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INTRODUCTION

Regimes of Bondage: The Encounter between Early Modern European and Asian Slaveries

Stuart M McManus[1]* and Rômulo Ehalt[2]

[1]The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China and [2]Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
***Corresponding author**. Email: smcmanus@cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract

This special issue focuses on the broader context and interconnectedness of different slave regimes in early modern Asia. Various transnational commercial and imperial projects influenced the waxing and waning of individual slave regimes, while internal and interpersonal conditions within polities also played important roles. The well-known European seaborne empires of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and England were major drivers of this early modern slavery, but they coexisted and competed with other groups of trader-raiders. These included merchants from the Islamicate world and Chinese coastal regions, which connected Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, and other regions. These extensive markets linked different regions together, such as the Malabar Coast with East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Red Sea. While the focus is on the Iberian expansion and its impact on the slave trade, this special issue acknowledges that slavery in Asia should be understood as a result of multiple overlapping and interacting regimes. Each article examines a particular regime while emphasizing its interactions with neighboring regions during the early modern period. The main focus is on the encounters between different slave regimes facilitated by early modern commercial networks. The history of slavery in early modern Asia involved clashes and cross-pollination between disparate slave systems. A further contribution relates to the terminology used to define and understand slavery in non-European contexts, which is still a subject of debate. The concept of "regimes of bondage" is adopted as an umbrella term to encompass the various forms of coerced, subaltern, and dependent labor in Asia during this period. Finally, by using local categories and sources, including European and non-European language materials, the special issue aims to recover marginalized perspectives and highlight the complexity and challenges of studying slavery in Asia.

Keywords: slavery; slave regimes; East Asia; Southeast Asia

Among Charles Boxer's papers at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana, is a set of lecture notes written sometime after World War II. Although in draft form with many cryptic passages and intriguing erasures, they sketch out an intellectual project that remains far from accomplished even today: a detailed, source-based history of slavery in the Iberian world. Indeed, reading through the jottings of this founding figure of Iberian imperial history, whose own early life in Japan and Hong Kong played out during the epilogue of large-scale European imperialism, one is struck by how easily it speaks to modern scholarship. To take one prominent example, it emphasises connections not only between

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Africa, the Americas, and Europe, but also Asia, resulting in a suggestive account of the Iberian world's vast and multi-ethnic slave trade that in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came to envelope large parts of the globe.[1]

Although written several generations ago, Boxer's lecture notes seem like a response to the ongoing calls from historians of slavery, most notably the late and great David Brion Davis, to place the transatlantic slave trade in a larger connected and comparative context (Iberian, Anglophone, or otherwise).[2] Of particular interest is Boxer's light-footed integration of Asia with the Atlantic world, a logical combination for a Japanologist and scholar of Portuguese expansion who wrote as readily on Brazil as he did on Macau. This remains a hard act to follow, in particular because slavery beyond the Cape of Good Hope has been comparatively neglected in the intervening decades and so it is hard to "stand on the shoulders of giants" as we might do when studying Angola or Brazil. Indeed, while slavery in West and Central Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Islamic world have been considered both as a series of independent systems and as part of a larger Atlantic (or "Mediterratlantic") world, the scholarship on Asia (broadly understood) is still in its infancy.[3] Admittedly, there have recently been a number of promising monographs and edited volumes evincing a surge of interest in the topic.[4] Unfortunately, the historiography on the transatlantic slave trade still barely engages with the few studies that exist on slavery in Asia, despite the important insights (and even direct connections) this has the potential to reveal.[5] Within this context, Boxer's lecture notes seem positively farsighted.

While recognising the very different sensibility of our age, this special issue aims to build on Boxer's unfinished work and contribute to ongoing efforts to understand the "big picture" of early modern slavery by centring Asia, while simultaneously acknowledging that the commodification of people and labour in this largely overlooked region was part of a series of connected and parallel slave regimes that together formed what bordered on an early modern world market in people.[6] Within this larger context, individual and partially amalgamated regimes waxed and waned, as various transnational commercial and imperial projects rose and fell. Internal and interpersonal conditions also changed within polities, creating and severing connections with other parts of the world, just

[1] University of Indiana, Bloomington, Lilly Library, Boxer mss III, Research and Notes, Box 10. On Boxer, see Dauril Alden et al., *Charles R. Boxer: An Uncommon Life: Soldier, Historian, Teacher, Collector, Traveller* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2001).

[2] David Brion Davis, "Looking at Slavery from Broader Perspectives," *American Historical Review* 105:2 (2000), 452–66. On the interrelated nature of Iberian and English slavery, see Michael Guasco, "Agents of Empire: Africans and the Origins of English Colonialism in the Americas," in *Entangled Empires: The Anglo-Iberian Atlantic, 1500–1830,* ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 43–5.

[3] On the concept of a Mediterratlantic world, see Byron Ellsworth Hamann, *Bad Christians, New Spains: Muslims, Catholics and Native Americans in a Mediterratlantic World* (London: Routledge, 2021).

[4] Martin A. Klein, ed., *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Gwyn Campbell, ed., *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004); Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, eds., *Slavery & South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Edward A. Alpers et al., eds., *Resisting Bondage in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007); Gwyn Campbell, ed., *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2013); Alessandro Stanziani, ed., *Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia, 17th–20th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Alessandro Stanziani, ed., *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); Gwyn Campbell, ed., Bondage and the Environment in the Indian Ocean World (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe, eds., *Being a Slave: Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020); Richard B. Allen, ed., *Slavery and Bonded Labor in Asia, 1250–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Kate Ekama et al., eds., *Slavery and Bondage in Asia, 1550-1850: Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2022).

[5] Tatiana Seijas, "The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish Manila: 1580–1640," *Itinerario* 32:1 (2008), 19–38.

[6] Shimojū Kiyoshi, *Miuri no Nihonshi: Jinshin baibai kara nenki hōkō he* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), 83.

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as individual parts developed according to their own historical dynamics. While the best-known drivers of this dark side of proto-globalisation were the seaborne empires of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and later England, Europeans were following in the footsteps of, and interacted and competed with, other groups of trader-raiders. These groups included not only merchants from the growing Islamicate world, but also extended to commercial interests and networks that connected Chinese coastal regions to Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea. In turn, these sprawling markets linked the Malabar Coast to East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Red Sea, as well as commercial concerns that entangled the Coromandel Coast with Bengal and Pegu. Though focused on the wide-ranging slave trade forged by Iberian expansion, this special issue recognises that slavery in Asia is best understood as the result of multiple overlapping and interacting regimes. Thus, each article is consciously rooted in one particular regime while stressing how it interacted with its neighbours during the early modern period. In essence, our focus here is on encounters between multiple regimes of bondage as facilitated by early modern commercial networks.

As will become clear, the story of slavery in early modern Asia was one of encounters between different people, ideas, and practices, which, as Tatiana Seijas so eloquently put it, took place "at the limits of the law of a number of nations."[7] These encounters involved clashes and crosspollination between disparate slave regimes, an underappreciated fact despite the interventions of Roquinaldo Ferreira and Hannah Barker, who have traced the interactions between economics and ideas in West Africa and the multiconfessional world of the medieval Mediterranean.[8] Charting the precise contours of these interactions is made even more difficult by the limited nature of the scholarship on Asian slavery. Indeed, beyond the familiar corners of the Atlantic world, the history of slavery all too frequently devolves into sociological discussions and comparative studies of this institution as an ill-defined form of labour, with universalising claims generally outnumbering archival reconstructions.[9] In picking one's way through such muddied waters, one is reminded of Suzanne Miers's statement that slavery is "the most misused word in the English language,"[10] that also "all too often encourages silence," to quote William Gervase Clarence-Smith.[11] Mercifully, however, there are at least a couple of models to follow. Since Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff's pioneering work on the limitations of Western concepts of slavery when applied to Africa, increasingly nuanced answers to what is frequently dubbed the "definitional question" have been

[7] Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 56.

[8] Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[9] Joseph Calder Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012); Michael Zeuske, "Historiography and Research Problems of Slavery and the Slave Trade in a Global-Historical Perspective," *IRSH* 57 (2012), 87–111. One cannot overstate the significance of Nieboer's work in popularising of the idea of slavery as a universally useful concept. Herman J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1900). In Japan, for instance, Nieboer was read as early as the 1930s, where it inspired Takigawa Seijirō to use the idea of slavery to describe various categories of coerced labour found in ancient Japan. See Takigawa Seijirō, *Nihon keizai doreishi* (Tokyo: Tōkōshoin, 1930). Takigawa's pioneering book was one of the cornerstones upon which an intense debate developed during the twentieth century in Japan concerning the use of the idea of slavery to classify a number of social institutions in medieval and feudal Japan. Takahashi Masaaki, "Nihon chūsei nōdosei ronsō," in *Rekishigaku jiten 6, rekishigaku no hōhō / Encyclopedia of Historiography 6: Methods in Historiography,* ed. Kabayama Kōichi (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1998), 490–1.

[10] Suzanne Miers, "Slavery: A Question of Definition," *S&A* 24:2 (2003), 1.

[11] William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

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proffered.[12] Helpful suggestions include the initial adoption of less-charged umbrella terms such as "bondage," "coerced labour," or "servitude," or the redefinition of slavery itself in order to encompass the multiple possible historical realities underlying the term. These serve to upset the universalising tendency in some of the scholarship on slavery as a transhistorical phenomenon rooted in an under-interrogated category.[13] However, whether any of these frameworks are really applicable to non-European slave regimes in Asia remains to be proven. In addition, the political consequences of any choice of terminology must be worked out, and will of course differ from country to country.

Yet one thing is clear: the early modern Iberian legal category of "slavery" was not a single unitary or uniform concept. Rather, it was a series of postmedieval reworkings of an ancient Mediterranean legal status that was subsequently influenced by encounters with numerous other forms of dependent labour.[14] In the early modern Iberian case, it was rooted in long-standing practices (both Christian and Muslim) where the conceptual frameworks of "slavery" (essentially the long shadow of the Roman category *servitus* resulting from warfare, sale, punishment, or birth to a slave mother) and "captivity" (i.e., the holding and potential ransoming of prisoners of war or kidnapped people) were often confounded.[15] From the fifteenth century onwards, Iberian imperialism expanded this system into West Africa and the Atlantic islands, where it took on new features, some inherited from local slave regimes and some dictated by the dynamics of these new colonial contexts.[16]

A similar process occurred in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iberian Asia as Portuguese slaving routes extended along maritime Afro-Eurasia and Spanish trade crossed the Pacific. In this way, as the articles in this special issue illustrate, Iberian customs came into contact with a varied and complex reality that is hard to subsume under a single label. At the same time, while Iberians (and Iberianised people of various origins) settled and created their own societies, marrying local women and giving birth to mixed children, so the very notion of slavery was transformed. As a result, it morphed into hybrid forms, foreign to Iberians and Asians alike, "never enough for both."[17] While there is a certain convenience inherent in applying the term "slavery" to this world, other frameworks can perhaps be more productive. Inspired by Gwyn Campbell, the subject of this special issue's interview, we have opted for *regimes of bondage* as the most

[12] Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives,* ed. Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 3–81.

[13] Alessandro Stanziani, *Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia, Seventeenth–Early Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 2; Kevin Bales, "Slavery in Its Contemporary Manifestations," in *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary,* ed. Jean Allain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281–303. For more on the definitional question of slavery in Asia, see Miers, "Slavery: A Question of Definition"; and Christine Molfenter, "Beyond Slavery: Historical Studies on Bonded Labour in the South Asian and Indian Ocean Regions," *Südasien-Chronik / South Asia Chronicle* 10 (2020), 413–39; Magaly Rodríguez García, "On the Legal Boundaries of Coerced Labor," in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery,* ed. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 11–29.

[14] António Manuel Hespanha, "Depois do Leviathan," *Almanack Braziliense* 5 (2007), 64; Tamar Herzog, "Schiavitù: Una Prospettiva Globale," in *Schiavitù del Corpo e Schiavitù dell'Anima,* ed. Emmanuele Colombo et al. (Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Centro Ambrosiano, 2018), 13.

[15] Juliane Schiel and Stefan Hanß, "Semantics, Practices and Transcultural Perspectives on Mediterranean Slavery," in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500–1800) / Neue Perspektiven auf mediterrane Sklaverei (500–1800)*, ed. Stefan Hanß and Juliane Schiel (Zürich: Chronos, 2014), 11–23.

[16] James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54:1 (1997), 143–66.

[17] Ijeoma Umebinyuo, "Diaspora Blues," in *Questions for Ada,* ed. Ijeoma Umebinyuo and Sonia Taaffe (Scotts Valley, Calif.: CreateSpace, 2015), 78.

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convenient umbrella term for the myriad forms of coerced, subaltern, and dependent labour found in Asia during the early modern period that subsequently interacted with Iberian agendas. This choice is primarily motivated by the urge to "provincialize Europe" by viewing "slavery" as an imported idea in the Asian context, although there were many phenomena that were highly reminiscent of it.[18]

Choosing to discuss regimes of bondage also has the virtue of underlining the problems inherent in seeing in Asia a simple free–slave dichotomy, where the alleged clear-cut differentiation between these two, as perceived in the Atlantic world (where it too has been subject to scrutiny in the most recent scholarship), is impossible to verify empirically.[19] To avoid such pitfalls, this special issue recovers local categories often marginalised and silenced either by omission or dismissal, using both European- and non-European language material.[20] Such close attention to a multilingual source base not only gives the perspectives of different actors, but also foregrounds the terminology used in different contexts, as well as highlighting the numerous problems of commensurability resulting from the gap between local and foreign expectations regarding human bondage. Similarly, local historiographical traditions and debates are front and centre in the way the authors of the individual articles approach their topics, as they recover and present contributions by Asian scholars written in East Asian languages, which would otherwise be inaccessible to those unfamiliar with the region's rich scholarly traditions. In order to cover as many of these as reasonably possible in this short special issue, the articles each have a different fulcrum, with a perceptible emphasis on the Sinosphere due to the richness of the surviving sources. These are arranged from the panoramic to the particular, although all the articles zoom in and out in their focus.

For instance, in the first article, entitled "Eastward across the Western Sea: The Indian Oceanic Trafficking of Africans into China," the eminent Sinologist Don Wyatt argues that the expansion of European regimes of bondage into Asia resulted in increasing Chinese contacts with dark-skinned slaves, whom the Chinese lumped together under the rubric of *Kunlun nu.* While other terms existed, this, he argues, was the main descriptor used for the group, many of whom he believes were originally from East Africa. This continuity in terminology underlines that even as European regimes of bondage expanded into China, they were interpreted within long-standing Chinese frameworks. These established conventions are essential to understanding later ideas, just as one must take into account classical and medieval terminology when studying Renaissance culture. Extending the chronological scope of his classic study, *Blacks of Premodern China,* Wyatt charts the origins and development of Chinese terminology for Africans (including *Kunlun nu, sengqi,* and *heinu*) and Chinese geographical knowledge of Africa (including Alexandria and Zanzibar) into the Ming and Qing periods.[21] To do so, he relies on a range of Chinese historiography and sources, including the 1680 *Guangdong xinyu* (News from Guangdong) of Qu Dajun (1630–96), who recounts the sale of dark-skinned slaves by Cantonese merchants. These unfortunate victims had likely previously passed through Portuguese Goa

[18] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[19] Gwyn Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Routledge History of Slavery,* ed. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (London: Routledge, 2010), 60–1; Michelle A. McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms: Slavery, Intimacy, and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima, 1600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[20] On the idea of silenced categories and a discussion on the place of these discourses in Malay studies, see Syed Farid Alatas, "Silencing as Method: The Case of Malay Studies," in *Fieldwork and the Self: Changing Research Styles in Southeast Asia,* ed. Jérémy Jammes and Victor T. King (Singapore: Springer, 2021), 199–214. Sure enough, such a proposition bears the Spivakian question on whether we are effectively ready or prepared to implement and debate such categories considering the disparaging difference in past scholarship dedicated to these in comparison to similar European categories.

[21] Don J. Wyatt, *The Blacks of Premodern China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

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and Macau before finding themselves in Qing China. We also learn from the *Guang zhiyi* (Record of extensive travels continued) of Wang Shixing (1546–98) about the Chinese perception of black slaves as fearsome warriors and skilled divers. This leads into a suggestive discussion of the possible roles played by the unknown number of *Kunlun nu* who found their way not only to Macau but also into Chinese households in Guangdong and elsewhere. There was not, he argues, a dearth of labour in premodern China, as existed in parts of the Americas. So why import enslaved black Africans, except for the very small number who possessed the aforementioned skills? He speculates that the bondage of *Kunlun nu* in premodern China was largely premised on a desire among the elite to have exotic-looking dependents in their households. In this sense, they were arguably little different from early modern European monarchs who engaged in such forms of conspicuous consumption. This is therefore perhaps an example of two regimes of bondage both interacting and paralleling each other across vast distances. In terms of sources and methodology, Wyatt has scoured the available written record in classical Chinese to find mentions of *Kunlun nu* and *heinu,* which he then contextualises and analyses in the traditional Sinological mode. This has the advantage of allowing us to see the ways that long-standing conventions for writing about dark-skinned peoples shaped Ming and Qing discourses within a millennial Sinographic tradition, and the subtle ways this was affected by contact with European regimes of bondage.

Taking a highly granular approach informed more by social history than traditional Sinology, James Fujitani traces the interactions between the Portuguese and Chinese regimes of bondage in the Pearl River Delta region in his article, “Sino-Portuguese Trafficking of Children during the Ming Dynasty.” These were multidirectional, with Chinese parents and people-traffickers seeking out buyers among the Portuguese, just as Portuguese merchants sought out sellers in southern China. Building on Chinese Marxian scholarship, Fujitani grounds his argument in a shift from a rural, feudal society to an urban, commercial one. This resulted in a move from small-scale free and peasant farming to large-scale commercialised farming, which forced people off the land and into debt, to become bonded peasants and frequently even to sell children they could no longer support. The resulting local revolts and the Qing conquest only compounded these stresses. With the peasantry facing such a dire situation, the particular choice to sell their children to foreigners, rather than to local gentry as had been traditionally the case, was driven by the desire to get the best possible price. The prohibition against selling children to non-Chinese merchants was simply ignored in the face of such pressing necessity, driven by the voracious appetite of foreign merchants who were tied into a large market beyond China that produced significant demand. Here, Fujitani underlines, foreigners included not only the recently arrived Portuguese, but also Malay, Siamese, and Javanese merchants who had long plied their trade along the southern coast. Depending on the bargaining power of the buyer, these sales at times resulted in permanent forms of bondage, something that horrified observers from Christian Europe, where the practice of selling children into slavery had died out centuries before. At other times, contracts stipulated what in the common law tradition might be called “indenture,” that is to say limited-term bondage with the expectation of work during that period. The other group who sold Chinese children to the Portuguese were kidnappers, who Fujitani identifies as displaced farmers desperate to make a quick buck, whatever the human cost. Like the farmers who were forced to sell their own children, these kidnappers were led to take such actions by the economic changes that were happening in this period. Fujitani also highlights how kidnappers seemed to show a preference for the children of gentry, partly because of the higher price they might fetch and partly out of animosity towards the elites. This is suggested by both Chinese and Portuguese sources, of which the author shows an unusual command. He concludes the essay with a suggestive and moving

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reconstruction of the experiences of the children sold by their parents and traffickers, relying on Chinese and Korean sources to hint at the tragedy obscured by the historical record.

The thin line dividing mercenaries and enslaved soldiers in early modern Southeast and East Asia is the topic of Stuart M. McManus's paper, "Arming Slaves in Early Modern Maritime Asia." Relying on sources in both Chinese and Portuguese, he identifies the various roles played by armed dependents in the region who served under European merchants and colonial authorities, as well as under Asian potentates such as Malay sultans, Chinese generals, and Siamese kings. Described using various monikers, including slave soldiers or sailors, mercenaries, bodyguards, and so forth, these were often males of African and Asian origin who took part in armed combat, defence, and diplomatic endeavours directly or indirectly related to colonial and mercantile enterprises. Based on their frequent association with slavery in European sources, McManus refers to the phenomenon as "military slavery," a practice that could trace its origins not only to foreign (European) ideas about armed service but also back to Chinese, Muslim, and other local (Asian) regimes of bondage. In so doing, the article addresses a topic that, although extensively explored by scholars working on Islamic military slavery, has been widely ignored by specialists in European colonial empires in Asia. As described by McManus, slave combatants were subject to a wide variety of regimes of coerced labour in which individuals might assume multiple legal and social statuses. They also frequently fought alongside convicts and other types of bonded people, whose nomenclature changes according to the worldview and agendas of the sources. In an effort to deal with the fleeting complexity of these malleable identities, McManus emphasises a focus on such groups as part of mobile populations of bonded people and men of fortune. From this point of view, it becomes clear how such fluidity of identities allowed individuals to engage in trade, piracy, and armed combat according to their status, abilities, and personal agendas. Drawing on scholarship on Latin America and the Islamic world, McManus also explores how the military aspects of Asian and European regimes of bondage were exchanged in the context of the early modern entanglement.

In "Geninka and Slavery: Jesuit casuistry and Tokugawa legislation on Japanese bondage (1590s-1620s)," Rômulo da Silva Ehalt explores the intersection of two distinct slave regimes and their intellectual underpinnings to bring out the various forms of subjection of individuals to bondage in Japan. His point of departure is a pair of landmark events: the debate held by Jesuit theologians in India regarding slavery in Japan in the 1590s, and the legal responses of the Tokugawa shogunate to human trafficking in the late 1610s. Here, the focus is on the thorny issue of terminology, with the word "slavery" itself being reserved in the article for imported European ideas of bondage instead of an ahistorical, universalising category. Meanwhile, drawing inspiration from Japanese scholarship, local variations are presented as *genin,* and the process of transformation of an individual into one of the many forms of coerced or hired labour existing in early modern Japan is labelled *geninka.* These processes involved voluntary or involuntary subjection to bondage through kidnapping or deceit at the hands of local traders, or in some instances limited-time labour contracts, a practice that gained traction following the arrival of the Portuguese in the middle of the sixteenth century. These transformations and the sheer variety of forms of bondage is made clear in both Portuguese and Japanese sources. While the shogunate focused on curbing human trafficking, Jesuit theologians in India recorded a larger number of different forms of *genin.* These included women who upon fleeing their husbands or fathers could end up being subjected to bondage by local lords, as well as children born as *genin* to mothers in similar situations. On the basis of legally and theologically authoritative texts, Jesuits equated some of these forms of bondage with slavery, showing how already in the sixteenth century there were doubts

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regarding the universality of the idea. Ehalt's paper corrects a number of misconceptions in recent work on Japanese slavery by combining his analysis of sources with in-depth reading of Japanese historiography on the applicability of the term "slavery" to medieval and early modern Japan. The article also highlights a number of future directions for research regarding the many interactions of colonial slavery with regimes of bondage existing beyond the formal limits of Iberian empires, particularly in Asia.

The special issue concludes with an interview with one of the pioneering figures in the study of slavery in Asia, Gwyn Campbell. Born in Madagascar and brought up in Wales, Campbell is probably best-known as one of the founders of the modern study of what he calls the Indian Ocean World (or IOW). This transnational space reaches from East Africa to China and Japan, and is united by a series of geographical, environmental, and human factors that mean it can usefully be studied as a whole. Placing slavery within the context of the monsoon system and the various polities that encircled this vast maritime region, Campbell's work shows how many of the conclusions reached on the basis of the study of the transatlantic slave trade are ill-suited to direct application to the IOW, or indeed "most of the world, and most of history." Revealing and engaging, the interview concludes with a call for "openness and debate."

In sum, each in their own way the four essays in this special issue underline that slavery in Asia was the product of encounters between different regimes of bondage. This said, there are important threads that run through all the articles. While focused more on cultural rather than economic questions, all the articles are linked by a concern with the dynamics and effects of the slave trade in Asia as "trade." This facilitated the interactions across regimes of bondage that animate the papers in this special issue. In all the studies presented here, a particular emphasis is also placed on the clashes, confrontations, and hybrid products of the interactions between Iberian and Southeast and East Asian regimes of bondage. This makes best use of the linguistic skills of the contributors and foregrounds the regimes of bondage in a part of the world that is *terra incognita* to historians of slavery in comparison to the area west of the Straits of Malacca. Here, the choice of the terminology "regimes of bondage" is deliberate, and is used to underline the Western nature of slavery as a category, which arrived in Asia only with the advent of Europeans (and arguably Islam), where it coexisted and at times mixed with other regimes of bondage. This said, the papers make clear that there were local norms and practices that were sufficiently slavery-adjacent to allow the aforementioned interactions to take place and hybrid forms to emerge.

Many of the insights contained herein came out of the discussions at a manuscript workshop held during the summer of 2021, generously supported by the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory. There, Norah Gharala (University of Houston) and Indrani Chatterjee (University of Texas, Austin) offered incisive comments on the role of legal documentation, race, and a myriad of other important considerations. Important interventions were also made by Claudio Costa Pinheiro (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), Matthias van Rossum (International Institute of Social History), and Vinil Paul (Jawaharlal Nehru University), whose expertise greatly contributed to expanding the initial debate into unforeseen arenas, such as contemporary Dutch expansion, the colonial encounter in South Asia, and epistemic colonialism in the historiography. Subtly integrating the insights of these generous colleagues, this special issue hopes to spur interest in the encounter of regimes of bondage throughout the early modern world. Perhaps one day someone will even take up the gauntlet thrown down some fifty years ago by Charles Boxer.

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