Colonialism, Institutional Change, and Shifts in Global Labour Relations

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Cover illustration: Workers in the silver mine in Potosí, an engraving from Theodor de Bry in *Historia Americae sive Novi Orbis*, 1596
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1 Introduction

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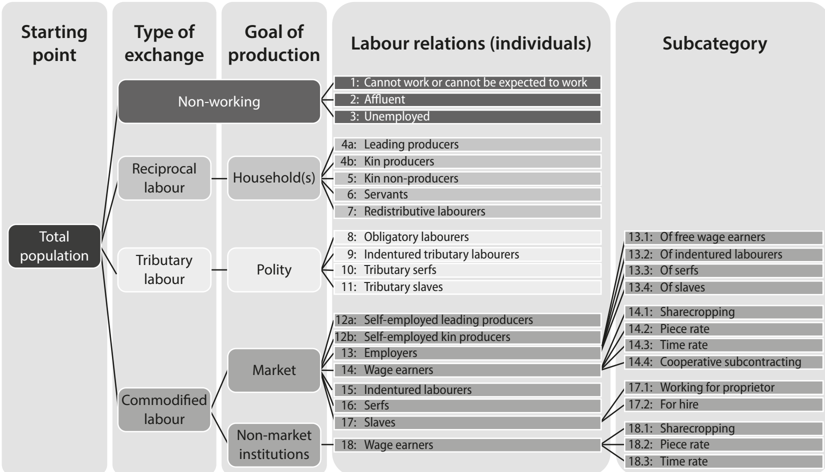
Abstract
The introduction explains the purpose of this volume: to explain the development of labour relations by looking at the institutions pertaining to various economic resources in society: commodities, land, labour, and capital. Rather than looking at the effect of colonial institutions on economic growth and viewing labour in a static and generic manner, we want to establish a more precise relationship between colonial institutions and changing labour relations. Therefore the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods are taken into account and we carefully look at changes over time in the institutions and the various forms of labour relations that prevailed, both free and unfree. The agency of the workers and their possible options to opt out of the labour system that was established by the colonizers are explicitly included.

Keywords: colonial institutions, labour relations, dynamism, agency, workers

This volume is one of the outcomes of the "Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations, 1500-2000", a project of the International Institute of Social History (IISH). The project aims to draw up a worldwide inventory

* This project has been made possible by generous grants from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung in Düsseldorf and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). For more information on the project and its background, see Hofmeester et al., "The Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations".

Figure 1.1 Taxonomy of Labour Relations



of all types of labour relations, in all their facets and combinations, in different parts of the world, and at five points in time: 1500, 1650, 1800, 1900 (also 1950 for Africa), and 2000. The first phase of this project (2007-2012) consisted of data mining.[1] The second phase of the project sets out in search of explanations for shifts in labour relations, as well as for the possible patterns observed therein. Causes and consequences of changes in labour relations are explored in a series of dedicated workshops, by looking in depth at possible explanatory factors, such as the role of the state, demography, family patterns, and – the topic of this volume – economic institutions.[2]

In order to compare and analyse all types of work and labour relations, the collaboratory starts off from a very comprehensive definition of work, provided by the sociologists Charles and Chris Tilly: "work includes any human effort adding use value to goods and services".[3] In our view, labour relations define for or with whom one works and under what rules. Taking these definitions of work and labour relations as a starting point, members of the collaboratory developed a taxonomy of labour relations that allows for long-term global comparisons.

1 For the data, please refer to https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourrelations/results.

2 Papers from the first workshop on the role of the state have been published in Hofmeester, Kessler, and Moll-Murata, *Conquerors, Employers and Arbiters*; a number of papers from the workshop on demography and family patterns have been published in a special section of *History of the Family* (vol. 22, no. 1).

3 Tilly and Tilly, *Work under Capitalism*, p. 22.

First, the taxonomy distinguishes between those who are able to work and those unable to do so. Next, in Column 2 it distinguishes between the three types of exchange in organizing the interchange of goods and services, including work. These types of exchange link up with the three levels of analysis listed in Column 3, which reflect the target of production: the household (or a community consisting of a group of households), the polity, or the market. There are three principles on which this exchange takes place. The first is *reciprocity*: work done for other members of the same household or a group of households that form a community. The second principle is *tribute giving*: work based on obligations vis-à-vis the polity. The third principle is market exchange, in which labour is *commodified*: in this case the worker – or in the case of unfree labour, the owner of the worker – sells their means of production or the products of their work. In Column 4, the labour relations of individuals are listed. They are based on the position of individuals within the entities that organize labour (households, polities, and markets), the degree of freedom, and the methods of remuneration.

The preliminary outcomes of this project suggest that in the long run, the proportion of the population engaged in commodified labour increased at the expense of reciprocal labour and tributary labour. Commodified labour began earlier than expected, but at the same time reciprocal labour lasted longer than previously assumed. This can be explained by another important finding, that, from early on, many individuals and households pooled various types of labour relations (for example, combining commodified labour with reciprocal labour). Shifts in labour relations are frequently manifested as shifts in combinations of labour relations. Within the category of commodified labour, we see a change from self-employment to wage labour. This was not a linear development. The most recent examples are the many regions in the world that exhibited decreases in wage labour in the twenty-first century. What drove these developments?

In New Institutional Economics, institutions and institutional change are identified as crucial variables in shaping all economic relations, thus including labour relations. Douglass North defines institutions as "humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions".[4] These constraints may be both formal (for example, constitutions, laws, and property rights) and informal (for example, customs and traditions). It is the purpose in this volume to analyse and explain the development of labour relations by looking at the institutions pertaining to various economic resources in society: commodities, land, labour, and capital. Institutions

4 North, "Institutions".

can affect the distribution of these resources across the population, which can in turn determine labour relations.

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson are strongly influenced by North and the institutional approach.[5] They suggest that those countries colonized by European powers that were relatively rich 500 years ago, are now relatively poor – and vice versa – and argue that this reversal reflects an "institutional reversal" caused by the colonial powers. In those areas that were relatively prosperous and densely settled in 1500, or that were characterized by high rates of (European) settler mortality due to tropical diseases, the Europeans introduced (or maintained already existing) extractive institutions to profit from this wealth, whereas in poorer and sparsely populated areas, Europeans themselves settled in large numbers, and created "inclusive" institutions that safeguarded private property, thereby encouraging commerce and industry.[6] More recently, they have synthesized this research in *Why Nations Fail*.[7] Their work has been highly influential and has prompted economists to take more seriously the role of the history of institutions, especially of colonial institutions in the Global South.[8] As a result, various economists have started testing whether the implementation of a specific institution in the past (for example, the slave trade, the *mita*, or colonial land revenue systems) had long-term consequences for economic development in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.[9]

Nevertheless, such works have not remained without critics, and some have questioned the quality of the underlying data used in the analyses, especially the data on settler mortality and population density in the 1500 benchmark.[10] Historians have pointed out the rather a-historical approach taken up by these "historical" economists. Regression analyses linking a point in the past (1500) with outcomes expressed in terms of GDP per capita

5 See Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, "Colonial Origins"; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, "Reversal of Fortune".

6 Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, "Reversal of Fortune", p. 1279.

7 Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*.

8 See the discussion in Nunn, "The Importance of History for Economic Development". Also see Woolcock, Szreter, and Rao, "How and Why Does History Matter for Development Policy?".

9 Widely cited examples include Nunn, "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades"; Dell, "The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita"; Banerjee and Iyer, "History, Institutions and Economic Performance".

10 See, e.g., Albouy, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development"; Austin, "The 'Reversal of Fortune' Thesis". See also Easterly and Levine, "The European Origins of Economic Development". The authors show that the small number of European settlers indeed correlates with a stagnating economic growth. They do not find evidence, however, that this was caused by institutions.

today, suffer from what Gareth Austin terms the "compression of history".[11] Institutions were clearly not the same over this long period of time (half a millennium), and nor were the consequences of these institutions. In this volume, we follow up on such critiques and investigate the relationship between institutions and labour relations over time, focusing on *changes* that took place both in institutions (for example, in response to indigenous reactions) and in their effects as time progressed.[12]

In congruence with some of the other literature that has appeared over recent years, we believe that colonial regimes had more manifestations than the binary classification put forward by Acemoglu and colleagues. Anthony Hopkins, for example, notes that among historians it is currently more common to differentiate between at least three types of colonies: settlements (such as South Africa), concessions (such as the Belgian Congo), and trade colonies (such as Nigeria).[13] The regimes that were introduced were not only determined by geography, endowments, population density, or orders from the metropolis, but also by pre-colonial power relations, including economic institutions such as rules on land distribution, property rights, and tribute and tax systems. In addition, the response of the indigenous and other population groups to the institutions that the colonizers established,[14] or tried to establish, have to be taken into account to obtain a complete picture.

Furthermore, the works that try to show the persistent effects of colonial institutions primarily focus on economic growth and how to explain it. While labour and labour relations do play a role in these works, it is always described from this perspective, and often in a static and generic manner. To give just one important example: the availability and allocation of labour is generally not discussed as a variable, although a recent publication edited by Gareth Austin and Kaoru Sugihara is a very welcome exception to that rule.[15] Furthermore, it is not always clear what "extractive" institutions

11 Austin, "The 'Reversal of Fortune' Thesis".

12 Jerven, "African Growth Recurring", focuses on periods of economic growth, explaining them by looking at institutions that changed over time as a consequence of African agency in the form of economic specialization. Labour and labour relations do not play a role in his argument, however.

13 Hopkins, "New Economic History", p. 168. Ewout Frankema distinguishes four types of colonial states and relates them to the character of their tax levels and spending patterns. See his "Colonial Taxation and Government Spending in British Africa".

14 See, for example, Bayly, "Indigenous and Colonial Origins", on institutional changes spurred by indigenous elites in Colonial India in the nineteenth century. On the local elites in the Spanish empire, see Grafe and Irigoin, "A Stakeholder Empire".

15 Austin and Sugihara, and the authors of the articles in their edited volume *Labour-Intensive Industrialization in Global History*, do analyse labour as a variable, discussing not only its

are and how these have changed due to colonial rule. A distinguishing feature of extractive institutions, according to Acemoglu and colleagues, is "a high concentration of political power in the hands of a few who extracted resources from the rest of the population".[16] As an example, they mention the silver-mining networks set up by the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers that were based on forced labour and oppression of the native population with the help of monopolized military power to extract silver.[17] The contribution by Rossana Barragán in this volume shows, however, that the situation in the Potosí silver mines was far more complex – characterized by a wide range of labour relations and an important role for indigenous and "informal" institutions – and that it is was more dynamic than the description by Acemoglu and colleagues suggests. In this respect, the non-Eurocentric, more global approach to institutions (both formal and informal) as suggested by Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and Roy Bin Wong, seems more fruitful than the division between "good" inclusive institutions, more or less based on what was the norm in Western Europe, and "bad" extractive institutions that were established in other parts of the world.[18]

The concept of "inclusive institutions", that is, institutions that "secure private property, an unbiased system of law, and a provision of public services that provides a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract"[19] may also benefit from further refinement. In South Africa, British colonial power created inclusive institutions in the sense that there were constraints on executive power and secure private property rights. Nonetheless, despite colour-blind laws and a functioning democratic system, the specific institutions created to supply the diamond mines with labour were openly racist and excluded many black workers from private property and an opportunity to "contract", as Karin Hofmeester shows in her chapter. Further, the European institutions mentioned in Matthias van Rossum's chapter on maritime labour relations in Europe and Asia, enforced upon Asian (maritime) labour markets, can be considered "inclusive" economic institutions, organizing market exchange and safeguarding contractual agreements. These contracts, however, generally did increase inequalities

availability and allocation (including the allocation and division of labour within the household), but also the quality of labour and the role of colonial and also indigenous or local and often very informal (among others, schooling and training) institutions that played a role in it. See especially p. 296 for this.

16 Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, "Reversal of Fortune", p. 1234.

17 Ibid., p. 1264.

18 Rosenthal and Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence*.

19 Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, pp. 74-75.

in power relations, as they often favoured the claims of employers over the protection of the rights of labourers.

Power relations are a crucial element in both the development and the effects of institutions.[20] In this volume, Elias C. Mandala examines power relations between the colonial governments and capitalist enterprises. He discusses how the high freight costs charged by private railroad owners in Malawi hindered the development of the cotton industry that the British colonizers so eagerly wanted to stimulate. Another example is the British colonial officials in South Africa, who tried to gain mineral rights, but lost the battle with the internationally financed diamond-mining companies. In addition, the power relations between the colonial rulers in the metropolis and the colonial administrators "on the ground" in the colonies should be taken into account if we want to know the exact effects of colonial institutions. In both Java and Cuba, the powerful sugar plantation conglomerates were well able to further their interests vis-à-vis those of the (semi-) colonial state, as Ulbe Bosma's contribution demonstrates.

To establish a more precise relationship between colonial institutions and changing labour relations, we want to take the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods into account and carefully look at changes over time in the institutions and the various forms of labour relations that prevailed, both unfree and free. We want to examine the agency of the workers and their possible options to combine labour relations to at least partially opt out of the labour system the colonizers established. Various contributions in this volume therefore also deal with the role of migratory labour and household labour strategies, including the work carried out by women and children.

It is our intuition that colonial rule, which originated from the European quest for exotic commodities, first and foremost manifested itself in the systems of production and trade of global commodities. Therefore the first, and largest, section of this volume is devoted to institutions related to commodity production and trade. Scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Andre Gunder Frank have argued that between 1500 and 1900, global trade resulted in a specific pattern of intercontinental specialization: whereas the periphery concentrated on the production of primary goods, the European core could shift part of its production into more productive sectors of the

20 See also Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; North, Summerhill, and Weingast, "Order, Disorder and Economic Change"; North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*. For a specific focus on labour, see Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*.

economy, such as manufacturing.[21] More recently, Jeffrey Williamson argued that the favourable terms of trade for cash crops led to deindustrialization in the "poor periphery".[22] As these economies focused on the export of only a few cash crops, they also became more vulnerable to price volatility.

In his contribution, William Clarence-Smith takes issue with these narratives. He emphasizes that industries in the "Global South" in the nineteenth century were much more developed than one might think when starting off from deindustrialization and dependency theories. He stresses that in addition to the role of import-substitution of consumer goods, export substitution, artisanal production (including producing under putting-out, sharecropping, and other more complex forms of labour relations), and the processing of "primary goods" were important in the development of industries in the developing world. The latter development could lead to more wage labour, though other forms of (unfree) labour were also applied. His chapter convincingly shows that (colonial) economic institutions during the free trade period (the 1850s to 1914) stimulated the development of industries in the developing world, whereas the institutions developed during the period of protection (1914 to the 1950s) had severely hindering effects, especially on export substitution.

In his contribution concerning cotton agriculture in Malawi, Mandala shows that although the British wanted to introduce commercial agriculture based on European capital and African wage labour, the high producer costs, low cotton prices, and resistance of rural Africans to wage labour, led to the failure of capitalist agriculture. Instead, cotton production came to be based on unpaid family labour on peasant smallholdings. Malawian peasants responded to economic realities and British demands for cotton by integrating cotton cultivation within their existing systems of food production as well as other economic activities, often combining several types of labour relations. Mandala furthermore shows that despite the general failure of cotton agriculture, which had negative effects for the wider economy, there were few substantive differences between the British colonial policies and institutions and those of the post-colonial governments (which continued to pay low prices to producers and extracted the surpluses, as they sold the cotton for a higher price on the world market).

The production of specific global commodities has been associated with specific modes of production. In a famous contribution, Stanley Engerman and Kenneth Sokoloff associate the production of sugar, tobacco, and

21 Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*; Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation*.

22 Williamson, *Trade and Poverty*.

cotton with large-scale production on plantations using slave labour.[23] As ever-increasing quantities of sugar, coffee, cotton, and other products, in various stages of production, were being transported across the globe, labour relations changed. However, the organization of production (and thus the associated labour relations) might not only differ between commodities (some raw materials have to be processed into manufactured goods before they can be transported, others not). The organization of production of one particular product – as Ulbe Bosma shows in his contribution about sugar and Karin Hofmeester indicates in her chapter about diamonds – could also differ between areas, depending on the scale of production and the method of financing the operations. What the contribution by Clarence-Smith shows, is that some of the export processing industries in the Global South disappeared because of protective institutions (such as tariffs and import restrictions) developed by the colonial powers to protect labour in the metropolis. This same protection of labour in the metropolis could lead to worsening labour conditions and labour relations for maritime labour in Asia, as Matthias van Rossum discusses. Thus, changes in colonial economic institutions could lead to shifts in labour relations, both in the colonies and at home. As Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk illustrates, the introduction of the Cultivation System (in Dutch: *cultuurstelsel*) in the Netherlands Indies altered institutions such as property rights, which not only affected labour relations in the colonies, but also led to changing labour relations in the Netherlands.

In addition, various studies have emphasized indigenous reactions to the implementation of colonial institutions.[24] Following up on this, the current volume also takes into account the agency of different population groups as they responded to changing colonial institutions. In some cases, local institutions could not be replaced or controlled by colonial institutions, such as land property rights, the bazaar, and the role of the middlemen in India, as discussed in the contribution by Bosma. The resistance of African farmers to engage in wage labour hindered the rise of a capitalist cotton-farming sector in Malawi, as mentioned above. The same resistance against (often unfree) forms of wage labour can be found in various other African

23 Engerman and Sokoloff, "History Lessons".

24 See, for example, Bayly, "Indigenous and Colonial Origins"; Hopkins, "New Economic History", p. 170, and Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society.* The latter focuses on labour and responses to colonial and post-colonial institutions. More recently, Ewout Frankema, Erik Green, and Ellen Hillbom have shown that the actions indigenous people undertook determined to a large extent the institutions established by colonial governments. See their "Endogenous Processes of Colonial Settlement".

countries, such as the Belgian Congo. The alternative of subsistence or independent commercial farming played an important role in the reluctance of Africans to take up wage labour in the Belgian mines and plantations. With the introduction of forced cultivation and the destruction of local markets, this alternative disappeared. As the information on the Netherlands Indies in the contribution by Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk shows, this was less the case under the Cultivation System.[25] Apart from resisting wage work, there are also examples of workers running off and starting out for themselves, such as the slaves in the Brazilian diamond mines as discussed by Hofmeester. Various contributions discuss the importance of (seasonal) migration. Yet another indigenous response that can be identified is the rearranging of household strategies. If we take the agency of the indigenous population seriously, we should include the whole population and thus also look at gendered responses to colonial institutions. The chapter by Van Nederveen Meerkerk shows that the "extractive institution" embodied by the Cultivation System initially caused a shift among a large group of Javanese women from working for the market to subsistence labour. However, the later reawakening of the textile industry was based on their return to producing textiles for the market. Van Nederveen Meerkerk's contribution makes a case against the deindustrialization thesis. In addition, both her contribution and that of Clarence-Smith stress the importance of local consumption for commodity production (and thus labour relations) in the overseas areas.

Access to land and labour is of course vital to commodity production, and as such it is dealt with in the first part of this volume, which is therefore the largest. In a provocative recent publication, Bas van Bavel suggests first of all that markets for land, labour, and capital have existed since antiquity, and are thus not a modern phenomenon as often thought. However, he admits that in some parts of the world, markets for land and labour remained weak up to the nineteenth century.[26] In many of these areas, colonial powers thus played an important role in introducing such markets and altering the previous systems for allocating labour and land. One of his main points is that the rise of markets for land and labour is, in the long run, associated with greater discrepancies in wealth and power.[27] Colonial elites often

25 See Houben and Seibert, "(Un)freedom". For the consequences of later institutional changes in the Netherlands Indies and Belgian Congo and their effects among others on (forced) labour, see Booth, "Varieties of Exploitation".

26 Van Bavel, *The Invisible Hand?*, p. 14.

27 Ibid., p. 21.

brought in, or maintained, coercive elements in markets, which further spurred trends towards more inequality, especially between different ethnic groups. Various contributions to this volume also hint at such dynamics (for example, Van Rossum and Hofmeester).

The second part of the volume is specifically dedicated to the land and labour market *institutions* established by the colonizers in order to produce the commodities they needed, including cash and food crops. To start with the labour market institutions: the *mita* is an example of an institution to allocate unfree labour (see Barragán's contribution), in the same way as labour recruitment institutions that consciously established segmented labour markets, which is the subject of the contribution by Van Rossum and is also dealt with in the chapter by Hofmeester where she discusses diamond mines in South Africa. At the same time, a labour market for free wage labour existed in Potosí and aboard the ships in the Asian maritime trade, and various chapters seem to point in the direction of combined labour relations (for example, Barragán, Mandala, and Karin Pallaver). If pre-colonial land property rights of the small-scale peasantry were secured during colonial times, subsistence farming was frequently a way out for workers to escape from forced labour: by migrating back to their small plots of land, workers could escape the system of unfree labour in the mines. Another important element that Barragán puts forward is that the *mita* changed over time, which contains a clear warning against a static view of the functioning of economic institutions.

The abolition of the slave trade provides a very clear example of changing colonial labour market institutions. What happened to labour relations after this most coercive form – often not established by, but massively expanded by colonial powers and their institutions – had to give way? This is the subject of the contribution by Johan Fourie and Erik Green. They compare the input of slave and local Khoesan labour (often in apprenticeship form but also in working gangs) on pastoral farms in the interior of the Cape Colony after a ban was introduced on the import of slaves. At first, a shift of slave labour from the west to the east of the Cape Colony took place and an increase of slave labour went hand in hand with a decrease of Khoesan labour in the farms in the interior. After the ban on the import of slaves of 1807, and the 1809 colonial labour code that restricted Khoesan labour mobility and enabled farmers to tie the children of Khoesan labourers to their farm for unpaid labour, a form of semi-bonded labour, the authors note a decrease of slave productivity and an increase of Khoesan (bonded) labour.

The final part of the volume contains two examinations of the effects of monetization and taxation on labour relations. To date, few scholars have connected the study of numismatics with the study of labour relations. In this volume, we bring together two prominent experts in this field and we hope that these stimulating contributions will spur further study at this intersection. Colonial powers often introduced currencies and tried to "extract" money via taxation. It was also hoped that imposing taxes, which required the local population to have cash, would increase the availability of wage labour (also discussed in the contribution by Mandala). All of this led to increased commercialization, the commodification of labour, and the monetization of the colonial economies. As a side effect, the local population sometimes entered into wage labour relations to be able to buy products that became available because of the colonial presence. Pallaver, however, suggests that taxation was not always a very effective way to raise the number of permanent wage labourers in the East African Protectorate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as one month of wage work or the sale of a small amount of livestock sufficed to pay the annual hut tax. Finding enough wage labourers remained problematic in the colony until the latter half of the 1920s, when economic crises, growing population pressure in the reserves, and a growing African taste for consumer imports, ensured an adequate flow of labourers without further coercion by the colonial state. There were two types of coins that were used to pay for wage labour, the large denominations of silver rupees ("the coercive currency of taxes") and the smaller copper cents. Rupees were paid to those permanent labourers who needed colonial money to pay the tax or to buy cattle to provide a bridewealth. These were workers who were unable to increase their agricultural production or sell cattle in order to obtain the money needed for tax payments. However, for everyday needs, it was sufficient to work for only a few days and to obtain cents. These were then used in the local markets. Women, who worked for wages only for very short periods, were instrumental in favouring the circulation of cent coins, as were casual labourers. The circulation in cents says something about women's wage labour. Pallaver's contribution clearly shows the direct relationship between labour relations and the circulation of coins of specific denominations.

Jan Lucassen works on the same theme in his contribution and finds that the degree of monetization in societies is a good proxy for the prevalence of wage labour. On the basis of estimates of the amount of small denomination currencies in circulation per capita, he derives levels of monetization for Europe and Asia in the second millennium and finds that India and Europe generally had similar levels of monetization between 1000 and 1900, but that China had generally (much) higher levels. Furthermore, he shows that Europe and India show roughly similar trends in the degree of monetization over this period, whereas trends in China exhibit different movements. Although these developments in monetization in part depend on the availability of institutions supplying (small) credit to workers, Lucassen argues that there is a strong relationship with shifts in labour relations: rises in monetization coincide with shifts from unfree to free labour, and from reciprocal to commodified labour. Lastly, he provides examples where workers demanded payment in specific types of coins, again demonstrating the agency and responses of local workers to institutions and institutional changes.

In sum, inspired by the path-breaking works of North and Acemoglu and colleagues, this collection of writings tries to explain shifts in labour relations by focusing on the effects of colonial institutions. In all the contributions, it becomes clear that colonial institutions played a major role in the persistence or change of certain labour relations. However, the precise manner in which these institutions were implemented and the channels through which they affected labour relations were dependent on local contexts and more complex than one would expect on the basis of a binary model of inclusive versus extractive institutions. Colonial powers were often not in a position to simply introduce institutions as they saw fit: they were not able to easily change pre-colonial institutions, but instead took over those institutions and made adaptations. The implementation of institutions by colonial governments was often contested by local populations, but also by the power of international capitalists. In terms of changes in labour relations, the implementation or adaption of institutions did not always lead to the shifts anticipated or wished for by colonial governments. Nor did colonial governments in the overseas territories simply execute policies or implement institutions as they were set out by governments in the metropolis. Local colonial officials also did not always carry out orders from the metropolis, suggesting that power relations played an important role in the actual functioning of institutions at various administrative levels. It is important that the local population often reacted to the colonial policies and institutions by combining labour relations. Furthermore, the aforementioned nuances and complications also blur the distinction between extractive and inclusive institutions. If one zooms in closer on the effects for different types of workers, the effects of what in principle may be seen as inclusive institutions were in practice quite extractive and vice versa. In emphasizing these complicated interactions between institutions and labour relations, this volume hopes to contribute to the wider literature on the effects of colonial institutions on development and the role of labour and labour relations in this, as well as to our understanding of the factors influencing changes in labour relations from the fifteenth century onward.

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