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Asymmetrical Dependencies in the Making of a Global Commodity: Coffee in the Longue Durée

Abstract:

The paper presents the general outline of a broader investigation into the history of coffee in the *longue durée*, from its first emergence in the commercial networks of the Ottoman Empire to the world crisis of Atlantic slavery at the end of the nineteenth century. Within this vast time frame the global circuits of the coffee commodity chain underwent substantive changes. The project explores the multiple combinations of land, labor, capital, and political power involved in the production, circulation, and consumption of coffee. The focus is on the relations between different forms of free and dependent labor mobilized for coffee production in the capitalist world-economy: peasant family organization, slavery, debt bondage, indentured labor, compulsory labor regimes imposed by colonial and national states, sharecropping, and seasonal wage labor. Based on a systematic study of a specific commodity chain, it directly addresses the problem of the structures of asymmetric dependence that evolved in different social orders over time.

Bio:

Rafael de Bivar Marquese is professor of history at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. His publications include *Administração & Escravidão. Ideias sobre a administração da agricultura escravista brasileira* (Hucitec, 1999), *Feitores do Corpo, Missionários da Mente. Senhores, letrados e o controle dos escravos nas Américas, 1660-1860* (Companhia das Letras, 2004), *Slavery and Politics. Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850* (The University of New Mexico Press, 2016), *Os Tempos Plurais da Escravidão no Brasil. Ensaios de História e Historiografia* (Intermeios, 2020) and *Reconstructing the Landscapes of Slavery. A Visual History of the Plantation in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).