

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20028]

Proposed title of the session

Global Impact of Slave Trade and Slavery – a comparative approach

Abstract

This session seeks to answer how freedom and slavery have contributed to the making of the modern world. One of the main questions in present day historiography is the role of slavery and slave trade in early modern globalization, world trade, development of modern labour regimes, migration and global economic divergence. Recent scholarship has begun to excavate the different histories of slavery across the globe. Beyond the Atlantic, new insights are being developed into the widespread character of slavery in the Mediterranean, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia. At the same time, the debate on the impact of slavery is still very much focused on the history of slavery in the Atlantic region. This session aims to bring together scholars of the histories of slavery in different parts of the world in order to assess the economic impact of slavery.

The British debate on the economic impact of slavery has been the most developed, partly as a result of the discussions that followed the Williams-thesis on the link between the profits of slavery and industrialization (Williams; Anstey; Richardson; Blackburn; Davis; Eltis; Engerman). For the Dutch Atlantic, recent literature has begun to reconstruct the size and impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Fatah-Black and Van Rossum; also the debate with Emmer in *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*). The size and impact of other segments of the Dutch Atlantic system will be researched in a research project recently granted by the Dutch Science Foundation (Bosma, Davids, Den Heijer, Van der Linden). Similar historiographical developments can be traced for the Mediterranean, Black Sea region and Asia (see for example the Datini conference 2013).

These contributions can provide starting points to develop research beyond the Atlantic world. It seems time to widen the debate to a more global perspective and to other regions. The level of availability of data for the Atlantic region cannot yet be matched by other regions. In the last decade, however, new debates have started concerning the size and impact of slavery and slave trade in Asia (among others by Allen; Boomgaard; Vink). In bringing together debates on the impact of slavery from a comparative and global perspective, it will be possible to gain better insight in the legacy of slavery and unfreedom worldwide. This might provide interesting new insights in comparisons and differences in economic and social-cultural developments.

This session will bring together scholars working on the history of slavery in Asia, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and other areas with slave systems. It seeks to come to new assessments of the economic impact of slave trade and slavery. Therefore, the contributions of various specialists in this panel will focus on:

- reconstruct the size of slave trading circuits over long periods of time, especially outside the Atlantic realm
- reconstruct slave based production, especially in connection to slave trading circuits
- reconstruct the gross-margin of already familiar circuits
- reconstruct the indirect impact of slave trading and slave based production on the global economy
- suggest methodological innovations to conceptualize the economic impact of slavery

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Dr. Matthias van Rossum (International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam) [Netherlands])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Dr. Karwan J. Fatah-Black (Leiden University [Netherlands])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. Filipa Ribeiro daSilva (University of Macau [China])
2. Joachim Östlund (Lund University [Sweden])
3. Richard B. Allen (Framingham State University [United States of America])
4. Tamira Combrink (International Institute of Social History [Netherlands])
5. Chris Evans (University of South Wales [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
6. Göran Rydén (Uppsala University [Sweden])
7. Chhaya Goswami (Virginia Commonwealth University Qatar [Qatar])
8. Juliane Schiel (University of Zurich [Switzerland])
9. Nigel Worden (University of Cape Town [South Africa])
10. Gwyn Campbell (McGill University [Canada])
11. Klas Rönbäck (University of Gothenburg [Sweden])
12. Sven Beckert (Harvard University [United States of America])
13. William Gervase Clarence-Smith (SOAS University of London [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])