

Exhibition:
**Stories of Work and Coercion:
Scientific Contributions
Depicted in Illustrations**



Forthcoming Publication:

**Writing and Visualising Histories of Coercion
in Remunerated Labor Relations**

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Exhibition design by Anna Hofbauer, on display at the international conference of the research networks COST Action “Worlds of Related Coercions in Work” (WORCK) and European Labour History Network (ELHN), Campus of the University of Vienna, 30 August – 3 September 2021

Exhibition: Stories of Work and Coercion: Scientific Contributions Depicted in Illustrations

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In order to generate and convey knowledge, historians kindly ask their best friend: the text. The friendship between historical science and the written language has lasted for over 2500 years, if we take Herodotus as the starting point of (an admittedly ‘western’) historiography. Words are chained linearly and arranged in larger units of meaning, the paragraphs. While gradually tracing the historian’s narration, the ‘architecture’ of the text is created. New potentialities arise when the focus is not only put on the logos, but also on the aisthesis. As a result, the bodily and atmospheric contexts come into play, the historical setting becomes the actor of the discourse.

The exhibition ‘Stories of Work and Coercion: Scientific Contributions Depicted in Illustrations’ intends to specifically point out the potential of the text-image relation for a multimedia historiography by introducing the illustrations of Dariia Kuzmych, Monika Lang and Tim Robinson. The visuals follow the scenarios developed by Anamarija Batista and Corinna Peres, based on academic texts by anthropologists and historians that were presented at the conference “Reconceptualising Wage Labour” 2020 in Budapest. The exhibition display, a rotating wooden drum, was developed by Anna Hofbauer.

Within this process the linearity of the textual is contrasted with the simultaneity of the pictorial and the multidimensionality of the spatial. The exhibition aims to carry the following issues into the discussion of the history of wage labour and coercion: What does it mean to bring the pictorial alongside the written? What knowledge-communicative and didactic possibilities does a multimodal way of telling the past offer?

Part I:

**Binding the workforce:
Remuneration tactics and
governmental initiatives**

Illustrated by Tim Robinson

Script: Anamarija Batista & Corinna Peres

Akın Sefer

“The mobilization of wage labor for Ottoman state factories in the 19th century”

This chapter analyzes how Ottoman wage workers were mobilized to work in state factories in the mid-nineteenth century with the aim to identify and discuss the coercive dynamics of capital-labor relations within these sites. In this period of ambitious top-down reforms to modernize the economy, the Ottoman state had to face the critical question of how to reorganize labor in state factories. In an increasingly capitalist context marked by the integration of the Ottoman Empire into world markets, especially by means of free-trade agreements and the development of transportation networks, creating and maintaining a disciplined, skilled, and affordable labor force became a priority. These developments marked the struggles between the state and the working classes in this period. Based on archival sources around the industrial establishments run by the Ottoman navy—the Imperial Arsenal and the Imperial Yarn Factory—this chapter argues that the mobilization of wage labor for these factories was characterized by Ottoman efforts to bind individuals, and at times entire communities, to specific

worksites. This created confrontations between the state and its subjects over the mobility of labor. The discussion will rest on four illustrated cases, which will be used for in-depth analyses of how the Ottoman naval officials employed wage payment as a discursive and practical tool to justify coercion as well as to restrict the workers’ physical mobility.

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Sources for documents and images used in the collage: Digital Collections of the Presidential Ottoman Archives, Getty Research Institute, the Abdulhamid II Collection of the Library of Congress.

Sigrid Wadauer

“Contracts under duress: Work documents as a matter and means of negotiation (Habsburg Monarchy/Austria in the late 19th and early 20th century)”

In the Habsburg Monarchy of the 19th and early 20th centuries, employment booklets for laborers and servants were mandatory documents for legal work, for travelling, and for proving one's identity. Unlike other European countries which abolished such documents, the Habsburg Monarchy extended this obligation to ever more categories of wage laborers during this



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This chapter addresses these documents as a symbol and as a means for establishing, negotiating, and enforcing work contracts. Government authorities and employers' organizations viewed work booklets as an indispensable precondition of control, as well as to establish trust and prohibit breach of contract. It was also argued that these papers—as certificates of work and qualifications—helped people in their search for work. However, organizations of laborers and servants described these documents as mere symbols of humiliation and of legal inequality, indeed as a 'sign of slavery.' Multiple conflicts are recorded concerning the contents of work references: Employers were accused of withholding documents to enforce a contract or to furnish themselves with a form of security for wage advances and debts. Individual or collective breach of contract was a violation of the trade law but, when committed by workers, also a criminal offense. Besides fines, monetary compensation or imprisonment were possible punishments. A person could likewise be forced to return to his/her workplace. Studying these different outcomes of practices and confrontations around employment booklets enables us to differentiate the diverse ways in which legal requirements were used, abused, resisted, and neglected.

Sources for documents and images used in the collage: Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna, Bürgenland Provincial Archives, Upper Austrian Provincial Archives, private collection of Sigrid Wadauer.

Nataša Milićević and Ljubinka Škodrić

“Between salaries and coercion: The case of civil servants in occupied Serbia, 1941-1944”

How did the occupational and social conditions of Serbian civil servants develop during Nazi Germany’s occupation in the Second World War? This chapter analyzes a number of measures that affected civil servants and explores their reactions towards these top-down changes. As in other countries under Nazi occupation, civil servants in Serbia confronted the rapid decline of their living standards as well as mounting political and ideological pressure. The work that they performed became more characteristic of wartime and more complex. Numerous decrees, orders, and bans altered their pre-war social position, status, and cultural capital. The formal salaries were not sufficient for their existence anymore, and high prices and food shortages, in combination with low incomes, stimulated corruption, low quality of performance, and permanent search for alternative income sources. These alternative sources included the black market and additional, often informal, jobs. Especially women were in a vulnerable position and frequently lost their jobs in the name of ‘reforms’ and ‘reorganization.’ Those who stayed, but—strikingly—also civil servants who were already retired, were expected to demonstrate that they were ‘nationally reliable’ and to publicly endorse the collaborationist regime. This expanded outside the realm of work as these men and women were required to attend propagandistic lectures and exhibitions, for example. Despite being salaried workers, they could be readily arrested or sent to mandatory and forced work. In this light, this

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chapter advances our understanding of the new role and representation of civil servants in an occupied country.



Sources for documents and images used in the collage: Archives of Serbia G-15, f. 1; Archives of the City of Belgrade; Found Municipality of the city of Belgrade K-230; Museum

of the City of Belgrade, I2/2-3651, I2/2-2568; National Museum Čačak, I-1610; Novo vreme on June 3, 1941, 2; Službene novine, No. 95, August 6, 1941; Novo vreme, November 20, 1942; Novo vreme, January 20, 1943; Novo vreme, March 18, 1943, 4; Novo vreme, March 19, 1943, 3; Private collection of Bratislav Stanković.

Part II:

**Confronting coercion:
Laborers' reactions at the
workplace**

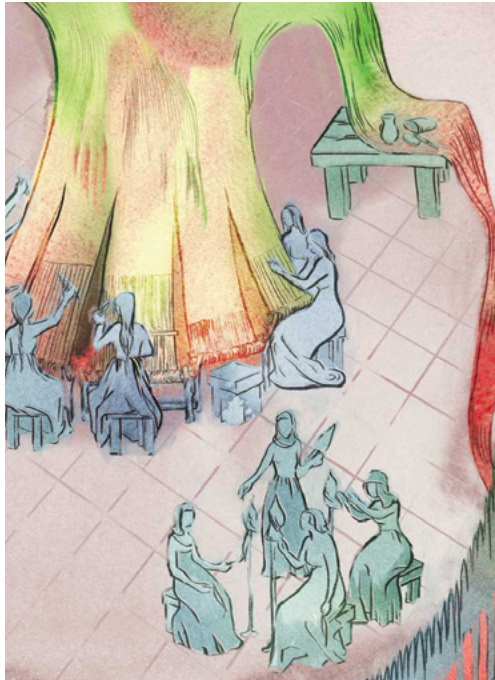
Illustrated by Dariia Kuzmych

Script: Anamarija Batista & Corinna Peres

Colin Arnaud

“Subdued wage laborers: Cases of ambiguity between wage labor and coercive labor in textile production in Western and Islamic medieval sources”

This chapter explores medieval labor relations that combined forms of wage labor and coercion. Based on three case studies, it advances the claim that remuneration could facilitate punishment, enhance coercion, or work as a means of control. In an episode of the Deeds of the Abbots of Sint Truiden (1135), male weavers were forced to perform humiliating Sisyphus work. As wage laborers they depended on the favor of the authorities and could not risk to jeopardize their already precarious situation by resisting. In Yvain (1180), Chrétien de Troyes narrates the fictive case of 300 captive girls who weaved silk cloths. The lord who held them hostage forced them to work but at the same time remunerated their work. Since the remuneration did, however, not cover the high costs for subsistence, the girls effectively ended up indebted. The last case concerns the laborers of the so called tiraz factories producing exclusive clothes for the Islamic courts. The Persian traveller Naser-i-Khusraw (1003-1088) tells that the cloth producers in Tinnis (Egypt) worked with pleasure for the sultan because of the fair remuneration. According to Egyptian administrative tractates from the 12th century,



the work of the embroiderers was controlled attentively only at the end of the process. Yet, if the quality of the cloth was not suitable, the controllers required the workers to pay a fine. Being essentially subcontractors with their own responsibilities, the embroiderers of Egyptian tiraz workshops were extremely susceptible to strict or arbitrary mechanisms of control. Counting on historical and fictitious sources, these different cases of textile workers discuss the relation between remunerated work, coercion, and exploitation in the medieval world.

Gabriele Marcon

“Money for nothing, working for free? Wage labor and coercion in the Medici silver mines”

In the early modern period, miners carried out a wide range of labor activities in the underground and on the surface. Labor relations implemented to perform mining and metalworking tasks outlined a multi-layered and ever-changing context of remuneration. Cringed into shafts and tunnels, or crowding washing plants and smelting workshops, female and male laborers' wages were determined through time shifts and collective piece rates. Moreover, by discovering new deposits miners were granted mining rights and figured as self-employed laborers.



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Mining statutes issued by territorial rulers in German-speaking mining sites were considered the most sophisticated and efficient in regulating social and economic entanglements embedded in the context of mining labor. Although significant differences emerged between these regulations across early modern Europe, policy makers adopted similar forms of labor organization and wage regimes by issuing mining laws inspired by German mining customs. This chapter unpacks wage labor in the Medici silver mining enterprise in mid-16th-century Tuscany. From 1542 onwards, the Pietrasanta mines employed German-speaking miners from Tirol and Saxony and workers from nearby villages. Mining laws issued in 1548 sought to organize labor and outlined a wide array of timely, piecework, and self-employed wage regimes. However, ducal economic interests and the increasing use of time-waged labor led to a progressive marginalization of miners' initiatives and engineered coercive elements in local workers' labor relations. Gradually, policy makers relegated miners to a salaried workforce and implemented forms of immobility affecting local and foreign miners.

Müge Telci Özbek

“Entangled dependencies: Domestic workers in late Ottoman Istanbul (1900–1914)”

This study focuses on girls and young women, mostly from rural Anatolian towns and villages, who served as domestic laborers in well-off households in early-20th-century Istanbul. Drawing on snippets gleaned from petitions, labor contracts, and police files, it aims at revealing the continuum of power that these women had to navigate, beginning with the patriarchal dynamics of their own families, to the class and socioeconomic divisions that defined relations with their employers, and the political and legal authority that urban police wielded. Ultimately, this chapter shows how



these dynamics came together to produce a system of domestic labor that was coercive and controlling. For example, readers meet Emine, a young woman from Ereğli, whose father contracted her out for domestic service in the household of İshak Cevdet Pasha. According to records in the police archives, Emine responded to this labor arrangement in a variety of ways, including by running away from her employer’s home three times. This account and a number of other archives explored make the claim that girls and young women from poor rural communities were manipulated and/or forced by their families to leave home for Istanbul, then locked behind the walls of wealthy households to serve without regular compensation and with no legal recourse that would allow the option of leaving freely, if they chose to do so.

Mohammad Tareq Hasan

“Solidarity in flux: Cultural discourse, coercion, and resistance in the garment factories of Bangladesh”

In November 2012, a factory fire killed about 120 workers of the Tazreen Fashions in Dhaka. Soon after, in April 2013, the collapse of the Rana Plaza killed about 1,200 workers. These two tragic events resulted in national protests and raised international awareness of the working conditions in Bangladeshi garment factories. Nevertheless, more than four million workers—70% of whom are women—are still suffering low remuneration, irregular payment, long overtime work, tight working schedules, restricted leave and benefits, and little ‘collective bargaining’ opportunities. In response, garment workers, despite being of different age groups and rural origins, and possessing diverse geographic mobility, are joining forces in ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ resistance. Therefore, garment industries provide an ideal setting to understand how new forms of ‘solidarity’ and ‘coercion’ appear around the linkages with global capitalism and neoliberalism. Studying these types of responses reveals a number of discourses which are partly in tension with one another and in which workers alternately emphasize different ideas about work and labor conditions. For instance, discourses of the ‘patron-client’ relation between owner (malik) and workers can determine how the workers respond to coercive working conditions; notions of ‘sisterhood/brotherhood’ impact solidarity and possible collaboration among workers. As the ethnographic findings of this chapter suggest, resistance to coercive work and solidarity on the factory floor remains conditional and highly dynamic, and labor relations in Bangladeshi garment factories are intertwined with a variety of social relations and cultural-moral discourses.

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Part III:

Manipulating labor relations: mechanisms of remuneration, debt, and punishment

Illustrated by Monika Lang

**Script: Anamarija Batista & Corinna Peres
& Nico Pizzolato**

Marjorie Carvalho de Souza

“Negotiating the terms of wage(less) labor: Free and freed workers as contractual parties in 19th-century Rio de Janeiro”

Even when performing similar works under very similar social conditions, free and freed, national and foreign workers were still considered under different legal statuses and submitted to diverse regimes of contract rules in the plural legal order of 19th-century Brazil. Designed to facilitate the loudly requested ‘substitution’ of slave labor by free labor, the first attempts of regulating labor contracts in the immediate post-Independence era (1822-) were a clear expression of the legal conviction that the universes of freedom and compulsion had no overlap. While this view of a clear-cut division among laborers along legal status remains powerful in the legal literature, a deep dive into the empirical world of notary offices displays a much more complex panorama where neither contracts nor wages were definitive features of one kind of labor relationship rather than another. Sometimes separated by no more than a page in a notarial book and using the same legal language, free and freed workers performed concrete labor negotiations that demonstrate the close proximity of spaces of autonomy and logics of coercion. Using the notarial records of Rio de Janeiro as its main scenario, this chapter aims to revise the usually static legal understanding of labor relations. It explores how remuneration, contract, and coercion dovetailed and manifested themselves in the multicolored spectrum of the Brazilian labor landscape.

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Nico Pizzolato

“From peonage to contract labor: Connecting the dots in the history of debt and coercion in the United States”

In this visual essay that combines images and writing, an historian and a visual artist tell the story of how historical research has unearthed evidence that points to an enduring connection between debt and coercion in the history of labor in 20th century United States. In the United States, debt, both in its material and symbolic aspect, functioned as a key instrument of coercion to perpetuate forms of subjection after the abolition of formal slavery. The post-Emancipation shift to contract and waged labour in the so-called Black Belt and its later diffusion in areas of agricultural expansion such as California and Florida created, ironically, new opportunities for coercion. Employers created, manipulated or simply benefitted from workers' indebtedness to cut labour costs, control mobility and perpetuate racialised hierarchical relations. When, in the post-war period, immigrant workers from Central America replaced African-Americans as the core of the agricultural labour force, they often arrived as contract workers or undocumented who were bound to their American employers by debts that they had incurred during the immigration process and that were magnified by management strategies. This visual essay is characterised by a high-level of reflexivity about the process of conducting an historical investigation on themes so close to us, yet at the margin of both public history and mainstream visual culture.

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Ivanka Petrova

**“Links between labor coercion and wage labor
in socialist Bulgaria: A form of student seasonal
wage labor”**

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An important part of state policy in socialist Bulgaria was the temporary forced engagement of students from high schools and universities as a workforce in various sectors of the economy. During the summer months, youth ‘labor brigades’ were formed as a compulsory form of unskilled work, through which physical labor was provided and young intelligentsia was temporarily put into the working-class position. Participation in the brigade was a prerequisite for continuing education in the next academic year. This labor coercion in non-teaching months was in line with the prevailing socialist ideology of imposing total control over all spheres of public and private life. Besides this physical work, a smaller, selected, group of students were employed as seasonal guides for foreign tourist groups. This form of labor was recognized as an equivalent to the participation in a brigade but it was not unskilled work. Based on the use of acquired language skills, and following an entrance test and several weeks of training and exams, the young guides received remuneration and were not confronted with physical force. With the core of this study being the “Orbita” Youth Travel Bureau, founded in 1958, this chapter sets out to explore if, why, and how the young students employed as tourist guides perceived this type of seasonal work as a form of labor coercion. Based on archival material and biographical interviews with former guides, it presents the working norms and obligations of the Bureau, their application, and the students’ labor practices and perceptions thereof.



Ana Luleva

“Freedom and coercion: Discourses on labor in Bulgarian state-socialism”

The slogan of ‘freedom,’ i.e. labor liberated from exploitation, dominated the public discourse of Bulgarian society in the first postwar decades. During the whole state socialist period (1944-1989), the pathos of free socialist labor did, however, not exclude the idea of coercion in work. Indeed, there existed a variety of official forms of coercion: forced labor in labor camps, labor troops as an alternative military service, and brigades. This chapter discusses the presence of the concepts of freedom and coercion in the public discourse during state socialism and their thematization in autobiographical narratives. It stresses the gap between the public discourse framed around class-party-ideology and the experienced realities, and moves to the forefront the internalization of the idea of ‘freedom’ and ‘free labor’ as well as public sensitivities and insensitivities to hidden and explicit forms of coercion in late socialist Bulgaria.



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