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Global Patterns of Forced Labor in Island Southeast Asia

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Abstract

Island Southeast Asia has long been a site of cross-border slavery and migration. Utilizing archival sources, ethnographic data, and news reports, the article considers patterns of forced labor in the case studies of domestic servitude and household work from the *ata* of Indonesia, the *alipin* of the Philippines, and foreign domestic workers from both countries. From a critical review of historical slavery to contemporary transnational migration, the article analyzes the sociocultural, economic, linguistic, geographical, and political dynamics at play and reorients the focus of slavery scholarship from the Atlantic context to include the wider implications of intra-Asia slavery.

Key Words: Slavery, migration, forced labor, domestic work, Southeast Asia

Introduction: Revisiting the Phantasm of Slavery

"There is no such slavery in the Philippines," declared an editorial written on 29 October 1912 in the middle of two debates on both sides of the Pacific.[1] In the United States, Congress was arguing the Jones bill that posed the question of whether or not the Philippines should be granted independence. In Manila, the Philippine Assembly was considering an antislavery bill, which would create mechanisms enabling the criminal prosecution of taking or having slaves. Yet, far from a statement of fact, the editorial team's pronouncement in *La Vanguardia*, a local Manila newspaper, had far-reaching political implications.

With the end of the American colonial period at stake, the editorial captured the sentiments of Filipino nationalists, who refuted, and even ridiculed, the assertion that slavery existed in the Philippines: "... it would be the height of humor, not to say of evil intention, to affirm the present existence of slavery in the Archipelago, much less in the Christian

[1] Dean C. Worcester, *Slavery and Peonage in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Government of the Philippine Islands, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Printing, 1913), 35.

provinces."[2] In guarding against any criticism that would question Filipino fitness for independence and self-governance,[3] the writers reasoned that if "[slavery] should be understood, by the lowest social class, debased and despised" as it was created by the ancient Romans "to give a useful application to their human booty of war, and by the American planters of the United States who cracked their whips upon [those]... who worked on their plantations," the answer to whether slavery existed at present in the Christian provinces of the Archipelago "must be in the negative."[4]

While *La Vanguardia* explicitly and instrumentally denied its existence, slavery in the Philippines as in other parts of Southeast Asia "is but one of the disabilities... found to occur in similar patterns throughout history."[5] From pre-colonial to post-colonial Southeast Asia, Bruno Lasker found that there were "five main ways in which individuals might become enslaved: (1) capture in warfare, including intertribal feuds; (2) condemnation for crimes; (3) raids, both by pirates and by professional traders, and subsequent sale; (4) sale of dependents, usually of children by their parents – or in the case of orphans by the head of the family – but sometimes of whole tribes and village communities by their lords; [and] (5) indebtedness," of which the latter "is by far the most potent in recent times" due to its attachment to private property.[6] Modern slavery is then a "residuum of even more primitive conditions," although similarities have not been readily acknowledgeable.[7]

Thus, despite the intentional comparison of slavery made across three continents and historical periods, the *La Vanguardia* writers did not fully recognize or acknowledge its presence in their own nation. Rather, they sought to make a distinction between the Christian and non-Christian, southern areas of the Philippines, where Muslim Moro leaders of the latter openly defended slavery as a practice legitimized by authority of custom and religion.[8] By asserting that Philippine "civilization was quite advanced" before the arrival of the Americans and that "humanitarian ideas regulated... social existence," the editorial contends: "As slavery does not exist here at present, only a madman or a visionary can fear its existence in the future. To do so would be equivalent to affirming that the Filipinos, instead of progressing, think of lapsing back into the barbarism of primitive life... there is no fear that the phantasm of slavery will disturb the peace of our civilized society to-morrow [sic]."[9]

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[2] Ibid., 36.

[3] Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies Over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 181.

[4] Worcester, *Slavery and Peonage*, 36.

[5] Bruno Lasker, *Human Bondage in Southeast Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 16.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 17.

[8] Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery*, 180.

[9] Worcester, *Slavery and Peonage*, 36.

With the very public problem of slavery circulating between the Philippines and the U.S., a systematic, yet ethnographically shallow, investigation of unfree labor and involuntary servitude ensued,[10] led by the controversial Secretary of the Interior for the Philippine Islands, Dean C. Worcester.[11] Findings from the report[12] disputed the aforementioned claims of the Filipino nationalists and exposed the commonality and long-standing practice of the sale of human beings, largely for household service and labor, even in territories occupied by non-Christian Filipinos.[13] Nevertheless, at the same time that *La Vanguardia* depicted slavery as colonialism; repudiated it for its "contradistinction to Christianity, civilization, and progress;" and objected to the word's usage in the antislavery bill, the newspaper supported laws against forced labor or involuntary servitude.[14]

In revisiting the construction of slavery in the Philippines as a phantasm, the *La Vanguardia* editorial lays bare the enduring contention over the nature, language, and discourse of human bondage. The invocation of prior forms of slavery, connecting the Philippines to the United States and Rome, demonstrates the need to attend to the geographical connections, structural developments, and social conditions that underlie systems of unfree labor. As Richard B. Allen argues, the "conceptual apartheid" that separates "discussions about the slave, indentured, and cognate labor trades that flourished during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries" is "no longer sustainable, and that a deeper understanding of these migrant labor systems is contingent upon situating them in more fully developed historical and comparative contexts."[15]

Following Allen's lead, the first section of the article explores Island Southeast Asia as a site of long-term international maritime slavery in which transnational labor migration of today now plies nearly the same routes. The exploration of forced labor across and beyond Island Southeast Asia allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the legacies of historical slavery in contemporary regional and global contexts. In situating patterns of forced labor within a global perspective, the article then considers in the second section how the field of anthropology has conceptualized slavery and calls for an understanding of the lived experience of forced laborers through a study of the broader sociocultural, economic, linguistic, geographical, and political dynamics that support and shape conditions of bondage. Turning to cases of historical and contemporary domestic work and servitude in Indonesia and the Philippines in the third section, the article reorients the focus of slavery scholarship from the Atlantic context to consider the wider implications of intra-Asia slavery

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[10] Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery*, 201.

[11] Bruno Lasker, "The Shadow of Unfreedom," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (February 1945): 129.

[12] Worcester, *Slavery and Peonage*.

[13] Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery*, 180, 192.

[14] Ibid., 187-189.

[15] Richard B. Allen, "Human Trafficking in Asia Before 1900: A Preliminary Census," *The Newsletter* 87 (Autumn 2020): 32, https://www.iias.asia/sites/default/files/nwl_article/2020-10/IIAS_NL87_3233.pdf.

through an examination of forced labor under debt bondage, violence, and crises. The article concludes with a return to the discourses that enable, legitimize, and recognize unfree household and migratory labor, illustrating that the lived realities of the *ata*, *alipin*, and domestic workers in Indonesia, the Philippines, and beyond the borders of Island Southeast Asia dispels the view that slavery is a phantasm in the region.

Southeast Asia as a Site of Slavery

While *La Vanguardia* explicitly denied the existence of slavery, studies of human bondage in Southeast Asia confirmed its enduring presence,[16] and general pattern across this region, albeit with distinctive local variations.[17] However, similar to Allen's finding of the lack of attention to the exportation of slaves in the literature on South Asian trade, commerce, slavery, and bondage,[18] major studies of these themes in Southeast Asia also makes little reference to the export dynamics of chattel labor.[19] Instead, they were largely focused on describing slavery domestically within national borders,[20] or comparatively.[21] For instance, in the latter, Anthony Reid utilizes evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to review patterns of James L. Watson's "closed" and "open" systems of slavery,[22] noting that "the transfer of labour was undoubtedly unusually marked" during this period of rapid commercial expansion and urban growth, low population growth, and a relatively dispersed and pluralistic political system.[23]

Here, he defines a "closed" system as "one oriented primarily towards retaining the labour of slaves by reinforcing their distinctiveness from the dominant population," a pattern that "occurs typically in relatively static and self-contained communities practising labour-intensive wet-rice agriculture, where commercial exchange and the money economy have

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[16] Lasker, *Human Bondage*.

[17] Kerry Ward, "Slavery in Southeast Asia, 1420-1804," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 3, AD 1420-AD 1804*, eds. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521840682.009.

[18] Richard B. Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate from India and Southeast Asia, 1500-1800," in *Critical Readings on Global Slavery*, eds. Damian Alan Pargas and Felicia Roşu (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1422-1423, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346611_046.

[19] Lasker, *Human Bondage*.

[20] Lasker, "The Shadow of Unfreedom."

[21] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia." In *Critical Readings on Global Slavery*, eds. Damian Alan Pargas and Felicia Roşu. Leiden: Brill, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346611_047.

[22] James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[23] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1463.

made little impact."[24] In contrast, an "open" system was "one which is acquiring labour through the capture or purchase of slaves, and gradually assimilating them into the dominant group," a pattern more readily seen in "the wealthy mercantile cities and a few other labour-deficient areas."[25] These two systems, however, are not absolute or static with Reid stating that "the constant flow of slaves from the 'closed' to the 'open' systems makes it necessary to retain the insistence... that we are dealing here with the one phenomenon, 'slave', even though the forms that phenomenon takes are naturally very varied."[26]

Indeed, it is only in recent decades that literature has begun to refer to and detail the lesser known international and intra-Asian movement of slaves into and out of the region. Specifically, the emerging work exploring the exportation of unfree laborers from India and Southeast Asia into the wider Indian Ocean has uncovered the Southeast Asian region as a thriving site of slavery. [27] These scholars found that Asian traders, particularly indigenous Hindu and Muslim traders between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries,[28] and Europeans in the second half of the sixteenth century,[29] began to traffic slaves, captives, and fugitives from the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asian states on a large scale. It is estimated that Asian traders imported an average of 2,000 South Asian slaves to Southeast Asia.[30]

In comparison, Portuguese ships carried some 400 Indian slaves to Aceh, Indonesia in 1646,[31] and transported several hundred slave laborers each year from 1580 to 1640 from southern India, China, Burma (Myanmar), Malaya (present-day Malaysia), Java, and other parts of Asia to the Philippines with Malacca frequently serving as a collection point before they were brought to Manila.[32] Additionally, Spanish colonists in the Philippines preferred Asian slaves, shipping some to Mexico,[33] where they comprised a significant proportion of

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[24] Ibid., 1462.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 1463.

[27] Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate;" Gwyn Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, eds. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (London: Routledge, 2011); Titas Chakraborty and Matthias van Rossum, "Slave Trade and Slavery in Asia – New Perspectives," *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2020): 4, https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shaa004.

[28] Daniel Perret, "From Slave to King: The Role of South Asians in Maritime Southeast Asia (From the Late 13th to the Late 17th Century)," *Archipel* 82 (2011): 164, https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2011.4261.

[29] Kuzhippalli Skaria Mathew, *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), 137–38.

[30] Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate," 1427.

[31] William Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1646–1650: A Calendar of Documents in the Indian Office, Westminster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 54, n. 2.

[32] Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate," 1424.

[33] Scott, William Henry, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991), 27-28, 31.

the immigrant population in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[34] In the colonial Dutch East Indies, or what is now Indonesia, slavery was largely driven by the demand for labor in Batavia (contemporary Jakarta) and the possessions of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC).[35] While forced migration in the commercial empire of the VOC has been well-documented,[36] there remains a need to examine and situate the legacies of historical slavery in contemporary regional and global contexts.[37]

The pre-colonial and colonial movements of labor within and beyond Southeast Asia demonstrates how those enslaved "experienced slavery as both a *global* and a *globalizing* phenomenon – global in the sense that it existed in diverse settings around the world... and globalizing in the sense that it connected world societies (emphasis in original)."[38] As Damian Alan Pargas and Felicia Roşu argue, a global perspective must "view slave systems across time and space as both ubiquitous and interconnected."[39] This is firstly an effort to "dislodg[e] antebellum southern slavery from its pedestal as the quintessential slavery" in world history,[40] and to depart from viewing the Atlantic experience of slavery as a normative "model for understanding various forms of unfreedom."[41] Secondly, this perspective means incorporating the global into comparative analyses much like Campbell, who seeks to place the history of slavery within an "authentic" Indian Ocean World dimension by articulating its location as the first "global economy."[42] The next section, therefore, aims to situate the meaning and historical significance of different forms of forced labor and servitude within the contemporary context of a global and globalizing Southeast Asian region and through the lens of anthropology.

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[34] Edward R. Slack, Jr. "The *Chinos* in New Spain: A Corrective Lens for a Distorted Image," *Journal of World History* 20, no. 1 (2009): 37, 41-42.

[35] Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate," 1424.

[36] Ward, Kerry, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521840682.009.

[37] Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate," 1423.

[38] Damian Alan Pargas and Felicia Roşu, eds., "Introduction: Global Perspectives on Slavery," in *Critical Readings on Global Slavery* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 3, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346611_002.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Christine E. Sears, "'In Algiers, the City of Bondage': Urban Slavery in Comparative Context," in *New Directions in Slavery Studies: Commodification, Community, and Comparison*, eds. Jeff Forret and Christine E. Sears (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 202-203.

[41] Pargas and Felicia Roşu, eds., "Introduction," 7.

[42] Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," 52.

Framing the Lived Experience of Forced Laborers

According to global estimates, Asia and the Pacific accounted for almost two-thirds of all modern slavery victims globally with 25 million victims on any given day in 2016.[43] Defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as "a set of specific legal concepts including forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery and slavery-like practices, and human trafficking," modern slavery essentially "refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power."[44] In Asia and the Pacific region, forced labor is prevalent. The ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines forced labor as "all work of service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."[45] This definition encompasses "traditional practices of forced labor such as vestiges of slavery or slave-like practices, and various forms of debt bondage,"[46] like bonded labor and peonage. Debt bondage is defined as "being forced to work to repay a debt and not being able to leave, or being forced to work and not being able to leave because of a debt."[47] Additionally, new forms of forced labor, like human trafficking, is included in this definition.[48] Thus, of those in modern slavery, the largest share at 66 percent were forced labor victims, of which over half were in debt bondage and over two-thirds were women and young girls.[49]

Despite these numbers, Kevin Bales argues that comparatively slavery occupies a much smaller component of the global economy than the past: "Pushed to the illicit margins of most societies, it nevertheless contributes, though in small ways, to a large number of commodities, products, and services that might be consumed locally or exported globally."[50] As a result of the vulnerability brought upon by poverty and not having access to resources,

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[43] International Labour Organization, *2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery and Child Labour: Regional Brief for Asia and The Pacific* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017a), 5, https://ilo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/41ILO_INST/1jaulmn/alma995073593102676.

[44] International Labour Organization, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva: International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation, 2017b), 16, https://ilo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/41ILO_INST/j3q9on/alma994967593002676.

[45] Ibid.

[46] International Labour Organization, *2017 Global Estimates*, 7.

[47] Ibid.

[48] International Labour Organization, *General Survey on the Fundamental Conventions Concerning Rights at Work in Light of the ILO Declaration on Social justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2012), 128, https://labordoc.ilo.org/permalink/41ILO_INST/j3q9on/alma994688153402676.

[49] International Labour Organization, *2017 Global Estimates*, 6.

[50] Kevin Bales, "Slavery in its Contemporary Manifestations," in *Critical Readings on Global Slavery*, eds. Damian Alan Pargas and Felicia Roşu (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1686, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346611_054.

protection of the law, or to social and legal citizenship,[51] Bales suggest that "the flow of slaves from place to place mirrors the migration of opportunity seekers from poorer countries to richer countries," where they largely engage "in simple, non-technological and traditional work that feeds into local economies."[52] Labor migrants and victims of forced labor, thereby, share similar work, such as in domestic service, agriculture and fishing, manufacturing, mining, and construction. Beyond this shared commonality of work, scholars of Southeast Asia have noted a correspondence or continuance between past and present slavery due to impoverished conditions that keep the poor in debt bondage in Cambodia,[53] or of cultural indebtedness that keep the filial in debt bondage in Vietnam.[54]

Nicolas Lainez, however, critiques these analogies between old and new forms of debt bondage in Southeast Asia, noting that its utility is limited to the hiring of service where the creditor employs the debtor and is tenuous in illuminating other current debt practices.[55] For example, he notes that not all indebted families resort to debt bondage to cope with economic adversity.[56] Instead, most families tend to expect financial support from their children in the form of remittances by migrant or overseas family members whether invoked through such terms as *utang na loob* (literally, "debt of the inside") in the Philippines,[57] or *luk katanyu* (loosely translated as "grateful children repaying their eternal debt to their parents") in Thailand.[58] Thus, while some anthropologists emphasize the role of kinship in

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[51] Nicola Piper, "A Problem by a Different Name? A Review of Research on Trafficking in South-East Asia and Oceania," *International Migration* 43 (2005).

[52] Bales, "Slavery in its Contemporary Manifestations," 1668, 1686.

[53] Trude Jacobsen, *Sex Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Context of Desire, Duty, and Debt* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[54] Daniel Silverstone and Claire Brickell, *Combatting Modern Slavery Experienced by Vietnamese Nations en Route to, and Within, the UK* (London: Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 2017). https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1160/combating-modern-slavery-experienced-by-vietnamese-nationals-en-route-to-and-within-the-uk.pdf.

[55] Nicolas Lainez, "The Contested Legacies of Indigenous Debt Bondage in Southeast Asia: Indebtedness in the Vietnamese Sex Sector," *American Anthropologist* 120, no. 4 (2018): 680, https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13105.

[56] Ibid., 676.

[57] Cheryll Alipio, "Money, Maturity, and Migrant Aspirations: "Morality-in-Motion" Among Young People in the Philippines," in *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*, eds. Lan Anh Hoang and Cheryll Alipio (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019); Cheryll Alipio, "Filipino Children and the Affective Economy of Saving and Being Saved: Remittances and Debts in Transnational Migrant Families," in *Transnational Labour Migration, Remittances, and the Changing Family in Asia*, eds. Lan Anh Hoang and Brenda S. A. Yeoh (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[58] Leonora C. Angeles and Sirijit Sunanta, "Demanding Daughter Duty: Gender, Community, Village transformation, and Transnational Marriages in Northeast Thailand," *Critical Asian Studies* 41, no. 4 (2009): 555.

shaping indebtedness and bondage,[59] others stress its antithesis in defining slavery,[60] or its study in relation to the political economy of labor and migration, wherein social, economic, and political structures – rather than indigenous forms of debt bondage alone – must be considered in the analysis of debt, indebtedness, and dependency relations.[61]

Lainez further argues that these transhistorical reproductions of debt bondage "continue to construct simplistic narratives in which slavery and traditions from the past continue to disempower and enslave present-day disadvantaged populations."[62] To mitigate these aforementioned limitations, the next section examines case studies of forced labor "both in terms of the individual lived experience of enslavement and in terms of the broader social and economic factors that support contemporary slavery."[63] This approach also allows for a recognition of the role of states, their various policies on migration, and the labor market "in producing the context and legitimization of situations of forced labor."[64] From a critical review of historical slavery to contemporary transnational migration, these case studies explore competing understandings and discourses of forced labor, demonstrating that an analysis of the sociocultural, economic, linguistic, geographical, and political dynamics at play must take not only a cross-border approach but also a global perspective.

Drawing upon archival sources, ethnographic data gathered from the authors' long-term fieldwork in Indonesia and the Philippines, and news reports drawn from the first author's larger study on determinants of migrant health in Hong Kong, the following section compares how transnational migrants, like the enslaved peoples and indentured laborers that came before them, such as the *ata* of Indonesia and the *alipin* of the Philippines, face a range of oppressive conditions and precarity from lack of legal protections and labor rights to basic human rights and social connections that place them in extreme power asymmetries indicative of earlier forms of exploitation. In considering how various forms of forced labor persists in the region as a result of social and structural conditions that foster debt bondage, violence, and crises, the article argues for a need to reorient the dominant focus of slavery scholarship from the Atlantic context to a renewed focus on the wider implications of slavery from within Asia.

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[59] Charles Kaut, "Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligation Among Tagalogs," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (1961).

[60] Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[61] Annuska Derks, "Bonded Labour in Southeast Asia: Introduction," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010): 849; Lainez, "The Contested Legacies," 672, 674.

[62] Ibid., 679.

[63] Bales, "Slavery in its Contemporary Manifestations," 1660.

[64] Danièle Bélanger, "Labor Migration and Trafficking among Vietnamese Migrants in Asia," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 653 (May 2014): 90, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24541776.

Historical and Modern Slavery in Indonesia

The region of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) in southeastern Indonesia shows congruencies between historical slavery and contemporary unfree labor. Much of this similarity is found in the existence of both inherited and acquired slaves as well as the geographic characteristics of unfree labor. The population of these islands faced enslavement before the colonial period by fellow inhabitants of NTT and other parts of Indonesia.[65] Large areas around the coast remain depopulated today from both the abduction of communities and the movement of villages to safer locations in the highlands away from maritime slave raiding.[66] Unlike Atlantic slavery, European colonialists, such as the Dutch, English, and Portuguese, did not export slave systems but adopted the characteristics of slavery in Southeast Asia while, at times, preventing slave raiding on allies in the region.[67]

During the precolonial and colonial period, slave raiding focused on catchments in the non-Islamic regions of eastern Indonesia. Enslaved peoples would be transported to regional centers, such as Bali or Makassar, to work in domestic servitude or plantation slavery. Others were further trafficked to the larger metropoles, such as Batavia and China.[68] Slaves from NTT were recorded as arriving in areas as far as South Africa (see Figure 1). These larger cities were not simply a location for enslaved peoples but qualify as "slave societies." Historical records demonstrate that large portions of the populations were enslaved people. Slaves were 56.93 percent of Batavia, 66.55 percent of Makassar, and 40.07 percent of Malacca's population in the seventeenth century.[69] Slave raiding in NTT came from several sources. At different periods over several centuries, the local kingdom of Ende, regional powers of Makassar and Ternate, and the Dutch and Portuguese took slaves from NTT.[70] Not unlike the Atlantic system, enslaved people would often be transmitted between local and international sources at collection points.

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[65] Hans Hägerdal, "Slaves and Slave Trade in the Timor Area: Between Indigenous Structures and External Impact," *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2020).

[66] Rodney Needham, *Sumba and the Slave Trade* (Monash Asia Institute: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Working Papers, 1983).

[67] Hägerdal, "Slaves and Slave Trade in the Timor Area."

[68] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1471.

[69] Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 148.

[70] Hägerdal, "Slaves and Slave Trade in the Timor Area."

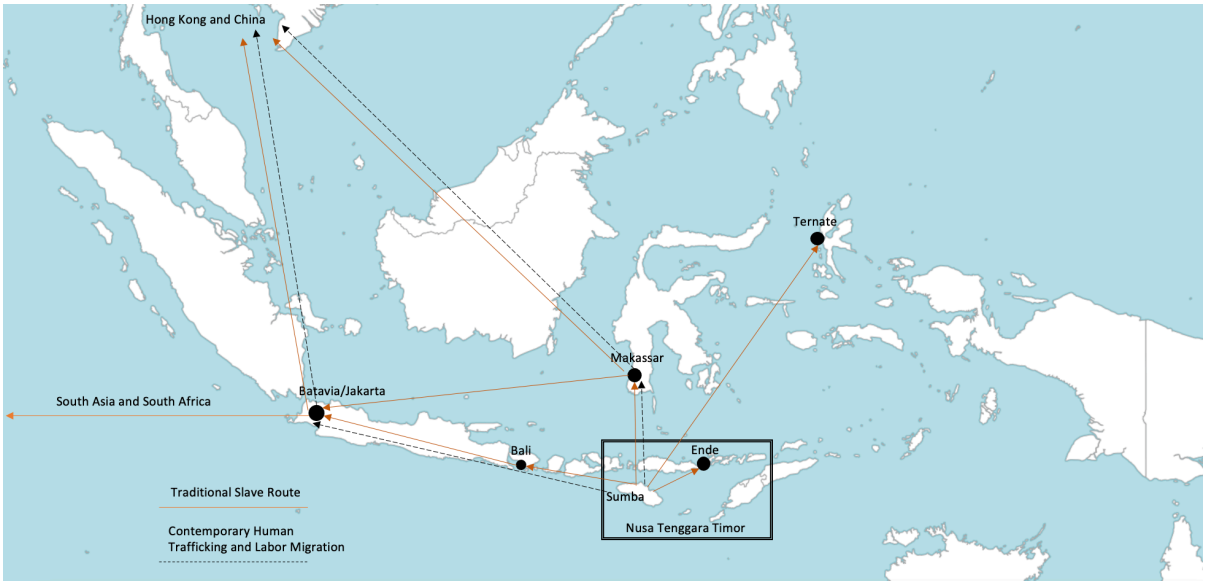

Figure 1: Historical Slavery and Contemporary Human Trafficking and Labor Migration Routes in Indonesia

What similarities exist between the historical and contemporary slavery in NTT? Because NTT comprises several islands and ethnic groups, this case study will focus on the island of Sumba as greater ethnographic detail exists regarding slavery. Sumba has continued to have both the traditional hereditary slavery within communities,[71] as well as unfree labor through labor migration[72] and kidnapping.[73] As was the case during historical periods, ethnic groups from Makassar on the island of Sulawesi have been identified as kidnapping and enslaving Sumbanese, according to Indonesian National Police detectives.[74] The means by which individuals became slaves is recorded in the Bugis law code, a sixteenth century pre-Islamic source that stated: "A person is called a slave (*ata*) when the four following circumstances arise: first, a person is peddled for sale and bought; second, the person sold says 'buy me' and you buy him; third, a person is seized in war and sold; fourth, a person has transgressed the customary law (*ade*) or the state (*kerajaan*), he is sold and you buy him;" or in a fifth case, a man can be sold to make good his inability to pay his or his parents' debts.[75]

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[71] Janet Hoskins, "Slaves, Brides and Other 'Gifts': Resistance, Marriage and Rank in Eastern Indonesia," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 25, no. 2 (2004).

[72] Aisyah Llewellyn, "'It is Modern-day Slavery': Migrant Workers from Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara Face Trafficking, Abuse," *South China Morning Post*, January 17, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3117956/it-modern-day-slavery-migrant-workers-indonesias-east-nusa?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=3117956.

[73] Indonesian National Police Investigator, Personal communication to co-author, 2010.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Mattulada, "Latoa: Satu Lukisan Analitis terhadap Antropologi-Politik Orang Bugis" (PhD diss., University of Indonesia 1976), 278-281, quoted in Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1464.

Similarly, the Sumbanese language also recognizes the distinction between one who is forced through violence into slavery and one who is born into slavery: *Ata mema* ("original slaves") are based on heredity and are typically autochthonous within communities while *ata pa kahi* ("bought slaves") are from outside of the community and acquire their designation through violence or a financial transaction.[76]

Ethnographic accounts over the last 30 years are unclear about the degree to which slavery has dwindled on the island. This is, in part, a reflection of the difficulty in defining slavery; the existences of bridewealth payments in which women are "paid for" by their husbands and his kin; and the ways in which symbolic, legal, and structural conditions hide unfree labor. The instances in which slavery has been reported to remain in Sumba are the following: Some *ata* tend livestock, work fields, and labor in households with only subsistence as compensation.[77] *Ata* have also been reported to carry brands and tattoos of the noble families to whom they are said to belong.[78] Extending at least until the 1990s, Indonesian National Police attended the funerals of nobles to prevent the sacrifice of *ata* to their deceased masters.[79] The continuation from traditional slavery to contemporary domestic servitude is captured in the language change used to describe this institution. The descendants of *ata* are now a caste euphemistically referred to as *orang dalam rumah* (literally, "people of the house") in which their domestic service connotes but hides their status as enslaved people.[80] *Ata*, nevertheless, have been found to use marriage to outsiders as one of the only ways to shed their status as slaves,[81] while some escape from the island with the help of missionaries to the inner islands of Bali and Java.[82] Others, however, are returned to their "homes" by the police when they flee.[83]

Today, Nusa Tenggara Timur is one of the most impoverished areas of Indonesia. Such economic conditions have led to a new type of *ata – ata pa kahi*, or bought slaves – who migrate outside the region, but often to unfree labor situations. In addition to being a location of traditional domestic servitude within communities, Sumba is a source of unfree laborers, who are moved to Java and other areas in western Indonesia.[84] Traditional chattel

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[76] Hoskins, "Slaves, Brides and Other 'Gifts.'"

[77] Chris Lundry, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Inside Indonesia*, June 6, 2010, https://www.insideindonesia.org/sympathy-for-the-devil.

[78] Indonesian National Police Investigator, Personal communication to co-author, 2010.

[79] Hoskins, "Slaves, Brides and Other 'Gifts.'"

[80] Siti Barokah, *An Ethnographic Investigation of Master-Slave Relation in Sumba, Indonesia* (The Hague: MA Thesis, 2016).

[81] Ibid., 30.

[82] Indonesian National Police Investigator, Personal communication to co-author, 2010

[83] Hoskins, "Slaves, Brides and Other 'Gifts.'"

[84] Barokah, *An Ethnographic Investigation of Master-Slave Relation*, 14.

slavery is often associated with large-scale production systems and, in Southeast Asia, there have been enslaved people who work the fields. Compared to the Atlantic slave systems, Southeast Asian chattel slavery is more closely related to domestic labor except in extreme instances where human trafficking has been reported to involve the abduction of young women from Sumba by the ethnic groups near Makassar,[85] who are also known for their historical slave raiding of the region.[86] Although only a minority of people leaving Sumba and NTT do so against their will, contemporary migrant workers from the region often face abuse and lack of access to legal protection.

Historical and Modern Slavery in the Philippines

Like the *ata* of Indonesia, the pre-Hispanic Philippines had a clear distinction between the bonded and "freeman" classes with the former known as *alipin* in Tagalog or *oripun* in the Visayan language, and the latter as *maharlika* and *timagua*, respectively. Individuals became an *alipin* through inheritance, sale, capture, judicial punishment, and debt; and based on their degree of dependence and obligation were further divided into subclasses: *Alipin sa gigilid*, or household slaves, were completely dependent and obligated to their master while *alipin namamahay*, or field slaves or serfs, had their own house, usually on the property of their masters and would assist them when called upon.[87] In a document dated 21 October 1589, Juan de Plasencia, one of the first Franciscan missionaries to arrive in the Philippines, detailed the customs of the Tagalogs, an ethnolinguistic group, in the province of Laguna and described the practices and rights of the aforementioned classes of slavery.[88] He noted that there have been confusion of the two *alipin* terms, leading to some *alipin namamahay* being taken away, used, and sold as *alipin sa gigilid*, which he notes is illegal.[89] Plasencia, then suggests that the alcaldes-mayor, or regional magistrate, "should be instructed to ascertain, when anyone asks for his *alipin*, to which class he belongs, and to have the answer put in the document that they give him."[90] While Reid describes Plasencia as concerned over "what he sees as the terrible abuse of trading in slaves," the former points out that in practice there was great fluidity due to commercial demand and "[i]f there was a

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[85] Utami Dewi Anggia and Rezasyah Teuku, "Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers and Sustainable Development Goals: Feasible Policy and Practices," *E3S Web of Conferences* 73, no. 09017 (2018): 2-4, https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20187309017.

[86] Llewellyn, "'It is Modern-day Slavery.'"

[87] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1470.

[88] Juan de Plasencia, "Customs of the Tagalogs (Two Relations by Juan de Plasencia, O. S. F.)," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898, V7, 1588-1591*, eds. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13701/13701-h/13701-h.htm#d0e1500.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

customary distinction between saleable and non-saleable bondsmen, it had little real force either in ideology or legal institutions."[91]

This sentiment can be found in an early account made on 7 July 1569, during one of the last years of Spanish explorer Miguel López de Legazpi's administration as Governor-General of the Philippines. Here, he relayed "a summary relation on the nature of this country and of the natives" to the viceroy of New Spain, Gastón de Peralta, 3rd Marqués de Falce:

> The inhabitants of these islands are not subjected to any law, king, or lord... the people do not act in concert or obey any ruling body; but each man does whatever he pleases, and takes care only of himself and of his slaves. He who owns most slaves, and the strongest, can obtain anything he pleases. No law binds relative to relative, parents to children, or brother to brother. No person favors another, unless it is for his own interest; on the other hand, if a man in some time of need, shelters a relative or a brother in his house, supports him, and provides him with food for a few days, he will consider that relative as his slave from that time on, and is served by him. They recognize neither lord nor rule; and even their slaves are not under great subjection to their masters and lords, serving them only under certain conditions, and when and how they please. Should the master be not satisfied with his slave, he is at liberty to sell him. When these people give or lend anything to one another, the favor must be repaid double, even if between parents and children, or between brothers. At times they sell their own children, when there is little need or necessity of doing so.[92]

On the one hand, Legazpi documents the looseness of the ideologies, institutions, and practices of slavery; and, on the other hand, captures the relative ease in which people are contracted and bonded into labor, particularly in a political and economic system that mirrored that of precolonial and colonial Indonesia.

In classifying the weak state, money economy of sixteenth century Philippine society as "transitional" between the "closed" and "open" systems of slavery, Reid suggests that this allowed for movement in and out of the slave category as slaves were increasingly seen as property, who could be exchanged for other goods or cash.[93] In this society, the Philippines had nearly identical pathways into slavery as Indonesia. In a letter written on 3 July 1584 to King Felipe II, Melchor Davalos, an auditor, testifies to the commercial and industrial status of the Spanish colony and notes:

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[91] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1470-1471.

[92] Miguel López de Legazpi, "Relation of the Filipinas Islands and of the Character and Conditions of their Inhabitants," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803, Volume III*, *1569-1576*, eds. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13616/13616-h/13616-h.htm#d0e529.

[93] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1469.

> Concerning slavery... we have here many kinds of slaves: some are slaves because their fathers and grandfathers were such; others sold themselves... either to make use of the money or to pay their debts; others were captured in war; others became slaves because, being orphans, they were held in that condition for food and expenses; others were sold in times of famine by their fathers, mothers, or brothers; others bear that name because of loans, for interest multiples rapidly among the [Indios (indigenous peoples of the Philippines)] and the Moros [(native Muslim inhabitants)], and thus a poor man becomes a slave. There are men who become slaves on account of crimes, and failure to pay fines and penalties; and others for not having paid the tribute or tributes of their lords.[94]

While Davalos explains that he "chose to mention these details because it is proper" to notify the King and his council, he also states that, "Each of these reasons is an argument for justifying slavery."[95]

Reid, however, finds that debt and failure to pay fines appears to be a distinguishing feature in the Malay Archipelago and in defining bondage,[96] arguing that debt is "the most fundamental source of Southeast Asian slavery."[97] In an official report written by Governor Francisco de Sande on 7 June 1576, he remarks:

> They are all usurers, lending money for interest and go even to the point of making slaves of their debtors, which is the usual method of obtaining slaves. Another way is through their wars, whether just or unjust. Those who are driven on their coat by storms are made slaves by the inhabitants of that land. They are so mercenary that they even make slaves of their own brothers, through usury... They are all a miserable race.[98]

Sande's report reveals the ubiquity of slaves and perhaps the uneasiness of its prevalence throughout Philippine society. But, as the global economy expanded and the practice of slavery extended beyond Christian and non-Christian inhabitants (as mentioned in the introduction and administratively documented by Worcester) to European and Asian slaveholders and traders (as mentioned in the first section of the article), "the 'open' system

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[94] Melchior Davalos, "Letter from Melchior Davalos to Felipe II," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898, Volume VI, 1583-1588*, eds. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/13120/pg13120-images.html.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Herman Jeremias Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1900), 38-39.

[97] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1465.

[98] Francisco de Sande, "Relation of the Filipinas Islands," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898, Volume IV, 1576-1582*, eds. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, accessed October 1, 2021, http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/gu012635.pdf.

of slavery tended to give way to one marked by racial distinctiveness,"[99] which is also a feature of post-colonial bondage and forced labor, especially that of domestic work and servitude (see Figure 2).

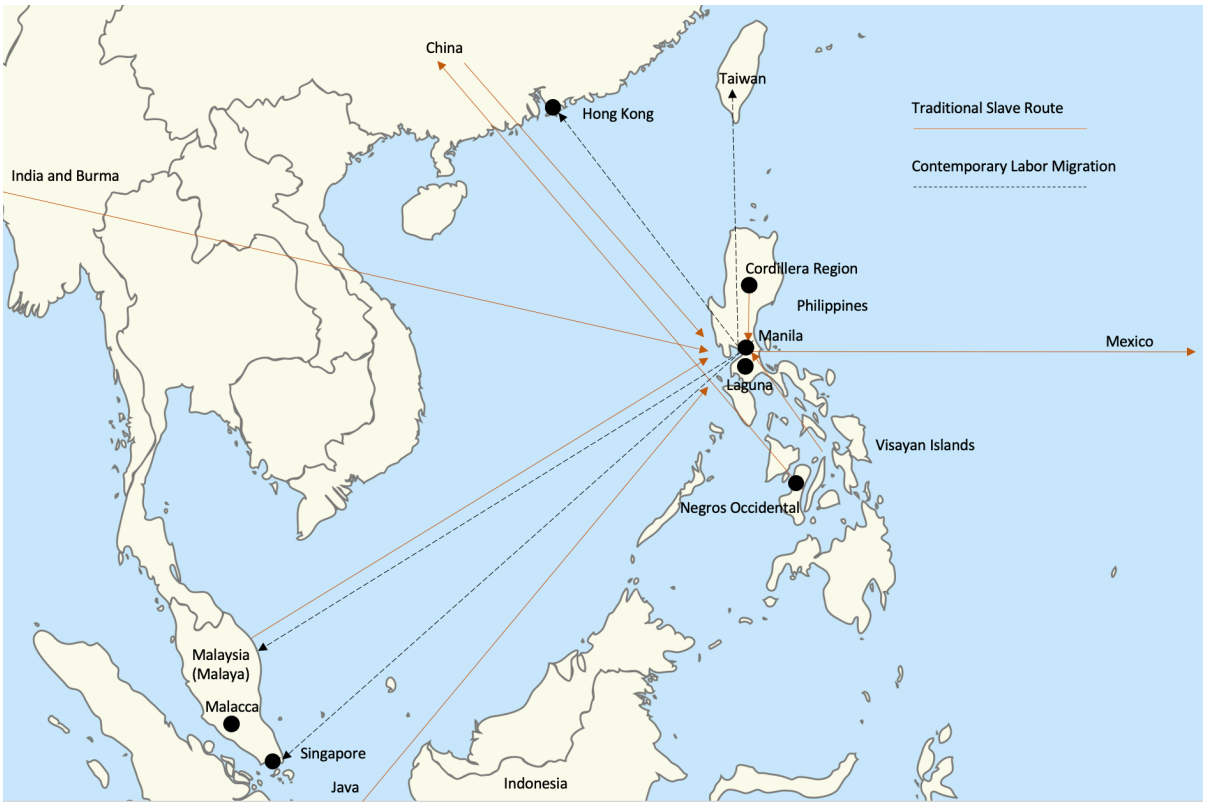

Figure 2: Historical Slavery and Contemporary Labor Migration Routes in the Philippines

Foreign Domestic Workers and Forced Labor in East Asia

Forced labor in relation to domestic work has long been a part of the histories of Indonesia and the Philippines as variously described above by historians, anthropologists, missionaries, explorers, and government officials. While the export of Indonesian slaves to China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from cities, such as Makassar, Malacca, Aceh, and Banten, has been documented, less is known about the specific export of Indonesian domestic servitude to East Asia during this time. In contrast, Worcester's controversial government report collected case reports, detailing not only the sale and transfer of young domestic slaves from indigenous tribal groups of the Cordillera Mountain Range and of Christian Filipinos from the Visayan Islands to Manila and the surrounding provinces of Luzon, but also of those exported from around the Philippines to China. For instance, a Bureau of Customs employee made the following report on 1 July 1913:

[99] Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems," 1480.

> ... relative to the existence of slavery in this country... a Chinese merchant from... Negros [Occidental (in the Western Visayas region)], was about to embark for China and sought to establish his status as a merchant... In the course of the examination the information was developed that he owned a girl 17 years old.... having purchased her from his [business] partner... three years ago for the sum of ₱20.00... According to his testimony, [the partner] had been made a present of the girl by her sister... I am led to believe, however, that in the case of Chinese slave owners the ulterior motive in many instance, especially if the slaves are females is to take them to China where they are sold as servants to wealthy Chinese... a theory, as evidenced by a talk yesterday with a very prominent English-speaking Chinaman who went so far as to acknowledge [it].[100]

This customs employee further noted that "the ownership of household slaves who are regularly bought and sold is so common in Negros... that it excited no special interest among foreigners who are familiar with such forms of servitude."[101]

Yet, in another immigration inspection case of a Chinese laborer failing to disclose the taking and shipping of two Filipino girls (aged four and 17) out of the country, the employee suspected that "young Filipino girls are being taken to China for other than legitimate purposes."[102] Despite what Worcester calls "proven facts," he asserts that "[w]hile there has been much noise about slavery, there has been profound silence relative to peonage, which, in the Philippines, is by far the greater evil of the two, because of the very large number of persons who suffers from its prevalence."[103] As previously noted in the second section, debt bondage, peonage, and bonded labor falls under ILO's umbrella term of forced labor; and continues to be a transhistorical issue in Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, especially in times of financial and humanitarian crises. For instance, the current pandemic due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has exacerbated the working conditions and financial burden of foreign domestic workers (FDWs) from these countries,[104] and has had an adverse impact on their health and well-

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[100] Worcester, *Slavery and Peonage*, 20.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 81.

[104] Kathleen Magramo, "Paying More for Domestic Helpers: Hong Kong's Supply of Such Workers Shrinks, Forcing Desperate Employers Into 'Bidding War,'" *South China Morning Post*, September 25, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/3150029/paying-more-domestic-helpers-hong-kongs-supply; Kathleen Magramo, "Hong Kong Freezes Domestic Helper Wages for Second Straight Year, Officials Point to Coronavirus-hit Economy as Factor for Denying Pay Rise," *South China Morning Post*, September 30, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3150735/hong-kong-freezes-domestic-helper-wages-second-straight-year.

being.[105] While transnational labor migration provides an alternative to these countries' stagnant labor markets, domestic workers currently face rising debt bondage and emergency expenses "because the... situation is far worse back home."[106]

It is due to these poor socioeconomic conditions that the Philippines and Indonesia have become top sending countries of FDWs, particularly to East and Southeast Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia, with the latter being a preferred destination for Indonesians.[107] In the Philippines, impoverished living conditions, intertwined with social mobility aspirations and a state infrastructure to support overseas employment, help to perpetuate the constant, and oftentimes intergenerational, family chain migration flows of FDWs to these countries, as evidenced by the lead author's fieldwork in Laguna province.[108] At the end of 2020, Hong Kong had nearly 374,000 FDWs with the majority being female and Filipino at over 207,400 and Indonesian at almost 158,000.[109] With one in seven households employing a domestic worker, this number points to the high reliance on and recruitment of FDWs to fill in gaps in care needs and provide domestic services for households, children, and the elderly.[110]

Their employment, however, requires them to live-in with their employers, increasing their vulnerability to labor exploitation, gender-based violence, and mental and physical health issues, including death in which one Filipino domestic worker passed away after her employer denied her request to seek healthcare treatment out of fear of contracting COVID-19.[111] Appeals made to overturn this policy point to the 2014 case of Erwiana

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[105] Ingrid D. Lui et al., "'We Also Deserve Help During the Pandemic': The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Foreign Domestic Workers in Hong Kong," *Journal of Migration and Health* 3, no. 100037 (2021): 1-7, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2021.100037.

[106] Raquel Carvalho, "Hong Kong Domestic Workers 'Angry' at Exclusion from Coronavirus Relief Measures," *South China Morning Post*, April 9, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3079281/hong-kong-domestic-workers-angry-exclusion-coronavirus-relief.

[107] Tim F. Liao and Rebecca Yiqing Gan, "Filipino and Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong: Their Life Courses in Migration," *American Behavioral Scientist* 64, no. 6 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764220910229.

[108] Alipio, "Money, Maturity, and Migrant Aspirations;" Alipio, "Filipino Children."

[109] Immigration Department, "Statistics on the Number of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong (English)," The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, last updated February 25, 2021, https://data.gov.hk/en-data/dataset/hk-immd-set4-statistics-fdh/resource/b983aa1d-2617-4051-9ec1-dc5ca281b117.

[110] Kok Xinghui, "Could a Singapore Scheme for Domestic Workers be a Model for Changing Hong Kong's Live-in Rule for Helpers?" *South China Morning Post*, September 19, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3149038/could-singapore-scheme-domestic-workers-be-model-changing-hong?tpcc=enlz-lunar&module=tc_1.

[111] Raquel Carvalho, "Coronavirus: Death of Filipino Domestic Helper in Hong Kong Underlines Stark Health Care Gap Amid Pandemic," *South China Morning Post*, October 11, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3104923/coronavirus-death-filipino-domestic-helper-hong-kong-underlines.

Sulistyaningsih, an Indonesian domestic worker who was tortured,[112] as well as to a surge of abuse cases since the pandemic in which the Asian Migrants' Coordinating Body (AMCB) has found that seven out of 10 domestic workers have experienced ill-treatment, one in five encountered physical abuse, and six percent of workers reported rape cases or sexual harassment.[113] Coupled with the government's stay-at-home guidance during the pandemic, FDWs have reported feeling pressured to stay home during their rest days, which is an employment right they are entitled to,[114] while others are threatened with having their visas cancelled or their jobs terminated.[115]

FDWs have also faced increased workloads at the same time that they are excluded from government relief measures due to their non-resident status. Eman Villanueva, a Filipino domestic worker and spokesman for AMCB, stated that, "The government treats us as if we are not affected by the [COVID-19 pandemic] at all," adding that "[i]n the past, most foreign domestic helpers only needed to prepare breakfast and dinner for their employers. But [now]... children stay more at home, parents also work from home, that means more work for their helpers... They also have to go to the market to buy food more, and do more cleaning."[116] Consequently, at the same time that FDWs are both overworked and in shortage due to public health measures, such as travel bans and quotas, Hong Kong immigration officials have restricted workers from "job-hopping," meaning that a worker cannot prematurely terminate their employment contract in order to change employers.

This policy led Villanueva to argue that even if some domestic workers had switched to higher paying employers, there was nothing wrong in pursuing better pay as many Hongkongers routinely did: "Why are domestic workers being punished for this? Our message... is that [the lawmakers] have the mentality of slave masters. One cannot leave his or her employer? That's slavery."[117] Moreover, during the pandemic, newly arrived FDWs to the city have been found to experience vulnerable situations even before the start of their

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[112] Chris Lau, "Hong Kong's 'Live-in' Rule for Domestic Workers Leads to Working on Rest Day, Appeal of Government Policy Argues," *South China Morning Post*, March 17, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3075631/hong-kongs-live-rule-domestic-workers-leads-working.

[113] Fiona Sun, "Slapped, Kicked, Scratched, No Days Off: Domestic Helper Group in Hong Kong Reveals Alleged Abuse Filipino Woman Suffered in 14 Months Amid Covid-19 Pandemic," *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3136995/slapped-kicked-scratched-no-days-domestic-helper-group; Cannix Yau, "Hong Kong Helpers Allege Sexual, Physical Abuse by Employers During Covid-19 Pandemic," *South China Morning Post*, June 29, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3139211/hong-kong-helpers-allege-sexual-physical-abuse.

[114] Lau, "Hong Kong's 'Live-in' Rule."

[115] Raquel Carvalho, "Coronavirus: Death of Filipino Domestic Helper."

[116] Ng Kang-chung, "No Pay Rise for Hong Kong's Domestic Workers in Coming Year, Government Says, as Covid-19 Hammers Economy," *South China Morning Post*, September 29, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3103573/no-pay-rise-hong-kongs-domestic-helpers-coming-year.

[117] Phila Siu, "Hong Kong Immigration Department Rejects 319 Visa Applications From 'Job-hopping' Domestic Helpers," *South China Morning Press*, February 3, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3120409/hong-kong-immigration-department-rejects-319-visa.

domestic labor with some reporting poor living conditions and the failure of employers to cover costs in compulsory quarantine, while others are reluctant to complain out of fear of getting fired.[118] A member of the public responded to this news, stating: "This is the ugly side of the foreign domestic helper business. This is just [a] slightly cleaner version of [the] slave trade."[119]

Conclusion

In 1912, when *La Vanguardia* declared that there were no slaves in the Philippines, its editors did so in an environment where slavery was highly politicized as a moral justification for colonialization. Thus, to refute the ostensive logic of colonialism that slavery should not exist, they tried to make it conceptually disappear through rhetoric. Contemporary Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, no longer require an absence of slavery to legitimize their independence or sovereignty. Recent cases show that such governments celebrate their role in liberating enslaved people within their borders,[120] while others increasingly acknowledge and are critical of the modern slavery practices and forced labor conditions that their nationals endure. When governments fail to protect the rights of those in forced labor, the case studies indicate that civil society and the public are willing to respond and intervene. Such manumissions and recognition also mean that slavery and forced labor remains a part of societies.

Rather than speaking slavery out of existence, contemporary unfree household and migratory labor is negated through not speaking about it.[121] The *ata* of Sumba are there. They escape to other islands, marry outsiders to gain the protection of Indonesian law, and are returned by police after they have run away. The geographic patterns of this unfree labor and abduction mirror much of the colonial slave trade, where individuals from peripheral areas of island archipelagoes were taken to metropolitan areas. Similarly, the *alipin* were also there in the Philippines. However, while this bonded class and its terminology are no longer in usage in comparison to the *ata*, domestic slavery and servitude is still present in society.

Yet, this is rarely spoken about in the Philippines or Indonesia and very few ethnographies mention the *ata* or the relevance of the *alipin* in understanding modern forms of unfree and forced labor. Rather, public and scholarly attention has been redirected towards

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[118] Raquel Carvalho, "'Limited Food, No Wages,': Domestic Workers Struggle Amid Quarantine in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, June 21, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3089837/limited-food-no-wages-domestic-workers-struggle-amid-quarantine.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Abby Phillip, "Nearly 550 Modern-day Slaves Were Rescued From Indonesia's Fish Trade. And That's Just the Beginning," *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/04/10/nearly-550-modern-day-slaves-were-rescued-from-indonesias-fish-trade-and-thats-just-the-beginning/.

[121] Savira Dhanika Hardianti, "Modern Slavery in Indonesia: Between Norms and Implementation," *Brawijaya Law Journal: Contemporary Issues in South-East Asia Countries* 2, no. 1 (S) (2015), http://dx.doi.org/10.21776/ub.blj.2015.002.01.06.

overseas foreign domestic work. This is due in part to the demand for this labor, to the indispensable care and household services they provide in Hong Kong and other countries of destination, and to their contributions to the wealth and economic sustainability of Indonesia and the Philippines. At the same time, these domestic workers attract attention as a result of the unequal and unfree conditions they face. As the case studies have shown, patterns of poverty, debt, and bondage, arising from social and structural conditions, has engendered Southeast Asians into global slave and migrant labor systems, where vulnerabilities as a result of their race, ethnicity, class, and gender can lead to exploitation and violations of their human and labor rights.

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