

**Vernieuwingsimpuls
Innovational Research Incentives Scheme
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Registration form (basic details)

1a. Details of applicant

Title: Dr.
 First name: Matthias
 Initials: M
 Prefix: van
 Surname: van Rossum
 Email: mvr@iisg.nl
 Website: <http://socialhistory.org/nl/staff/matthias-van-rossum>

1b. Title of research proposal

Between local debts and global markets: Explaining slavery in South and Southeast Asia, 1600-1800

1c. Summary of research proposal

Most of today's 35.8 million slaves live in Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, China and Indonesia. This is not without a history. Recent scholarship has noted that the long-distance slave trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian archipelago in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was almost as extensive as its Atlantic counterpart. This indicates that the system of market slavery was more important than previously supposed and challenges dominant perspectives that portray slavery in Asia as a local phenomenon based mainly on debt bondage and slaves as status objects (Reid 1983; Campbell 2012). Drawing on suggestions that slavery in Asia should be seen as a dynamic part of a global economic system (Mann 2012), this project shows how slavery functioned as an economic system at least in and around the VOC empire in South and Southeast Asia.

This project sheds new light on the history of slavery in Asia by studying debt and market systems of slavery as interconnected systems of economic production. It aims to explain the development of forms of slavery in South and Southeast Asia from 1600 to 1800 and thus uncover the early roots of (modern) slavery. The case of the VOC is crucial as it controlled significant territories. This research will: a) reconstruct and analyse the slave labour force needed to produce key products in South and Southeast Asia; b) reconstruct and analyse the slave trade to VOC territories and VOC-related production areas; c) and analyse and compare the functioning of slavery as an economic system in *urban* and *rural* working environments in three VOC settlements having key positions in South and Southeast Asia: Cochin (India), Galle (Ceylon) and Batavia (Java). The results will be presented to academic audiences (English monograph; academic symposium) and the broader public (museum and educational seminar; information pack).

1d. Keywords

SLAVERY; ECONOMIC PRODUCTION; GLOBALIZATION; COERCION; LABOUR RELATIONS

Research proposal

2a1 and 2a2. Description of the proposed research

Main research aim

The *Global Slavery Index* estimates that, currently, 35.8 million people live in conditions of slavery, mostly in Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, China and Indonesia (GSI 2014). The continuous role of coercion in labour-intensive industries in South and Southeast Asia is also reported elsewhere (SOMO 2014; Lucassen, van Rossum 2015). However, in the history of slavery academics and the public have focused almost entirely on the Atlantic experience of the past five centuries (Oostindie 2001).

Yet recent scholarship indicates that the Asian slave trade was almost as extensive as its Atlantic counterpart (Vink 2003; van Welie 2008; van Rossum 2015). This challenges the dominant focus on Atlantic slavery. More importantly, it implies the need to reassess prevailing perspectives claiming that Asian slavery was dominated by local forms of debt-related slavery, with slaves as status objects, and less for economic purposes. It prompts questions on the functioning of slavery and use of slaves.

This project engages with these new directions by studying how forms of slavery functioned. It aims to explain the development of forms of slavery in the period 1600-1800 by studying slave-based production, slave trade and labour relations in and around the VOC empire in South and Southeast Asia, focusing on three key settlements (Cochin, Galle and Batavia). The VOC provides a crucial case, controlling significant territories in South and Southeast Asia to which the prevailing perspectives on (mild) slavery are applied.

The Indian Ocean and Indonesian archipelago were closely connected maritime worlds. For most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the VOC was the largest trading organization in the intra-Asiatic trade (van Rossum 2014). Unlike in the Dutch Atlantic, slave populations were already growing rapidly in VOC areas from c. 1600 to 1750 (Vink 2003; van Rossum 2015). From 1807, the abolition of the slave trade forced (legal) market slavery to the margins of Europe's empires (Warren 1981; Ewald 2000; Tagliacozzo 2007). New forms of coercive labour relations developed, but in the long run slavery did not vanish completely (Allen 2014). Tapping into existing systems of trade and slavery, the VOC acted as a catalyst, connecting South and Southeast Asian slave-based production to world markets (Jacobs 2000). VOC regions were also important destinations for the slave trade (Raben 2008). Functioning as a government, the VOC shaped slavery as an institution by regulating markets, laws and labour relations (Knaap 2014).

Debate

The distinction between 'open' and 'closed' forms of slavery is crucial to understanding perspectives on slavery. Open forms enabled slaves to join the kinship systems of slave owners. Closed forms kept slaves apart, making them permanent outsiders (Watson 1980). Both systems were fed by war and impoverishment (Chatterjee and Eaton 2006). Impoverishment is often associated with local, open forms of debt-related slavery – with slaves regaining 'freedom by paying off their debts' (Boomgaard 2003,87; Chatterjee, Eaton 2006). Captives and market slaves who could 'be bought and sold' often remained outsiders (*idem*).

Most studies claim market systems were less important in Asian contexts, portraying slavery as local and the slave trade as limited (Campbell 2011). Unlike Atlantic plantation systems, Asian slavery is characterized as 'mild' urban household slavery, with

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slaves functioning as servants and 'objects of conspicuous consumption by elites' (Reid 1983; Campbell 2011,61). Slaves were a luxury, not a production factor (Boomgaard 2003,93). These concepts are also projected onto European colonies, emphasizing 'the "cozy" intimacy of pure household slavery', diminishing only 'as plantations radiated outward from late eighteenth-century Batavia' (Jones 2010,144).

Such arguments reflect notions that slavery was local and debt-related. Boomgaard states that 'if it is accepted that debt was the chief cause of enslavement, most slaves were not aliens – unless it can be proven that they were subsequently sold outside the community' (Boomgaard 2003,90). Recent literature has challenged this assumption (Allen 2010; Dijk 2008; van Welie 2008; Vink 2003). Although limited to studying the extent of the slave trade, these studies indicate that the system of market slavery was much more extensive and widespread than previously supposed. Large numbers of slaves were traded over long distances, through networks connecting the Indian Ocean and Indonesian archipelago and transgressing divides between European and Asian societies (Seijas 2014).

Innovation

The implications extend beyond the slave trade alone. They question how widespread systems of market slavery were, how they functioned and what slaves were used for. Except for Dutch South Africa and Banda, these have not yet been systematically explored. In these cases, studies conclude that market slavery meant 'slaves were used as units of coerced labour with an overwhelmingly economic function' in agriculture, transport and urban production (Worden 1985,2; Biewenga 1999; Hooper, Eltis 2013; Banda: van Zanden 1991; Winn 2010).

Elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia there are indications that slaves were used for producing sugar, pepper, cloves, rice and other crops (Vink 2003; Chattopadhyay 1977), but also in manufacture (as smiths, coopers, tailors, etc. – also household related) and industry (sugar refineries, distilleries, ship building, etc.) (van Rossum 2015; Vink 2003). Slaves were employed directly or rented out – by corporations, states and European, Eurasian and Asian owners (van Rossum 2015; Raben 2008).

This project develops these implications, innovatively studying slavery as a system of economic production in light of four observations:

- Slavery was related to labour-intensive paths to economic development (Stanziani 2014a), and new perspectives should develop Mann's idea of conceptualizing Asian slavery as 'a dynamic part of a continuously changing, globally connected and increasingly capitalistic economic system' (Mann 2012,22).
- Slavery in Asia was basically underpinned by two systems: local forms of directly enforced social relations of coercion, and non-local systems of market slavery fuelled by the long-distance slave trade (van Rossum 2015).
- Slaves fulfilled economic functions in both systems, as they were sources of labour power in household, industrial and agricultural work, or were rented out.
- Systems of (European and Asian) market and local debt slavery were strongly connected – local systems provided slaves for the long-distance slave trade.

Analysing slavery as a system of economic production, this project compares slavery in urban and rural working environments in and around three important VOC settlements. The focus on urban centres, rural environments and households reflects the recognition that these were crucial economic sites (Lucassen, van der Linden 1999). It contributes to

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innovative developments in historical and economic studies, uncovering and studying key factor markets in the history of Asia (Lucassen 2012; van Rossum 2014; Gommans 2002,69; de Zwart 2015) and, moreover, to recent insights into free and unfree labour relations and labour-intensive routes in economic development (van der Linden 2008; Stanziani 2014a).

The characteristics of the cases selected are crucial to understanding the dynamics of slavery. Economic conditions varied from casual, contract and slave labour (Batavia and the *ommelanden*) to slave and contract labour alongside local systems of rural- and urban-obligated *corvée* labour (Galle, Cochin and surroundings) (van Rossum 2014; Dewasiri 2008). On Java, similar practices of *corvée* labour increased in the eighteenth century (Bremen 2010). The VOC's position varied from *sovereign* (Batavia; coastal Ceylon) to *suzerain* (Cochin) (Knaap 2014). The pivotal position of these urban settlements and their rural environments was linked to trade (Batavia; Galle) and military presence (Cochin; Galle), but more especially to key products, particularly cinnamon (Galle), pepper (Cochin) and sugar (Batavia).

Method

In the debates on labour and economic development, the crucial factors in the development of slavery are: labour, mobility, population, production and institutions. Taking these into account requires an analysis integrating methods from *global labour history*, *economic history*, *legal history* and the *social sciences*.

Labour and demography: The Nieboer *thesis* explains slavery in terms of the abundance of accessible land combined with labour shortages (Nieboer 1910). This thesis has been used or refined for the Americas and South Africa (Fogel, Engerman 1974; Green 2014). For South and Southeast Asia it needs further study as Nieboer-thesis conditions were absent and explanations must incorporate more complex situations involving 'free' and 'coerced' labour (Boomgaard 2003,88; Bosma 2011).

Mobility: Contrasting with the Nieboer thesis, it has been argued that coercive systems of slavery and serfdom were actually ways to bind mobile workforces (Stanziani 2014a/b). Mobility has been central to the literature on the Indian Ocean and Indonesian archipelago, but has not yet been connected to slavery (Knaap 1996; McPherson 1993; Pearson 2003; Sheriff 2010; van Rossum 2014).

Modes of production: Traditionally, Asian modes of production are regarded as different from European ones, characterized by despotism (Weber) and lack of private property (Marx) (Banaji 2011; Stanziani 2014a). Scholars of Asian slavery have argued against the existence of 'a slave mode of production' (Reid 1983,23). Recent studies argue that contemporaries perceived slavery as a modern, dynamic economic system (Mann 2012; Winn 2010). Simultaneously, Asian labour-intensive paths are portrayed as dominant 'in most of Eurasia' and pivotal in the global diffusion of economic development (Austin and Sugihara 2013; Stanziani 2014a,9). These trajectories increased constraints on labour, spawning slavery, serfdom and contract labour (Stanziani 2014b).

Institutions: Debates on the historical divergence of Europe and Asia have emphasized the role of geopolitical limitations (Pomeranz 2000; Wong 1997), colonialism (Parthasarathi 2011) and world trade systems (Wallerstein 1974-2011; Frank 1998). Economic and political institutions are increasingly seen as crucial factors (Robinson, Acemoglu 2012; van Zanden 2009; Mokyr 2002). The effect of institutions on labour relations is key to most explanations but has not been studied systematically – here, the impact of global trade, the VOC and local institutions on slavery are crucial.

Research plan and questions

The project systematically explores the key elements of slave systems and production. The main research question is: *How can the development of forms of debt and market slavery in South and Southeast Asia between 1600 and 1800 be explained?*

There are three research steps (linked to sources and methods):

- 1 *Which sectors employed slaves producing for world markets in and around VOC territories, what was the estimated demand for slave labour in these sectors and what changed in this period?*

Reconstructing and analysing the slave labour force required for producing key products in South and Southeast Asia provides indications of the workforce involved (A) and the volume of exports to the world market (B).

- 2 *How extensive was the slave trade in, to and from VOC territories and VOC-related production areas in South and Southeast Asia, and how did this change in this period?*

Reconstructing and analysing the extent and operation of the slave trade in VOC territories and VOC-related production areas is vital to uncovering segments of market slavery. Data is available for the development of slave populations in urban settings (Raben; Knaap; C) and semi-urban or rural environments (A+C+E). Additional data concerns slave markets, prices and trade routes (A+D).

- 3 *How were slaves employed in different working environments throughout the VOC empire (cases: Batavia, Galle and Cochin)? How did different forms of slavery function as systems of economic production and how were they related? Did labour relations and employment change over time?*

A comparative analysis of *urban* and *rural* working environments of Batavia, Galle and Cochin is crucial to understanding slavery as an economic system. Detailed information on labour, workplaces and the regulation of slavery as an institution can be uncovered (F+G; also A+D+E). The analysis will distinguish between:

- 1) European, Eurasian and Asian households;
- 2) Private workplaces – *idem*;
- 3) VOC workplaces;
- 4) Private and VOC agricultural production sites.

Available sources

- A- Travel accounts (KNAW-Collection; *Reisebeschreibungen*; *Linschoten-series*), merchant guides (NEHA);
- B- *Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia* (HuygensING), *Havenmeestersadministratie* (NA-VOC);
- C- *Gezinsrollen, bevolkingstellingen* (NA-VOC-OBP; NA-VOC-Cochin; SLNA);
- D- *Generale missiven* (HuygensING), *Marginalia dagregisters Batavia* (ANRI/CortsFoundation);
- E- Reports, administrations workplaces (NA-VOC-OBP; SLNA; ANRI), private archives (NA-VOC; NA-Cnoll; NA-Radermacher; etc.);
- F- Public ordinances Batavia, Cochin, Galle and Colombo (NA-VOC; van der Chijs; Hovy);
- G- *Raad van Justitie, Schepenbank*: Batavia (NA-VOC), Cochin (NA-VOC-Cochin), Galle (SLNA).

2b. Knowledge utilisation

Public demand

Recent years demonstrated the societal importance of this research project. In contrast to the publicity concerning the abolition of slavery in the Dutch West Indies (1863) in 2013, the abolition of slavery in the Dutch East Indies (1860) was completely ignored. Since then, Dutch scholars have called to increase awareness of the history of Asian slavery (Paasman 2013; Bosma 2013; van der Wal 2013). Internationally, a growing attention for modern slavery and its origins is visible in the *Global Slavery Index*. The new year mass of Pope Francis (2015) called to fight slavery and human trafficking. In South Asia, Dalit-organisations campaign against its continuous existence, addressing international bodies such as the UN and ILO.

There is a clear need to move beyond Atlantic-centric perspectives on slavery (Combrink 2014). The public symposium on Slavery in the Dutch Empire evidenced a demand for knowledge of the Dutch history of slavery in Asia and other non-Atlantic regions from a diverse audience (KNAW-IISH-Symposium, 25-09-2014). The need to understand historical patterns of coercion and slavery is made even more urgent by the persistent global existence of modern slavery. The persistence of slavery indicates that economic development does not produce or rely on increasing freedom, but can very well rely on coercion, especially in labour-intensive paths (Lucassen, van Rossum 2015). Therefore, the knowledge produced in this research project is crucial to academia and society.

Contribution and cooperation

The project will be hosted at the International Institute of Social History (KNAW), which plays a pivotal role in the global history of labour, migration and slavery with its *Global Labour History* programme. The IISH has an excellent track record in communicating to various audiences, especially media and non-academic Dutch audiences (through a range of channels available to the IISH, KNAW, etc.). Internationally, the IISH is crucially positioned in the *Global Network* (with Harvard University, University of Delhi, etc.), *International Social History Association* and *European Labour History Network*. It has contacts with relevant NGO's (ILO, international and national labour unions).

The project will collaborate closely with the *Leiden Institute of Slavery Studies* (Leiden University) and the *Mapping Slavery Project* (a public-academic collective, VU University, <http://mappingslavery.nl/>). These contacts enable the project to contribute to the broader fields of postcolonial, heritage and historical studies, and especially to reach out to broader audiences.

Dissemination and usage

This project will disseminate to society the knowledge gained by reaching out to intermediaries holding central positions in important societal areas, especially educators, policy makers and NGO's. Intermediaries are important since they translate academic knowledge and act upon it. Addressing them will enable the results of this project to be disseminated in the most efficient way.

The three main targets are:

- Education sector (especially teachers and policymakers);
- Cultural and museum sector (especially museum professionals);
- NGO's and interest groups.

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Three interrelated activities will be undertaken, leading to interaction with intermediaries and dissemination of the knowledge produced by this research project:

- 1- Organizing a workshop for museum and cultural professionals (as an independent part of the academic symposium), enabling an academic-cultural exchange on (visual) sources on slavery in Asia under the VOC. Activating interest and expertise among professionals, the workshop aims to:
 - A. Map and analyse the visual and physical heritage of Asian slavery in collections of Dutch museums;
 - B. Explore connections between this heritage and the results of the research project;
 - C. Explore possibilities to employ this heritage for public and educational use – in the cultural and museum sector, and the education sector (see activity 2).

Several museums with important collections relating to this topic, including the Rijksmuseum (Jeroen van der Vliet), Het Scheepvaartmuseum (Joost Schokkenbroek) and Amsterdam Museum (Kees Zandvliet), have confirmed their interest in participating.

- 2- Organizing a meeting and debate on the possibilities to employ the research results and knowledge on the history of slavery in Asia in the education sector, facilitating an exchange between a range of participants, including history teachers, policymakers, relevant NOG's, other educational professionals (e.g. from museums) and academic experts. Contact will be sought with the Vereniging van docenten geschiedenis en staatsinrichting in Nederland (Kleio), Europeana and the Koninklijk Nederlands Historisch Genootschap.
- 3- Creating an *information pack* containing information on the key results of the research project. This will be available digitally from the project website, with the key results formatted for use as teaching material through visualizations, tables, maps, short comprehensive texts, selected source material and literature suggestions. The structure and content of this information pack will reflect the outcome of the two workshops.

2c. Number of words used: section 2a 1999

Number of words used: section 2b 750

2d. Literature references

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