

**S. 10. 4 – COERCIVE SEAS – REVISITING EARLY MODERN COERCED MOBILITIES  
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**Organisers:**

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### Panel Abstract

Studies of bondage, such as slavery, serfdom and coerced labour have a significant and enduring intersection with maritime history. The sea served as an arena for coerced labour in and of itself, but also as the realm for immense flows of forced migrations, especially in the early modern era. The sea as a space of coercion offer an opportunity to consider coerced labour regimes across the globe not as separated from one another: the maritime sphere will let us explore the connections between societies in the past, and understand the links and transfers between different coercive regimes.

Recent studies on the slavery in the Mediterranean, Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago worlds indicate that slave trade was also widespread outside the Atlantic world. Commodified forms of slavery existed side by side with forms of non-commodified bondage, by which it was influenced and with which interacted, most importantly *corvée*, caste- and debt-based slavery (Van Rossum 2020). Similar to these different regimes of coercion, however, there were also various forms of coerced mobility, or forced relocations, existed as well, as the example of prisoners of war indicates clearly (Turner & Peters, 2016). Slave trade was not the only form of coerced mobility, but existed alongside for example deportation, repopulation, tribute and kidnapping. This paper takes a broad and comparative view of such mobility, including traded slaves, coerced maritime labour and forced relocation.

Building on meetings in Amsterdam (2016), Kalmar (2017) and Lyon (2019), this panel is part of a network of scholars that aims to further the study of coerced labour and relocation in Asia. This panel explores patterns of maritime coerced mobility in early modern Asia and the Pacific, and hopes to deepen our understanding of the variety of coerced Mobilities in the past, and to reconsider the role of these coerced mobilities had in *connecting* and *shaping* regimes of coercion in the early modern maritime sphere. This panel thus aims to detect characteristics, differences and commonalities through in-depth analysis of coerced migration, and the way in which such diverse maritime systems and networks overlapped and affected each other.

## *A slave economy in the East Indies: Seaborne transportation of slaves to the Banda Islands*

HANS HÄGERDAL (Professor of history at the Linnaeus University)

### **Abstract**

The Banda Islands were famously conquered by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1621, wiping out much of the indigenous population. As Banda was the home to the vital trading items nutmeg and mace, the VOC devised a plantation system on the island that was worked by slave labour - a rare Asian parallel to the slave system of the West Indies. The paper discusses the sources of unfree labour in Banda in various parts of Asia, and offers a network analysis on the way the Dutch built up routines of purchase and forced transportation in eastern Indonesia.

### **Keywords**

Banda Islands, VOC, slavery, shipping

### **Biography**

Hans Hägerdal is a Professor in History at Linnaeus University, Sweden. His main field of research is early colonial encounters in Southeast Asia. He has in particular studied early-colonial societies in Timor and Maluku, addressing problems of resistance and adaptation to colonial structures.

## *Free and Unfree Labor in Portuguese Shipping on the China Seas*

**JAMES FUJITANI** (Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Azusa Pacific University)

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the Portuguese ships that traded in East Asia during the sixteenth century. There is much mystery surrounding their crew compositions. Many sources indicate that Europeans made up no more than 20% of the personnel. However, they give relatively few details as to who made up the other 80%. Some sources suggest that these were slaves, while others suggest that they were free Asian sailors. This ambiguity flows into a larger debate over the nature of European maritime expansion. While some scholars say that Europeans tried to take over the Asian trade routes using forced labor, others say that Europeans integrated into the trade networks by partnering with local merchants. This paper helps shed light on the question. Through a careful examination of both Chinese and Portuguese sources, it offers fairly precise estimates of the ships' crew compositions. It is clear that most ships had both slaves and free sailors. However, it is less clear how work was divided among them.

### **Keywords**

Portugal, China Sea, Trade, Ship Crews, Slavery

### **Biography**

James Fujitani is Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Azusa Pacific University. He studies the history of East-West relations, in particular during the sixteenth century. His research topics include Portuguese diplomacy with Japan and China, Jesuit missions to East Asia, and trade, piracy, and slave trafficking in the China Seas.

## *The middle passage in the European slave trade on Madagascar (17th-18th centuries)*

RAFAËL THIEBAUT (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

### **Abstract**

The Transatlantic slave trade counts as one of the best researched forms of forced migration in the Modern age. And while the slave trade in the Indian Ocean has received considerable attention in the last decades, much remains to be done. We see that the volume of this commerce is at the heart of the recently created Exploring the Slave Trade Project. On other elements of the slave trade, however, little is still known.

Madagascar was an important slaving reservoir for different European East India Companies. During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Dutch, French and English vessels traded slaves on the Big Island and disembarked them in different locations like Cape Colony, Sumatra, Mauritius, Bombay, Ceylon and even the Americas. While closely resembling the Transatlantic slave trade, the Madagascar slave trade is quite particular both in its organization and in its execution.

In this paper, we propose to study the maritime aspects and the middle passage of the European slave trade on Madagascar during the Early Modern Age. Thanks to an extensive archival research, we have been able to extract information on the slave ships used, the composition of crew and cargo, the age-sex ratio, the mortality, desertion techniques and shipboard revolts. Compared to the Transatlantic slave trade, and other forms of (forced) migration, we can better understand this phenomenon.

### **Keywords**

Slave Trade, Madagascar, Middle Passage, Indian Ocean, Forced Migration

### **Biography**

Rafaël Thiébaud defended his thesis « Traite des esclaves et commerce néerlandais et français à Madagascar (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles) » at the Université Paris 1 under joint supervision with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in November 2017. Currently, he is a postdoctoral researcher at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and he works on the larger research project « Resilient Diversity: the Governance of Racial and Religious Plurality in the Dutch Empire, 1600-1800 ».