate the idea that women were legally in a situation of asymmetrical dependency and allow generalizations about how women were seen in legal discourse.

In the next lecture, another Heinz Heinen Kolleg/BCDSS Visiting Fellow, *Serena Tolino* (University of Bern, Switzerland), presented findings from her ongoing research on terms used to refer to unfree people in Islamicate societies. Stressing that slavery in Islamicate societies needs to be thought of as a continuum of strong asymmetrical dependencies rather than in terms of binary oppositions, she argued that an analysis of relevant terminology promises to shed more light on different types of dependency – a claim she validated by drawing upon Arabic lexicographic sources, legal texts and chronicles (ninth to fifteenth centuries) from the Fatimid empire in order to juxtapose references to eunuchs in these three text types. While the lexical items used in chronicles provide valuable information on the social position and functions of eunuchs in elite households, legal texts prove to be primarily interested in specifying the type of castration (due to its possible legal implications).

LEXICAL FIELDS

In the first lecture in the section on lexical fields, *Pierangelo Buongiorno* (Universities of Salento, Italy, and Münster, Germany) discussed the etymology and development of various terms referring to states of dependency in the ancient Roman world, focussing in particular on the lexemes *mancipium*, *servus* and *famulus*. He showed, for instance, that the polysemy which can be observed in the usage of *famulus* defies assumptions of a clear-cut distinction between slavery and freedom. Semantic changes taking place over the course of time likewise demonstrate that more detailed studies of the semantics of asymmetrical dependency are called for, even for the Roman world. In his contrastive analysis of the etymology and semantics of terms used to refer to slaves/thralls in Early Scandinavia (to c. 1350), for example *ambátt/ambótt*, *thrall*, *deja*, *fostri/fostra*, *Stefan Brink* (University of Cambridge, UK, BCDSS Visiting Fellow) drew upon a range of different sources (including runic inscriptions). Brink showed that the terms typically can be assigned to the following basic fields: the member of a household, someone who runs errands, ethnic terms used to denote war captives, a boy or child. This semantic distribution largely correlates with the social and legal diversity of people's unfree states in

pre-modern Scandinavia. Diachronic semantic shifts can often be related to social changes regarding the status of being free or unfree.

The two presentations on the lexical fields in different pre-modern European terminologies of asymmetrical dependencies were completed by an analysis of Old Persian and Middle Iranian lexemes. *Hossein Sheikh* (independent researcher) examined the semantics of the Old Persian word *bandaka*, which may mean "servant" or "subject" and which occurs in inscriptions, contracts and letters. Moreover, he contrasted this lexeme with words used to denote unfree people in Middle Iranian languages. This lecture once more stressed that the study of lexical fields and of the semantics of dependency provides an excellent path towards overcoming dichotomies of free versus unfree people in pre-modern societies.

After lectures that focused on pre-modern societies, *Barbara Herceg Pakšić* (University of Osijek, Croatia) took the discussion of lexical fields related to asymmetrical dependencies into the present by looking at the terminology employed by national and international courts to talk about dependency. In her presentation, she referred to selected court cases of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and the High Court of Australia. Her paper, which rounded off the first day of the conference, demonstrated that an analysis of semantics and lexical fields is not just relevant to the pre-modern period, but remains a central task of research on contemporary asymmetrical dependency.

NARRATIVES

The panels on the second day of the conference focused on narratives of dependency from various regions and historical periods. In her lecture on stories about manumitted slaves from the ancient Greek world, *Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz* (Tel Aviv University, Israel) raised a number of questions that are highly relevant to all textual depictions of enslaved or formerly enslaved people: what are the social functions of these texts, and to what extent (if at all) do they represent social reality? Zelnick-Abramovitz showed that stories about (manumitted) slaves can be found across otherwise very different genres in the ancient Greek world, for instance in anecdotes inserted in historiographic texts, in philosophical writings, and in biographies. These texts, which were not written by former slaves, tend to imagine manumitted slaves as trickster figures who secure their freedom by means of their wit, which, according to Zelnick-Abramovitz, allows the hypothesis that these narratives articulate anxieties on the part of slave-owners rather than endorsing social mobility.

On the basis of "The Art of Being a Minister" (*"Chén shù"*), *Christian Schwermann* (University of Bochum, Germany/BCDSS) discussed the kind of asymmetrical dependency that informed the relationship between the ruler and his ministers in pre-modern China. "The Art of Being a Minister" is the second chapter of a Chinese mirror for princes written by Liú Xiàng in 79–8 BCE. Like the other chapters in this work, it consists of an introduction followed by short, anecdotal narratives that were meant to illustrate and support the position presented in the introductory part. In these anecdotal passages of the text, the asymmetrical dependency experienced by ministers becomes tangible, but readers may also glimpse attempts to achieve a certain amount of agency on the part of the dependent.

The strategy of "reading between the lines" or seeking to identify "hidden dependencies" was also adopted by *Elke Brüggén* (University of Bonn, BCDSS) and applied to a literary figure in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Middle High German epic poem *Willehalm: Rennewart*, a Muslim Arabian prince working as a servant in the kitchen of the court of a Christian king. Although this character has already attracted considerable interest among scholars, the implications of his status as someone who has been forcibly removed from the cultural and religious context he was born into have not been explored. Brüggén argued that a reading of Rennewart's interactions with others in the light of concepts of strong asymmetrical dependency makes for an innovative interpretation of this literary figure. In her outlook, Brüggén proposed shedding a new light on further Middle High German epics from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by shifting the interest to the representation of strong asymmetrical dependencies. The lecture by *Christiane Czygan* (University of Bonn) focused on non-fictional texts written by a historical figure from the Ottoman Empire: Hürrem, wife and erstwhile slave of Sultan Süleyman (sixteenth century). There are numerous (biased) representations of Hürrem in contemporary and later accounts. Yet the letters she wrote to Süleyman promise to provide access to her own voice and make it possible for scholars to analyze the (love) narrative of a dependent woman in terms of the rhetorical strategies she used to secure the position she had gained as the Sultan's wife. Czygan highlighted especially the following two strategies: expressing complete submission and strong affection.

Making use of an intersectional approach, *Ruth Ennis* (University of Leipzig, Germany) examined the discourses of what has often been called "white slavery" by European writers and politicians in the nineteenth century; that is, the trafficking of white women in the context of brothel prostitution. The references

to brothel prostitution as "white slavery" illustrate the widespread tendency to apply the terminology of transatlantic slavery to other types of asymmetrical dependency. Drawing upon various nineteenth-century sources, Ennis was able to trace the development of the discourse of "white slavery" and its utilization in political contexts.

The last paper of the conference, which was presented by *Ulrike Schmieder* (University of Hannover, Germany), provided various insights into the history of slavery, its abolition and the aftermath of slavery up to the present day on the island of Martinique. One of her main sources was the abolitionist text *Histoire de l'esclavage pendant les deux dernières années* (1847) by Victor Schœlcher, in which the author's depiction of cruelty against enslaved people served as a strong argument against slavery. Schmieder argued that Schœlcher became a prominent figure in the official French historical narrative, which, on the whole, tended to recall abolition while seeking to forget slavery – a tendency that has been criticized on a large scale in recent decades, especially in the ongoing debates on retributive justice.

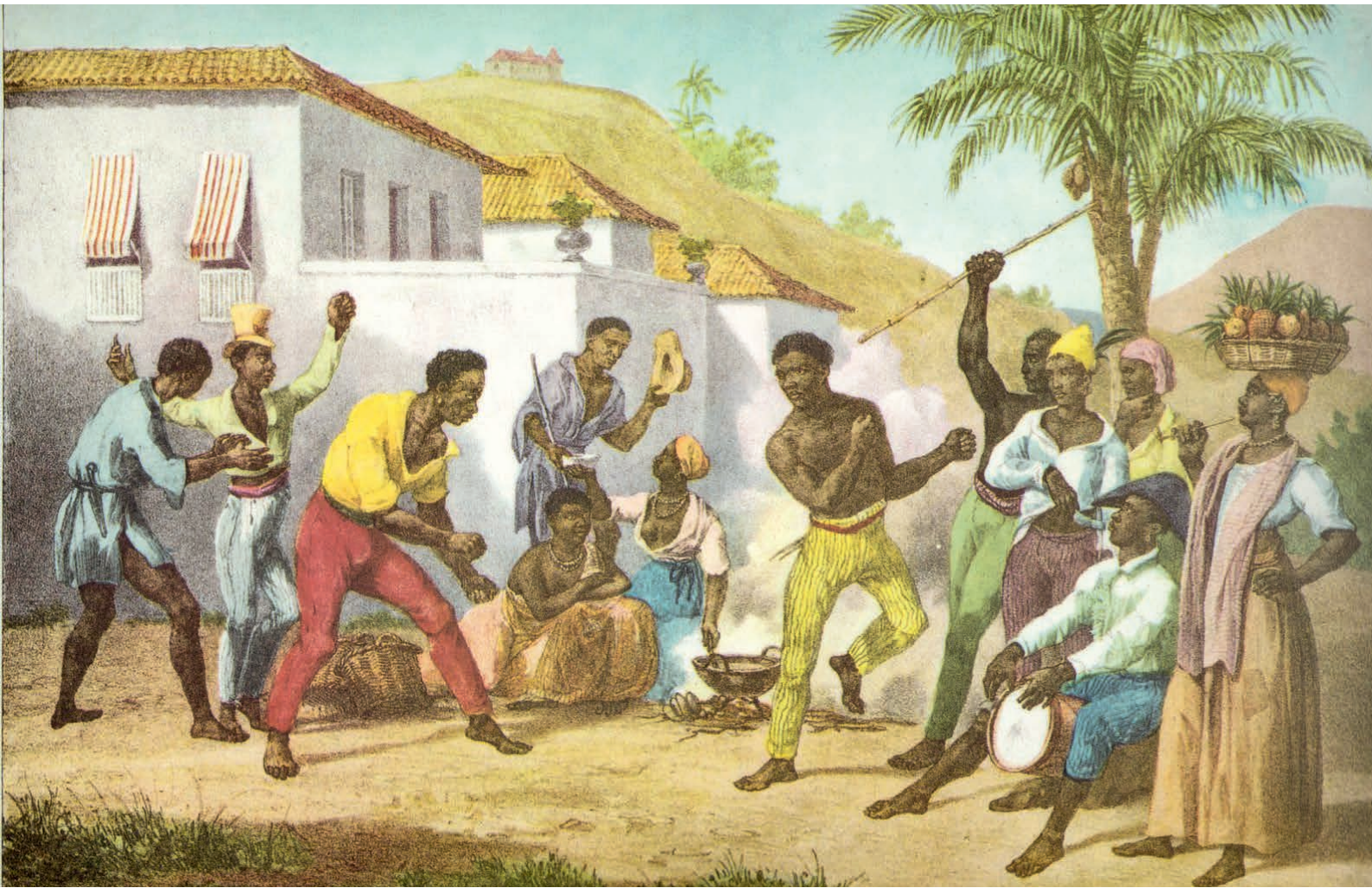
The two-day conference has enriched the BCDSS by widening the scope with respect to regions, periods, and historical phenomena. Moreover, thanks to the historical, theological, and philological expertise of the thirteen scholars who presented their papers, the conference has confirmed that semantics, lexical fields and narratives are indeed productive starting points for analyzing strong asymmetrical dependencies across different historical periods and regions and for undermining the binary opposition between slavery and freedom.



Prof. Dr. Marion Gymnich

is Professor of English Literature and Culture at the University of Bonn. In her research project on representations of domestic service, Marion Gymnich explores

changes and continuities in a wide range of literary and non-fictional depictions and negotiations of asymmetrical dependencies that shaped the lives of domestic servants in Britain from the Restoration period to the end of the nineteenth century.



CURRENT TRENDS IN SLAVERY STUDIES IN BRAZIL

Paulo Cruz Terra

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 10–11, 2020

Slavery in Brazil was significant not only in terms of its history but also concerning its historiography. The greatest number of African enslaved people taken to the Americas was brought to Brazil, and it was the last country to abolish slavery in the Western world. A huge number of academic productions about slavery has come out of Brazil. Between 1996 and 2019, 1,228 dissertations and theses about this topic were written in the discipline of history alone. Linguistic barriers, however, mean that this production is little known outside the Portuguese-speaking world.

The international conference "Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil" organized by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) was an excellent opportunity to discuss and think about this amount of scholarly work. Eleven Brazilian scholars presented important trends of slavery studies in this country to the BCDSS and, as the event was online, also to a larger audience, reaching almost a hundred people.

The papers underlined that Brazilian slavery studies cover an extended period, from the seventeenth century to post-abolition, and extending into the early twentieth century. Despite Brazil's long tradition in studies about slavery historians have only recently begun to look more closely at the lives of Black women and men in the post-abolition era. This was the case, for example, of *Wlamyra Albuquerque* (Federal University of Bahia, Salvador de Bahia), who analyzed the trajectory of Black political leadership before and after abolition in Bahia, and the extent to which racial thinking permeated national projects in dispute in the post-abolition era.

Racism is another crucial topic that was problematized in the presentations. *Ricardo Pirola* (University of Campinas, São Paulo) focused on the phenomenon of lynching in Brazil between 1830 and 1930 in order to think about how racial hierarchies were constructed in Brazilian society. *Martha Abreu* (Federal University Fluminense, Niterói) looked at racist representations in musical production, and *Lilia Moritz Schwarcz* (University of São Paulo) explored how a specific iconography was capable of producing and entrenching racial stereotypes. Schwarcz and Abreu highlighted another significant trend, the study of artistic productions on slavery, exploring how iconography and the music market can bring new perspectives to issues such as the agency of slaves and racism.

Another trend is the gender approach: *Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado* (University of São Paulo) explored the issue of slave motherhood, and *Fabiane Popinigis* (Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica) addressed how gender as well as race impacted the lives of enslaved and free food sellers of African descent.

Some slavery studies scholars in Brazil have begun a dialogue with a Global History perspective, and more specifically in terms of the debate about slavery and capitalism. This was the case of *Rafael de Bivar Marques* (University of São Paulo) who demonstrated how Brazil was part of the global processes of capital accumulation. *Tâmis Parron* (Federal University Fluminense, Niterói) presented an interpretation that placed the transformations of slavery within the broader framework of changing world geographies of accumulation and shifting global value relations. Illegal slavery is another crucial trend in Brazilian slavery studies: *Beatriz Mamigonian's* (Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis) presentation showed that the extension of illegal enslavement and the volume of the illegal slave trade forced historians to reinterpret Brazilian history in different aspects, such as political, legal, economic and social.

The study of the connections between Brazil and Africa has recently become more common in Brazilian historiography and represents another new trend. *Crislayne Alfagali* (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro) analyzed iron and gold mining and smelting in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and the Ilamba region.

Labor History in Brazil and in other countries was identified with free wage labor, but historians increasingly understand the necessity to address different forms of labor and how they interlink. *Fabiane Popinigis* (Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica), rethought the category of "domestic labor" within the context of the reorganization of the labor market between slavery and freedom. The issue of indigenous slavery is a further significant trend which was addressed by *Carlos Alberto de Moura Ribeiro Zeron* (University of São Paulo), who analyzed the ideas about "the natives" the Jesuit priest Antônio Vieira shared with other agents of colonization. The study of justice and law, and the extensive use of legal documents, is not exactly new in Brazilian slavery studies, but it is still essential in our academy. It was included in Machado's and Pirola's papers, for example.

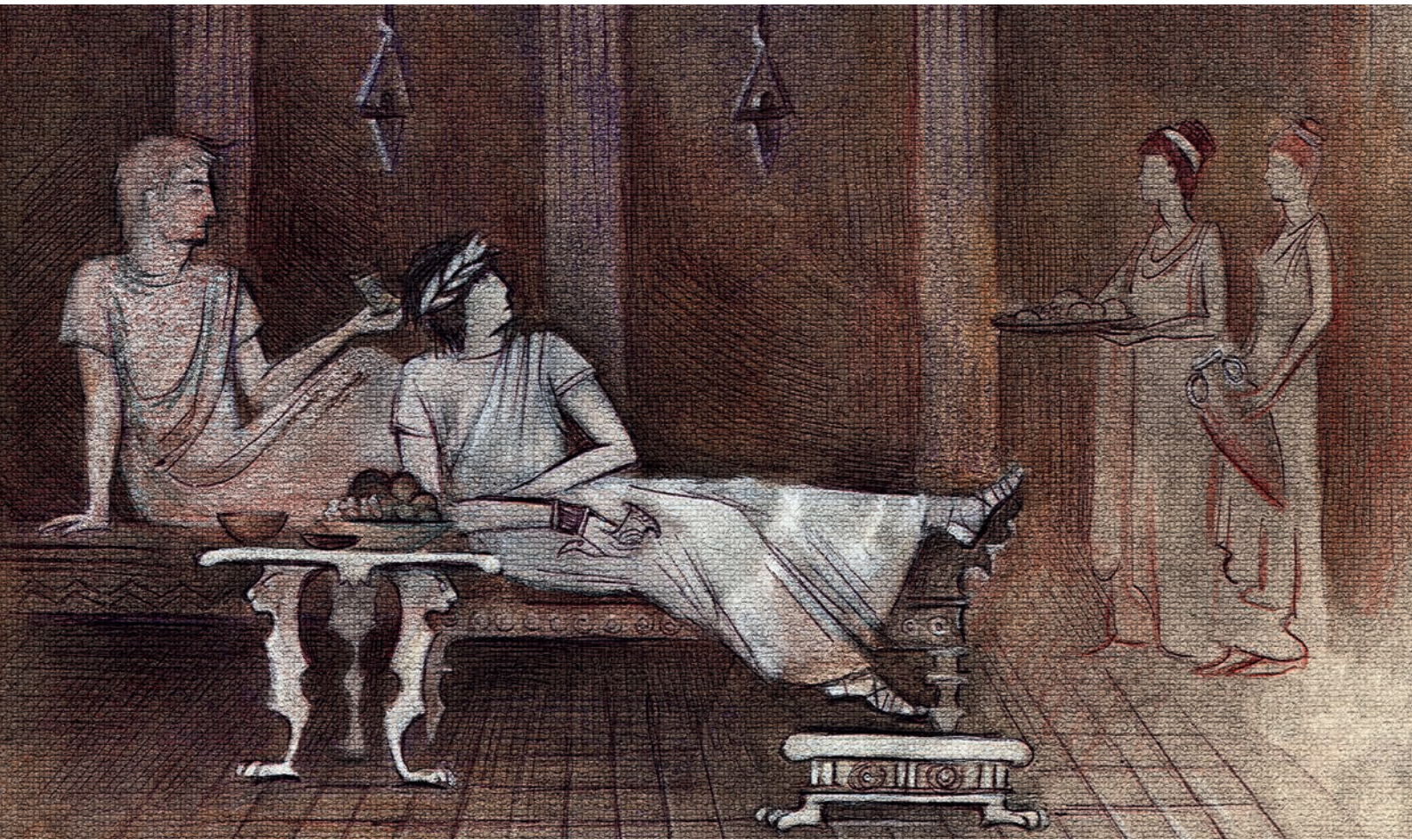
Although the conference "Current Trends in Slavery Studies in Brazil" did not cover all new trends in slavery studies in Brazil, it highlighted all the essential ones. The idea behind the conference is that this exchange of research findings can help to open Brazilian publications to an international public, and to be the starting point of a fruitful dialogue between the BCDSS and Brazilian scholars.



Prof. Dr. Paulo Cruz Terra

is Professor at the Federal University Fluminense in Brazil and teaches undergraduate classes at the History Department. He was a Capes-Humboldt Research

Fellow from September 2019 to August 2020. In his research project he analyzes how legislation, punishment and anti-vagrancy policies entangled with multiple labor relations during the process of the abolition of slavery. It centers on the period 1850–1910 and addresses the Lusophone world, with particular foci on Rio de Janeiro and two of the most important cities of the Portuguese Empire in Africa during this time frame: Lourenço Marques in Mozambique, and Luanda in Angola.



SOCIAL STATUS OR LEGAL DIFFERENCE? THE RANK OF SLAVES IN ANTIQUE ROMAN SOCIETY

Andreas Bahr
Magnus Goffin

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

UNIVERSITY OF BONN
AUGUST 28–29, 2020

The symposium *Social Status or Legal Difference? The Rank of Slaves in Antique Roman Society* looked at the social and legal distinctions between slaves in ancient Rome. It took place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, with infection numbers being low in August. The organisers did not want to do without the physical presence of at least some participants and so chose a hybrid format, whereby the majority of speakers assembled at Bonn's *Juridicum* (the Law School building), while the listeners and participants in the subsequent discussion joined them online.

The symposium proceeded on the assumption that slaves did not form a homogeneous group, but belonged to different social ranks. The central question was whether these distinctions were reflected in law. In his opening talk *Martin Schermaier* (University of Bonn) indicated that the objective of the event was to bridge the gap that exists in this field between legal and ancient historians, and to forge a link between slavery as a legal status and as a social phenomenon.

Martin Schermaier then pointed to the connections between all of the papers to be presented, focusing on two points. Firstly, there is no corpus of "Roman slave law" as such in the ancient legal texts: rather, ancient law addressed legal questions on an individual basis, most of which concerned the effects a slave's actions might have on their master. "Roman slave law" is hidden, as it were, behind these individual cases. The second point flagged up was that in the original legal texts in antiquity the slave was conceived as a subject imbued with agency. This aspect is however no longer discernible, a fact which Martin Schermaier explained was due, in his opinion, to the medieval understanding of *dominium*, which can be translated roughly as ownership. He called for a new concept of ancient Roman slavery which includes an awareness of slaves' ability to act in a legally meaningful way.

The first paper was presented by Richard Gamauf (University of Vienna), who spoke about "Peculium: Social and Legal Aspects of Slaves' Special Estates". The *peculium* was the property which a Roman master (or father) gave to his slave (or to his son) to use as they pleased. Although legally speaking the *peculium* remained the property of the slave owner, it

enabled the slave to take part in legal transactions. The paper not only gave a good overall survey of the topic, but also resolved some legal contradictions, and even managed to partially reconcile the legal situation with complex social practice.

Next, Wolfram Buchwitz (University of Würzburg) presented his paper about "The Effects of Roman Inheritance Law on the Social Position of Slaves". By analysing ancient legal texts and inscriptions, he demonstrated that there was a certain degree of participation for slaves in the social practices of Roman inheritance law. Slaves had the capacity to inherit, and under certain circumstances were able to benefit from being appointed as heirs.

Richard Gamauf then returned to present a second paper: "Dispensatores: Slaves as Treasurers of Enterprises". *Dispensatores* were male slaves who held high positions in the financial administration of prestigious Roman households. As the position of property administrator required great trust, *dispensatores* frequently enjoyed privileges, socially at least. The paper stressed the hypothesis fundamental to the symposium, namely that slaves were not a homogeneous group.

The penultimate contribution of Day 1 was Jakob F. Stagl's (University of Santiago de Chile) "Favor libertatis and Its Legal Basis". *Favor libertatis* was a rule of interpretation. In legal cases where the manumission of a slave was in doubt, a ruling in favour of the slave could lead to his or her liberation. Jakob Stagl demonstrated that *favor libertatis* had not been introduced by Roman jurisprudence but instead through a *lex publica*, which he identified with the *lex Iunia Petronia* from 19 AD.

The first conference day was rounded off with Thomas Finkenauer's (University of Tübingen) presentation about "Filii Naturales: Social Fate or Legal Privilege?". He gave comprehensive insights into the lives of slave families and the legal recognition they sometimes enjoyed. *Filii naturales* were the – by definition illegitimate – children of a slave couple or of a female slave by her master. In individual cases legal sources recognize this very natural connection, which was eventually associated with legal privileges.

Aglaia McClintock (University of Sannio) opened proceedings on Saturday morning with her paper about the "Servi Poenae" – men sentenced for a crime to become slaves and work in the mines or fight in the arena. Such a slave had no *dominus* and therefore could not hope to be manumitted. Once convicted he lost his Roman citizen rights and all property, and his



marriage was dissolved. It emerged clearly from Aglaia McClintock's presentation that, although legally both were slaves, the social situation of a *servus poenae* was in no way comparable to that of a dispensator as described in Richard Gamauf's contribution.

The last paper was delivered by *Pierangelo Buon-
giorno* (Universities of Salento and Münster), who spoke about the "*Familia Caesaris: Slaves and Freedmen in the Imperial Administration*". He began by outlining the social situation and political significance of the imperial bureaucracy in the early centuries AD, in which slaves and freedmen played a pivotal role; before taking a closer look at irregularities in the names (*nomina*) of some of the imperial freedmen in inscriptions.

The symposium ended with an extensive discussion, in which both those present and online attendees took part. It is planned to publish all papers in a conference proceedings.



Andreas Bahr

is a research associate and PhD candidate at the Institute of Roman Law and Comparative Legal History at the University of Bonn. His research project investigates an ancient Roman action, the so-called *actio Fabiana*. This complaint could be brought by the patron (i.e. the former master) of a *libertus* (freedman) in cases where the *libertus* reduced his patron's legitimate share (*debita portio*) during his lifetime with fraudulent alienations. Andreas is particularly interested in the evolution of testamentary freedom of a *libertus* in Classical Roman Law.



Magnus Goffin

is a PhD candidate at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Research Associate in Research Area C "Institutions, Norms and Practices". He is interested in the concept of selling oneself into slavery, which occurred in many societies throughout history. This includes ancient Rome, where jurists in the early Empire were the first to draw up carefully detailed regulations for the social practice of self-sale. Freeborn persons over twenty years of age who knowingly sold themselves with a view to sharing in the price (fraudulent self-sale) as well as those who entered into slavery in order to secure the position as their owner's steward (*actor*) were sentenced to come under ownership.



THE CLUSTER GOES ABROAD

Nabhojeet Sen

ONLINE WORKSHOP

INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN
NOVEMBER 25, 2020

"The Cluster Goes Abroad" was organized as a cooperative event between the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) and the Institute for History at Leiden University. Due to the ongoing pandemic, BCDSS members presented their research online via Zoom. The idea behind such "The Cluster Goes Abroad" workshops is that the members of the Cluster present their research to their partner institutions. It was a second such event in this series. This time, the Research Groups "Dependency, Gender and Labor in the Household" led by *Hanne Østhus* and "Punishment, Labor and Dependency" led by *Christian De Vito*, shared their research projects with the Dutch colleagues and discussed feedback.

The meeting opened with a welcome address by *Stephan Conermann*. He introduced the Cluster, its research and the "Cluster Goes Abroad" series. He underlined the importance of sharing research projects at the BCDSS on various forms of asymmetrical dependencies with the wider world through partner institutions and collaborative projects.

This was followed by the keynote lecture by *Jeff Fynn Paul* from the Institute for History on "Slavery Research on Micro and Macro Scales". The lecture aimed to share with researchers on slavery some useful methodological pointers and suggestions for micro and macro level research. *Jeff Fynn Paul* concluded his talk by urging young researchers to avoid mixing our own contemporary thinking with historical data which leads to anachronistic views on slavery.

Following this, members of the Research Group on "Punishment Labor and Dependency" presented their projects. *Christian De Vito* introduced the Group's aims and objectives. He then discussed his own project which focusses on how punishment occupied a central place in the construction and maintenance of various forms of dependencies which empowered Spain's imperial expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This interconnection was oriented along four major axes – conquest and exploitation, punishment of the enslaved, the role of punishment in the defense system, and the implication of punitive practices in the shift away from slavery and control over the enslaved.

PhD candidate *Nabhojeet Sen* then briefly discussed his project on how punitive rights were imbricated with property control, and how these played an important part in parceling and sharing out rights to govern. This played an important role in creating and retaining various forms of dependency and control in West India in the early modern period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. PhD Candidate *Adam Fagbore* presented his research on the role of punishment in the production and reproduction of various forms of dependencies within labor relations in Pharaonic Egypt. Revenue extraction was an important area where acts of physical violence and coercion, such as flogging, were employed. These acts were also employed in the context of local dependents such as the *Heqanakht*, members of priesthood and village headsmen, who often acted seemingly disengaged from central control.

Karwan Fatah Black from the Institute for History identified in his paper the Seven Years War as a key moment in the making of Dutch self-perception towards slavery and notions of racism and empire in Holland.

The next presentations were by members of the Research Group "Dependency, Gender and Labor in the Household". Research Group leader *Hanne Østhus* defined the group's focus and context as exploring the different asymmetrical dependencies and dependents existing in the household. Identifying the household as a research unit is key to establishing gender and

intersectional relations in this contact zone of classes, ethnicities, genders, and ages. It was followed by her own research project which looks at forced migration of Black slaves and servants to Denmark and Norway during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to see how this process informed meanings and practices of slavery and service with a focus on the household as a place of exercise of authority.

Following this, *Malik Ade*, doctoral candidate of the Research Group, presented his research on interdependencies and interrelations in Ekiti, a West African Yoruba region. The project looks at how gender was constructed throughout the nineteenth century inside and outside the household, through performances and activities. The project investigates roles and statuses through a gender and intersectional lens and asks how they shaped personhood and relations, norms, taboos and the justice system. *Malik Ade* emphasized that social relations evolved differently to the European understanding.

The meeting was wrapped up by *Damian Pargas*, Institute for History, who summarized key takeaways from the presentations by the BCDSS members. He identified certain threads from the Research Groups such as relations between punishment and violence, the right to punishment with reference to local and central authority, the household as a contact zone in creating and sustaining dependency related to gender, and social categories such as "outsiders" which informed and created dependencies of race, lineage, gender etc.



Nabhojeet Sen

is a PhD Candidate at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Research Associate in the Research Group "Punishment, Labor

and Dependency". His research analyzes the multiple entanglements between punishment and labor in early modern and colonial Western India along three interrelated axes: punishment of laborers; labor as punishment and punitive pluralism; and multiple relations that emerged because of this: convict transportation, corporal and capital punishment, incarceration (penal reform), forced labor on public works and their connection with other forms of coerced labor.



SLAVERY AND SOCIAL DEPENDENCY: SHINING SPOTLIGHTS ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

Silvia Oster

DIES ACADEMICUS 2020

UNIVERSITY OF BONN

DECEMBER 2, 2020

From its inception the Cluster of Excellence saw it as part of its mission to do its share in the programme offered by the University of Bonn for the general public. This includes the biannual *Wissenschaftsnacht* (Science Night), the University Festival, and the University's Open Day, *Dies academicus*, which takes place every semester. Because of the pandemic many of these events had to be cancelled at short notice, but *Dies academicus* could go ahead online in December 2020, so that the BCDSS was able to present some of our work there as planned.

Three senior professors from the University of Bonn, who are also PIs at the Cluster "Beyond Slavery and Freedom", together presented brief talks about slavery in classical antiquity under the heading, "Slavery and Social Dependency: Shining a Spotlight on the Ancient World". They were ancient historians Winfried Schmitz and Konrad Vössing, and legal historian Martin Schermaier. The panel, which attracted an audience of more than eighty, was chaired by Egyptologist Ludwig Morenz.



In the first lecture, "Hope for Freedom: Manumission Bowls from Classical Athens" Winfried Schmitz considered whether manumission practices in antiquity could be taken as evidence of humane treatment of slaves. He explained that masters often held out the prospect of freedom to their slaves in return for loyal service. Funerary inscriptions from the Roman world show that slaves there could expect to be freed by the time they reached the age of 35.

Fragmentary inscriptions on stelae found in the Acropolis and the Agora of Athens show that silver bowls worth one hundred drachmas by weight were dedicated to the goddess Athena on the occasion of slaves being manumitted for good. Professor Schmitz explained that we can infer from these inscriptions that manumissions at Athens happened in two stages. In a first step, a slave was provisionally freed on condition that they continue to serve their master for a further stipulated period of time; they were then formally freed only in a second, later step. It was on this occasion that the bowls were inscribed and dedicated. The precious metal was later melted down and the inscriptions were transferred to the stelae. Professor Schmitz believes that they do not indicate that manumission was a widespread practice in Athens. The occupations listed show that those freed were primarily highly skilled slaves who worked as craftsmen or traders.

They were privileged slaves whose skills, contacts and knowledge enabled them to earn and save money with which to purchase their freedom. Other slaves, who lived outside the city of Athens and its port of Piraeus, would not have had these opportunities. For this reason, it would have been extremely rare for a slave who worked in agriculture or the mines to achieve manumission. Mine owners usually leased their slaves and so could simply replace them when they fell ill or died. It was a different story for house slaves, who

were trained or bought for their special qualifications and so could not be simply replaced. Professor Schmitz concluded that the conditions under which enslaved people lived in the classical world were very different, so that it could be said in only some cases that they had been humanely treated.



The second speaker was *Konrad Vössing*, who presented a case from late Roman Africa entitled, "Unfreedom without Slavery". He began by pointing out that already in antiquity people had been familiar with the concept of a grey area "between slavery and freedom", especially when thinking about agricultural laborers. In this sector chattel slavery was not the norm, but actually comparatively rare. In late antiquity it became common for agricultural laborers (*coloni*) to be legally tied to the estates on which they worked. However, the landowners were barred from selling them. *Coloni* were a dependent population whose status was hereditary. They were severely restricted in their freedom of movement and obliged to pay the landowner a fixed rent. Their dependent status came about because of the scarcity of agricultural laborers. As the central government of the empire grew weaker, small tenant farmers found themselves squeezed from both sides: they were increasingly at the mercy of the landowners, but also frequently fell prey to roaming gangs of slave catchers who operated outside the law. As Rome's wars of conquest came to an end, an important "source" of slavery dried up. This led to a shortage of slaves in late antiquity.

Professor Vössing presented a fifth-century letter written by Saint Augustine at the time when he was Bishop of Hippo. Free rural residents had been brought to the coast and taken from there on board ship (probably to Asia Minor) to be sold as slaves. The letter describes Saint Augustine's attempts to help, which were only partially successful. The bishop found himself in a difficult position. The law was ineffectual. He tried to stand up to locals who supported the trade in human beings, but he also strove to remain true to his own principles, namely his opposition to the death penalty. (The legal punishment often resulted in death.) We can see from this letter how scarce agricultural slaves had become in fifth-century Roman North Africa; while at the same time the Empire had grown so weak that it could no longer effectively protect even the semi-unfree, tied-to-the-soil field workers both from human traffickers and from the local grandees who profited from the trade. Professor Vössing explained in conclusion that the letter, which only came to light a few decades ago, also sheds light on the difficult situation in this outpost of empire not long before the collapse of Roman rule in Africa.



The last talk was given by *Martin Schermaier* under the heading, "'All Are Born Free': Roman Law's Ambivalent Attitude to Slavery". A pronouncement by the late Roman jurist Ulpian runs, "All men are born free". Professor Schermaier com-

mented on its apparent similarity to Enlightenment thinking, but pointed out that it had in fact been written around the year 210 AD. He asked how this sentence fit in with the well-known fact that ancient Rome was a slaveholding society. In answer, he pointed to the difference between *ius naturale*, the natural law before which all people are equal, and *ius gentium*, the law of nations which allowed slavery. The Christian emperor Justinian I, for one, held that *ius naturale* stood above *ius gentium* in the legal hierarchy, but only the law of nations was recognized as positive law.

For this reason, Professor Schermaier explained, civil law had devised detailed slave law: how are slaves to be sold or bequeathed? How is a slave's master liable for their actions? However, there were also two epochs in which many provisions were written into law to protect slaves against arbitrary treatment by their masters: one under the emperor Marcus Aurelius in the second century, the other under the Christian emperors from the reign of Constantine in the fourth century onwards. Professor Schermaier pointed out, however, that all of these legal texts usually refer to domestic slaves. As we had already seen in Wolfgang Schmitz's lecture, house slaves were often well educated and trained, and some enjoyed a high social standing. The laws concentrated on slaves who were essential to the householder. It was more likely that conflicts would arise between the master of the house and a highly trained slave, the legal historian went on to explain, especially one who had dealings with valuable assets; while rural enslaved workers were largely beyond the scope of the jurists.

Professor Schermaier called this phenomenon a "displacement mechanism" and compared it with our own world today. He pointed out that while the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights or Germany's Basic Law declare that human dignity is inviolable, that all people are equal and that slavery is to be outlawed, we all know that slave-like dependencies in many shapes exist even in the Western world. The problem the same in Roman law and in our own world: because we think that we can define what "slavery" is, we fail to question other forms of asymmetrical dependency. The law expert ended his talk by observing that when we condemn the term "slavery", we merely create the illusion that we have solved the problem.

EVENTS & PREVIEW

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Online
via Zoom



January 28–29, 2021

LATIN AMERICAN WORKSHOP

International Workshop
organized by
Christian G. De Vito and
Paulo Cruz Terra

Online
via Zoom



February 18–19, 2021

PUNISHMENT, LABOR AND THE LEGITIMATION OF POWER

Interdisciplinary Workshop
organized by
Christian G. De Vito and
Adam Fagbore

Online
via Zoom



March 25–26, 2021

CONTEMPORARY ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: COVID-19, MIGRATION AND GLOBAL LABOR

International e-Symposium
organized by the Working Group
"Contemporary Asymmetrical
Dependencies"

Online
via Zoom



April 21–22, 2021

DEPENDENCY, VULNERABILITY AND EMBODIED FIELDWORK: SEXUALIZED HARASSMENT AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE FIELD

Interdisciplinary Workshop
organized by
Sinah Kloß

June 10, 2021

OPENING OF GROWING/ EXPERIMENTAL EXHIBITION: SLAVERY IN CONTEXT: MATERIALITIES OF ASYMMETRICAL DEPENDENCIES

Exhibition Opening
organized by
Research Area B

June or July 2021

SEMANTICS – LEXICAL FIELDS – NARRATIVES: NARRATIVES OF DEPENDENCY

**Second Workshop
of Research Area A**
organized by
Marion Gymnich

LECTURE SERIES

Online
via Zoom



The Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series

Renowned international scholars will present their research and speak on questions of asymmetrical dependency and slavery.

February 2021

February 1,
4pm (CET)

Mariana Armond Dias Paes, BCDSS/Max Planck Institute for European Legal History, and **Paulo Cruz Terra**, Capes-Humboldt Research Fellow at the BCDSS/Federal University Fluminense:
Brazil and Africa in Global Legal History and Global Labor History

February 8,
4pm (CET)

Ravi Ahuja, University of Göttingen:
After Indenture: British Liner Companies and „Racial Management“ in the Early Twentieth Century

February 22,
4pm (CET)

Rafael Thiebaut, University of Le Havre:
Changes in Enslavement Methods on Madagascar (1725–1810)

March 2021

March 29,
4pm (CEST)

Henry B. Lovejoy, University of Colorado Boulder:
Building West Africa Historical GIS: Mapping Enforced Internal and External Migrations during the Age of Abolition

April 2021

April 26,
4pm (CEST)

Hans Kopp, University of Bochum:
tba

May 2021

May 10,
4pm (CEST)

William Gervase Clarence-Smith, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London:
tba

May 31,
4pm (CEST)

Finbarr Barry Flood, New York University:
tba

June 2021

June 14,
4pm (CEST)

Fırat Yaşa, Duzce University :
An Adopted Country? Seventeenth-Century Life among the Manumitted Slaves of the Crimean Khanate

CURRENT EVENTS AND PUBLIC
LECTURES AT THE BCDSS

<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/events>

PUBLIC LECTURES AND OTHER
BCDSS EVENTS AS AUDIO PODCASTS

<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/events/podcasts>



FIELD RESEARCHERS' REPORTS



As they investigate **strong asymmetrical dependency**, our scholars go beyond the study of written records. They travel to the regions they research in order to scrutinize historical sources and artefacts. They also conduct interviews with experts and communicate with local people. In the following pages, the scholars share impressions from their historical, archaeological or anthropological field research.

Due to the corona pandemic, many of our scholars have had to postpone their research trips to a later date. So this section is shorter than usual. The reports we publish in this issue look back on research trips that took place before the pandemic. The health and safety of all is of particular concern to us.



In an informal chat with the elderly members of the Rohingya community

RESEARCH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FIELDWORK AT HOME AND OTHER DILEMMAS: VISITING REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Anas Ansar

Just a few weeks before the global standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I arrived in Cox's Bazar, a coastal city in Bangladesh bordering Myanmar. It is mid-February, late in the evening, the central bus station full of bustling crowds even at 11 pm! Here I am after six long years – in the place where I was born 30 years ago and spent my entire childhood. As I head to my new accommodation close to the refugee camps, the first question from the taxi driver is, "You know everything! You grew up here – what's new that you are looking for here?" Here comes the first encounter with the field, and one that I was not prepared for!

Yes, it is home, but the unprecedented number of refugee arrivals since 2017 has undoubtedly changed the social, political, cultural and demographic setting of the region. The growing number of refugees and refugee camps – one of them currently the largest in the world – has made the landscape unfamiliar to me, at first glance at least.

How do we look at intensely familiar spaces and people with different eyes? Being back "home" makes it even easier to slip back into taken-for-granted modes of thinking about places and routines. Within a few days, I realize it takes a much more self-conscious



questioning and constant reappraisal to keep from losing the outsider's distanced perspective, to maintain my critical eye and my "outsider glasses" in my own society and country.

One of the most frequent challenges is getting into a conversation, as people will just say that as a local I should know what life looks like here in the camps and surroundings! So making the familiar unfamiliar again proves to be the most immediate objective, before I can even think of going for a long intense interview with my potential respondents.

Another challenge is the difficulty of drawing the line between "fieldwork" and "non-fieldwork" activities. While respondents assume that I already know everything about this place, government officials, who I need to grant permission to spend a couple of months in the camp area, bring up another complicated question. They want to know what the German university will do with the information about all this chaos here.

But doing fieldwork at "home" also has its advantages. My status as a local gives me an entry to remarkably many doors. I do not need to constantly legitimate my presence in most spaces while in the field. "Blending in" is easy – so to speak. Because of my already existing networks, I don't need to spend time building up contacts to source informants.

A lot of this is perhaps not just a problem for researchers conducting fieldwork in their home contexts, but for all field workers. There is a fear of taking things for granted and of just accepting the local norms without putting a critical perspective. A sense of fatigue sets in



With male members of the community



Rohingya camp- birds eye view

where everything does not seem as new or significant any longer. What tactics are useful then to maintain that critical gaze? A point I have been pondering ever since ...

Just as I am about to get into the rhythm of the fieldwork, the Covid-19 pandemic emerges, giving "cancel culture" a new meaning. On March 26, when Bangladesh is celebrating its 49th Independence Day, the government abruptly decides to impose a lockdown. I have exactly six hours to pack my stuff and rush to the bus station. My long-awaited fieldwork has to go into involuntary hibernation. The field season ends before it has even begun, leaving me with too little information to craft something out of it.

I have no idea when I might be able to return to Bangladesh. Over the past few months, I have had to come to terms with the fact that I am no longer alone in this "new normal" – a phenomenon of sheer uncertainty. But whenever it will be, my next time in the field will require many additional preparations, as I learned from this brief but intense HOME stay!



Anas Ansar

is a PhD candidate at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Research Associate in the Research Group "Beyond Slavery: Dependency in Asian

History". He looks at the various entanglements of the Rohingya refugees in Southeast Asia between their lack of rights and exploitation on one hand; and their agency, negotiation and resilience on the other. By looking at these processes, through which a significant proportion of refugees end up in forms of dependency, his research explores the question of the extent to which social capital impacts processes of dependencies among refugees.



RESEARCH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DEPENDENCY IN CASTE SYSTEM

Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

The deconstruction of the diametric conceptualization of "freedom" versus "slavery" is very fundamental to the broader concern of the BCDSS, which intends to move beyond this conventional Euro-American binary that has characterized various studies of the human displacement and oppression connected to the transatlantic slave trade. Drawing on varying geo-temporal contexts, however, and without underestimating the savagery of colonialism, the BCDSS intends to fill this vast lacuna in the field of what is broadly called "Dependency Studies". Keeping this orientation of the Cluster in mind, I would like to make a short note on the idea of the caste system which touches many aspects of social life in South Asia and its diaspora. Discussing why there is a need to place caste and race at one table, I will end this note by hinting at why moments of ritual interface between different castes are important in the study of dependency relationships related to the caste system.

While looking at South Asia as a broader cultural region with immense diversity, the BCDSS's conceptualization of "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" is very significant. The idea of race does not hold much sway in the Indian imagination of caste; instead, it is *jāti*, a more localized form of caste that is the defining term.



Jāti comprises broadly the four varnās (Brahmins, the priestly class; Kshatriyās, the ruling and warrior class; Vaishyās, the farmers, merchants, and traders; Shudraās, the servicing class to other three classes). It is a hierarchical ordering of people based on the idea of degrees of "purity" and "pollution". Outside of the four varnās, there also exists the fifth (a)varna which is made up of people excluded from the varna system, the Dalits, for whom the system works through a process of inclusion by exclusion. Here, the casteless people themselves constitute a caste/distinct identity. The proximity to and contact with an out-cast(e) member causes "pollution" to the other upper castes in a hierarchy that necessitates ritual cleansing.

Although originally a Hindu social order, it is extended to other religious communities who live on the subcontinent, even to Muslims and Christians. The modern idea of "race" came into being with colonial ethnology which went hand in hand with the related practices of human taxonomy that mapped different physiological markers onto communities and groups. But the

marked difference between "caste" and "race" is the metaphysical basis of caste. Here, the subjugation and violence enacted on the deprived castes are legitimated through beliefs and practices. Overall, the caste system is a well-formed system of dependency relations that maintain and regulate the material, social and cultural capitals. The core practices are endogamy, hereditary occupations, and social segregation. This is reflected widely, from practices related to temple entry to food habits, access to public wells to the location of dwellings in the city or village. While progressive postcolonial politics with its emancipatory ideals addressed this, and also constitutionally ensured legal rulings to end oppressive practices related to the caste system such as "untouchability", the core values and practices continue to thrive.

From the angle of dependency, the relevant point is here not the conceptual difference between caste and race: it is the similarities between these two categories. Both were reinforced through colonial systems of enumeration such as decadal census practice, the impact of which continues to cause discrimination and oppression into our own times. They are not scars from the historical past, but loom large in the contemporary present. It is an in-depth analysis

of asymmetrical dependencies that is required. At the 2001 World Conference against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, the state of India strongly opposed the idea of discussing "caste", arguing that "race" and "caste" are two different phenomena. It would have been a positive step in the right direction if the discriminatory and oppressive elements related to both these categories had been acknowledged and tabled, rather than denied.

Like race, caste is also very well represented in academic studies. Social anthropologists and South Asianists dominate the field. Dalit Studies often focus on the question of representation such as Dalit writings. The borderline of the caste system is often assumed to be stringently practiced rules of purity between "pure" and "impure" caste groups. However, this is not necessarily true at all times. One notable exception are contexts that ritualize the sharing of resources, special skills, and knowledge. Within ritualized "anti-structures", an exalted status is given to lower castes, which allows for the venting of anger and protest against the oppressive system, but in the long run further reinforces the system, with dissent domesticated, deified and dramatized. Where otherwise "caste" is conventionally treated as a system of discrete social categories, liminal embodied ritual performances (where both upper and lower caste groups are temporarily freed from their caste hierarchy) can be an entry point in the study of complex dependency relationships within the caste system.



Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

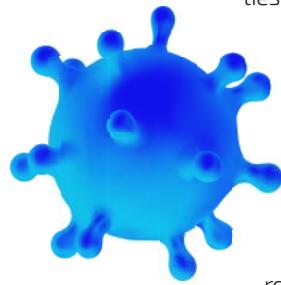
is PhD candidate at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Research Associate in Research Area B "Embodied Dependencies". Focusing on

the pre-modern Indian Ocean networks of religion – trade – dependencies, which were implicated in the formation of the South Indian Muslim communities, his research project intends to elaborate on the production of Muslim venerated spaces (mosques and shrines) in the littorals of South India.

RESEARCH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BCDSS RESEARCHERS' CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES IN TIMES OF UNPRECEDENTED UNCERTAINTY

Katja Girr, Ayesha Hussain, Sinah Kloß



Uncertainty is always part of empirical research. Ethnographers may be denied access to a specific event in a community during fieldwork. Archaeologists may not be issued research permits for excavations. Archival researchers may find collections closed during political protests or discover that essential documents have been lost. However, the current conditions for empirical research due to the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated this level of uncertainty to an unprecedented extent that few researchers could have anticipated. Empirical researchers of the BCDSS have been affected by being unable to travel to research sites, meet research participants face-to-face, or work in archives that have not digitized the desired documents. These uncertainties have disproportionately been affecting junior researchers at the Cluster, who usually start with a novel research project and can seldom rely on already-collected data. They have creatively engaged with this unprecedented and challenging situation, but also continue to struggle with finding appropriate ways of adapting to it. In a working group on empirical research in crisis, twelve PhD candidates and research group leaders discussed the challenges for research methods that are central to the Cluster's empirical research and that are particularly affected by the pandemic: ethnographic fieldwork, archaeological fieldwork, and archival research.

“The current conditions for empirical research due to the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the level of uncertainty to an unprecedented extent few researchers could have anticipated.”

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Several ethnographic methods require on-site fieldwork. Long and intensive periods are often necessary to establish close relationships and to gain trust within “the field”. COVID-19 restrictions severely affect ethnographic researchers who find themselves unable to travel or meet with informants face-to-face. While shifting to online methods can be an alternative in some cases, data protection needs to be taken into account. For ethical reasons, online research is not always an option or full replacement:

Due to the sensitivity of my research topic, which addresses moments of high vulnerability and potentially traumatic events for my respondents, ethical issues arise when conducting such interviews online. [...] For this reason, virtual ethnographic research may help me to connect to potential interviewees and establish contacts, but it will not replace the need for long-term ethnographic research in the Ivory Coast.

Katja Girr, PhD Candidate



During the summer of 2020, many researchers who rely on ethnographic fieldwork considered changing the focus and/or the region of their projects. But as COVID-19 infection numbers have been rising again around the world, uncertainty may still persist after the decision to conduct field research within Europe has been made:

In light of all these developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic, I planned to change my research focus from rural Punjabi migrants in Pakistan who move to urban areas, to rural Punjabi people who migrate to Europe, particularly Italy. [...] I planned to travel to Italy to conduct my fieldwork in January and February 2021, but because of the second wave of COVID it is now extremely uncertain whether I will be able to conduct my fieldwork any sooner, even after changing the focus.

Ayesha Hussain, PhD Candidate

With the need for long fieldwork periods and face-to-face encounters in mind, some researchers even considered taking a one-year leave from their contracts in order to gain time. Such measures would however heighten their precarious situations, particularly for those who have no other source of income available during this period. Overall, pandemic-related developments are continually re/shaping ethnographic research, which results in persisting feelings of uncertainty.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Archaeological fieldwork often involves the application of complex support material (such as technical survey devices) as well as test digs to collect the data necessary for the research project. Being unable to travel to their sites due to COVID-19 restrictions, some archaeologists considered employing colleagues who are on site or live locally as an alternative. However, access for local researchers to some of the required devices from abroad has proven to be a major obstacle in the pandemic context. Research methods such as "remote fieldwork" are often affected by the sensitivity of the data and related questions of trust and confidence.

Other BCDSS archaeologists have considered replacing archaeological data with other sources. This is especially challenging on an emotional level and leads to a major change from the initial idea and "vision" of the research project:

I was at best stuck in the office, or – worse – at home, rewriting my research plan again and again, slowly replacing archaeological fieldwork with archive work, and then when many archives also closed again replacing that with work based on published sources and literature studies. Despite not being able to conduct fieldwork, I acknowledge my situation remains extremely privileged. Even if I'm not able to deliver the research I originally promised, I still get fully funded at the BCDSS. This crisis has made me also think creatively about my research, particularly the data and the methods that I use.

Dita Auziņa, PhD Candidate

Especially early-career researchers are concerned that the use of alternative methods may severely impact their careers, as conducting fieldwork is an important skill for archaeologists, which forms the basis of their professional trajectories:

Since my doctoral thesis focuses on archaeological research and I want to build my career in this discipline, the planned fieldwork is of enormous importance for my future. I cannot write a purely ethno-historical doctoral thesis and then introduce myself as an archaeologist.

Paul Graf, PhD Candidate

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Even if a region or country has been less affected by COVID-19, repercussions of the pandemic have significantly impacted and restricted the chance of conducting archival research across the world:

Public archives and libraries are essential for archival work, but many have been shut down for longer periods since March. As public institutions, several have sought a very cautious interpretation of government guidelines and opted for closure.

Hanne Østhus, Research Group Leader

Many collections, libraries, and archives are currently digitizing archival documents, so that some researchers were able to digitally access some of the documents they depend on for their research. For example, while stressing the current difficulty of archival-based research and the negative effects of the pandemic on early-career researchers especially, Christian De Vito explained why he considers his individual research may be "less affected" by the current situation:

I have been working on this topic for nearly ten years now, so I had many opportunities to do research in the archives of Spain and Latin America that are relevant to it, before the pandemic started. [...] During the last



years, tens of thousands of documents have been digitized that are relevant for my research. This has given me the chance to continue my research almost undisturbed even during the pandemic. [...] Having said this, in order to complete my research, I will need to visit at least four archives in Spain [...] in addition to the study of digitized sources and secondary literature. Spain is at present harshly hit by the pandemic, and the three archives have been (and some still are) closed, or have been only accessible by reservation for limited days and hours per week. The chance that I might visit them during the next months is very small.

Christian De Vito, Research Group Leader

Digitization has not been conducted to this extent everywhere, however, and researchers who had just started a new research project have been affected disproportionately by closures of archives. In addition, digitized data may not always be a substitute for directly accessing the relevant material and collections.

COPING STRATEGIES

Many BCDSS researchers, especially those who have been directly affected by the measures to control the pandemic, have shown great initiative and creativity in rethinking their research strategies and methods. To some researchers who conduct archival work digitized data provided some benefit, but others working with mainly non-digitized documents continue to be negatively affected by the closure of archives. Another coping strategy, particularly among ethnographic fieldworkers, was to start or continue research by using online methods, for example contacting informants and interlocutors via phone or social media applications. A few researchers hired local research assistants. However, the second wave of COVID-19 experienced by most European countries since October 2020 has resulted yet again in lockdowns and strict social distancing in many countries around the globe, which in turn also impacted newly-hired research assistants who were now unable to commence or continue fieldwork. Those who sought to change their research focus by adapting the topic and/or the locality of "the field" – to have a hopefully more accessible place to conduct fieldwork, e.g. within no-risk areas of the European Union – have been confronted with the impact of the second wave which rendered these changes useless, at least for the foreseeable future.

WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING?

To raise awareness of these various challenges, we formed a working group which we named "Empirical Researchers in Crisis" as a forum in which to discuss the issues, and to come up with coping strategies and recommendations for the University of Bonn and the DFG as funding body. The group consists of early-career researchers who have found the impact of the pandemic on their research and professional trajectories

particularly pressing. The group formulated some recommendations about coping mechanisms and contract extensions, hoping to increase discussion at the administrative levels of the Cluster and the University of Bonn. Along with the HR Department, the BCDSS will organize a seminar for the researchers affected to address and discuss the challenges and opportunities of empirical research during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Similar measures have proven useful in other institutions (such as the German Anthropological Association), and other platforms have been established both to share concerns and to provide and discuss creative solutions. Although members of the working group certainly acknowledge that all empirical research implies uncertainties, frustration and fears, we believe that it is necessary to support researchers with institutional strategies in the current pandemic. These challenges cannot be solved by individual researchers on an individual level alone: they require the support of research and funding institutions. If they are not addressed immediately, the COVID-19 pandemic may (re-)produce inequalities in academic research processes, careers and future research funding.



Katja Girr

is a PhD candidate in Geography and a Research Associate in Research Areas D "Labor and Spatiality" and E "Gender (and Intersectionality)". She focuses on return migration of illegalized Ivorian migrants from Northern Africa back to the Ivory Coast since 2011.

In the context of EU border externalization politics and by focusing on the multiple dependencies that characterize this migration her study sheds light on the ways in which the experience of illegalization (re)shapes migrant trajectories and their visions of/possibilities for a more independent life.



Ayesha Hussain

is a PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology and a Research Associate in research area E "Gender and Intersectionality" and research area D "Labor and Spatiality" at the BCDSS. Her research looks at the international migration of rural Punjabi migrants from Pakistan and the debt bondages under systematic

exploitative setups in various labor sectors in Italy. She focuses on the role of micro and meso level social structures of migration including ethnic networks and diasporas to not only freed, settled and established but also for failed and return migration.



Dr. Sinah Kloß

is a Social and Cultural Anthropologist and Research Group Leader of the Research Group "Marking Power: Embodied Dependencies, Haptic Regimes and Body Modification". Her research project discusses the sensory history of body modification and the interrelation of permanence, tactility, religion and servitude in Hindu

Indian communities of colonial Suriname, Trinidad and Guyana. It focuses on the tattoos and tattooing practices of Indian indentured laborers in the Caribbean and among contemporary Caribbean Hindu women.



The magazine **DEPENDENT** is published twice annually by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) and contains information, descriptive articles and reports about its research projects and findings, as well as its publications and events. A feature article provides insights on research into areas related to strong asymmetrical dependency. The magazine is sent out by e-mail in PDF format or in print. Information on how to subscribe and future issues can be found at

<https://tinyurl.com/dependent-magazine>

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Over the coming years, the BCDSS will continue to publish information about its current research projects on its website, and to provide background information on subjects related to the overall topic of dependency. BCDSS scholars will also comment on social developments from their own perspectives. In the "Interviews" section, they talk about the conditions of their work, new methods and the changing nature of research communication.

THE BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES (BCDSS)

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

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

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



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