

Senior Editors' Note

Labor history in non-Western societies and the global South continues to produce compelling scholarship centered on innovative theoretical and methodological approaches. This issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History* presents a range of contributions, organized in two thematic sections and other free-standing research, exploring different facets of such exciting developments.

Our first group of articles, on “Changing Labor Relations in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey,” discusses findings and perspectives emerging from studies that aim to rethink and renew working-class historiography in Ottoman societies and successor states. These contributions, based in the *Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations*, are in dialogue with the Global Labor History approach and deepen *ILWCH*'s long-standing interest in the region, for example in our 2001 special issue on labor in the Ottoman Empire. As Karin Hofmeester and Jan Lucassen explain in their introduction—“Shifting Labor Relations in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey 1500–2000”—over the past decade the area's labor historiography has transcended earlier chronological divides between the empire and its successor states. Greater attention has also been paid to unorganized sectors of the working class, including peasants, women, domestic workers, independent producers, and small-scale industries, as well as local patterns and the influence of diverse religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural configurations. The work of the *Collaboratory* has expanded on such agendas by highlighting questions like the coexistence and overlap of free and unfree work, migrations, and child labor. Studies in this section also focus on early modern periods, which remain relatively under-researched. The authors revive early modern labor history by excavating and analyzing, with an emphasis on quantitative methodology, data from tax records, inventories, and legal contracts, which only now are being mined and assessed as labor history sources.

Through a meticulous examination of tax registers in the city of Bursa and surrounding villages, Karin Hofmeester and Jan Lucassen provide, in “Ottoman Tax Registers as a Source for Labor Relations in Ottoman Bursa,” a rich and complex portrait of the transformations of work in this early imperial political capital and major economic center. Fiscal records from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century are combined with a wide range of original sources from subsequent periods to survey trends in the expansion of waged employment relative to independent production over four centuries. The authors demonstrate that, contrary to earlier studies, the Bursa region's economic trajectory shows that the Ottoman Empire did not face an irreversible economic decline after 1600. Rather, the eighteenth century was a period of expansion connected to growing insertion in the circuits of global capitalism as well as economic diversification away from the earlier centrality of the silk industry. In the process,

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wage labor became deeply entrenched, although in a non-linear and often halted trajectory, as growing numbers of women entered production outside the household, enslaved labor slowly declined, and independent production remained strong.

In “Slavery and Decline of Slave-ownership in Ottoman Bursa 1460–1880,” Hülya Canbakal and Alpay Filiztekin develop the section’s inquiry into shifting patterns of slave labor in their pioneering long-term analysis of slaveholding and related market dynamics. In the period under examination, enslaved persons ceased to be mostly considered luxury possessions for wealthy households and were increasingly employed in industrial and agricultural production. The authors sift through probate inventories to show a picture that is more complex than existing assumptions that slavery merely declined as the empire became increasingly integrated in “modern” forms of capitalist trade and international relations. The consolidation of wage labor did indeed mirror a concomitant long-term decline in slave ownership, which was probably influenced by the pressure of abolitionist interests within and without the empire. Yet, at the same time, the racial modalities of slavery also changed, as the proportion of enslaved Africans grew, especially in the nineteenth century, while, ironically the early practice of enslaving war prisoners from the Caucasus and the Balkans was hampered by greater scrutiny under international humanitarian law. The relations between slavery and wage labor remained, therefore, far more complex than a simple replacement of the former by the latter, as well as purely economic dynamics as an explanatory factor, have suggested.

The section’s third and final study, “In Between Market and Charity: Child Domestic Work and Changing Labor Relations in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Istanbul,” by Yahya Araz & İrfan Kokdaş, accounts for a different aspect of the deep connections between free and unfree labor by looking at how the employment of foster children in Istanbul mutated from early, religiously infused ethical norms of family-based charity to legally formalized, capitalistically defined wage labor relations. The commodification of household work did not, however, merely suppress earlier notions of moral economy. Those notions survived and changed in response to a growing standardization of employment contracts. As a result, as children came to be increasingly seen as a human resource in the capitalist sense, the survival of traditions of gift and benevolence between host families and foster children played a highly contradictory role. On one hand it could alleviate the harshest impacts of commodification and precarious labor. On the other it also served to legitimize nascent capitalist production relations.

Two articles constitute the section on “Oral History and Indian Labor History,” which interrogates working-class lives by centering key aspects of intimacy, emotions, and memory, once neglected by labor history. Affects in the daily life of the working poor in Delhi’s industrial districts are examined in Rukmini Barua’s “Matters of the Heart: Romance, Courtship and Conjugality

in Contemporary Delhi.” The author’s rich ethnography outlines how the geography of workers’ romantic attachments remapped and contested industrial spaces marked first by planned industrialization and then by proliferating informality in the age of neoliberalism. The collapse of urban and industrial planning underpins here a landscape of existential precarity and environmental devastation, amid which migrant workers negotiate intimate relations shaped by reputational, caste, and family norms in villages of origin as well as subjective and community strategies of pushing the boundaries of what is deemed socially acceptable. As a result, workers’ attachments acquire a public dimension, challenging the policing of feelings practiced in private and household domains.

Interviews with older migrant workers returning to family villages after experiences of urban employment provide the subject of “Segmented Possibilities: Migrant Life Histories of Hindustani Workers in Post-colonial India,” by Camille Buat. In colonial times and early independence times, Kolkata and the Bengal saw the employment of large numbers of workers—deemed “Hindustani”—from rural areas of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The article’s analysis of migrants’ subjectivity is centered on narratives shaped by different intersections of caste, religion, language, occupation, identity, family, and social relations. Buat is critical of perspectives centered on either the idea of a rural-urban dichotomy or a continuum between rural and urban life. The study’s focus on workers’ strategies rather shows how “the movement between rural and urban is a culturally, socially, and even politically charged act,” which requires labor historians to reassess the meaning of migration itself. Connections between rural and urban workers’ worlds rather speak to a continuous tension between staying and moving, choice and constraint. To migrate, therefore, does not necessarily mean to sever links with religious and caste obligations from places of origins. At the same time, the centering of the village in one’s identity does not imply that such obligations cannot be challenged through values and discourses acquired in the experience of migration and urban employment.

Moving to a region neighboring the Indian subcontinent, Ulbe Bosma offers a comprehensive survey of scholarship, problems, and current issues in the study of Southeast Asian labor in “Communism, Cold War and Commodity Chains: Southeast Asian Labor History in A Comparative and Transnational Perspective.” The long transition from colonial plantation economies and primary commodity production to import-substitution industrialization, and export-oriented authoritarian modernization reflected, Bosma argues, the rise and decline of powerful, deeply entrenched, and well organized radical labor movements. The propelling role, with significant national variations, of Communism in early unionization amid the region’s anticolonial struggles gave way, after the second world war, to repression fostered by U.S. imperialism and facilitated by the absorption of Southeast Asia in the global ideological confrontation of the Cold War. It is in the legacy of colonialism

and state-sponsored anticommunism, rather than just the advent of neoliberal globalization, foreign direct investment, and low-wage work for export, that the decline of organized labor should be understood. With the collapse, in the 1990s, of Communist states and the decline of political authoritarianism, the region has thus witnessed renewed labor activism, although along lines shaped by social movements, NGOs, and global campaigns against sweatshops and “new slaveries.”

Three “reports from the field” and a book review essay complete this issue. The “Historical Cultures Under Conditions of Deindustrialization Working Group Report,” compiled by George Steve Jaramillo, Melinda Harlov-Csortán, Roberta Garruccio, and Stefan Moitra, documents a stimulating and innovative initiative aimed, within the European Labor History Network, at critically reflecting on cultures of labor under conditions of deindustrialization. The working group’s impressive global reach promises major developments in the study of meanings and memories of industrial work, its loss, and the resulting changing social and geographical landscapes. “‘German Labour History is Back’ – Announcing the Foundation of the German Labour History Association” is Stefan Berger’s report from the first conference of the German Labour History Association, in February 2020, an important event marking not only a step in the rebirth of German working-class historiography after the crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, but also the establishment, for the first time, of a national organization in this field, to which German historians have long provided decisive contributions. Finally, Silvia Hunold Lara and Nauber Gavski da Silva’s note, “Labor Relations and Slavery in Contemporary Brazil: A New Digital Collection,” presents a new project for the digital preservation of public and legal archives on slavery and contemporary enslavement in Brazil. By coordinating and protecting archival information on slavery and labor conditions analogous to it, the collection will undoubtedly be a vital asset in the study of coerced labor, including the exploitation of indigenous work and human rights violations on women, children, and people with disabilities.

Our book review essay is “Police Work, Unbounded,” where Kirsten Weld discusses two recent texts on the often neglected topic of policing as a form of work. *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, by Stuart Schrader and *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police*, by Micol Seigel are put in conversation by Weld to emphasize features that define police work across its national and global dimensions. The two books invite readers to think of the police as actors overcoming, in the daily labor of state-sponsored violence, conventional divides between military and civilian, national and international, or private and public. To analyze policing as work requires thus an understanding of how police power is always already a militarized articulation of the state operating in the interest of private capital by combining, especially in the case of training programs

run by the U.S. government, domestic repression and global counterinsurgency in heavily racialized ways.

In conclusion, we are convinced that—coming out in a period of global pandemic, deepening economic crisis, and growing uncertainties over the future of labor as well as labor history institutions—the contributions for this issue testify to the continuing vitality of labor and working-class historiography as well as its capacity to generate questions and perspectives that are vital in increasingly precarious times.

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