DEEP END

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY OF RESOURCES AND SLAVERY

DEPENDENT

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY OF RESOURCES AND SLAVERY

Edited by Martin Bentz, Nikolai Grube and Patrick Zeidler

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WHENCE DEPENDENCY: A GLOBAL APPROACH

DEPENDENCY – INTERDEPENDENCY – INDEPENDENCY

In its most general definition, dependency is a form of relationship between at least two entities of which one is dependent in some way on the other. Nature and the universe in general are composed of infinite relationships of dependency, in which human dependencies constitute particular types related to forms of human organization. The same is also true in regard to interdependency and independency. The first is a dyadic relationship of dependency where at least two entities are dependent one on the other, in a different or similar way. This conceptual distinction between dependency, interdependency and independency is not a given, but reflects the way in which the human mind perceives relationships in general, whether human or not, individual, social, economic relationships or other.

In a similar way, independency is defined as the state of being non-dependent on something or someone. This concept is normally perceived in our modern mind as a developmental stage, economic, political, psychological development for example. Modern theories of the social sciences even define independency as the objective of developmental processes. All this adds a moral aspect to the way we define human relationships and relationships in general: the state of being dependent is perceived negatively, while the state of independency is an objective, and often is equated with freedom, i.e. to be free from being dependent. This perspective has oriented the scholarship and the research about phenomena of dependency, in particular in the social sciences, towards perceiving them within a sociopolitical context of power relations.

The hand-painted images show members of different Indian castes or religious and ethnic groups. Clothes and jewelry reflect traditional appearance, as yet uninfluenced by European colonialism.

1 a–b
Illustrations from the manuscript *Seventy-two Specimens of Castes in India* by T. Vardapillay, from Madura (southern India), 1837.

BALANDIER'S "SOCIOLOGY OF DEPENDENCY"

In 1952, the French sociologist Georges Balandier wrote, "The notion of dependency, which was frequently used in political economy and psychoanalysis, has become popularized to the point of becoming an explanatory instrument used by journalists."[1] In a fundamental article about the "Sociology of Dependency," he called for a sociological definition of this concept and explained its importance against the background of the capitalized colonized world of the After War. Attempts to interpret and explain contemporary events, he argued, required an accurate definition of situations of dependency, domination, submission, and their social, economic, political and cultural conditions. Balandier has differentiated between local traditional forms of dependency, integrally embedded in the social structure of a given society, and dependency as a means of subjugation of foreign societies.

The caste system in India (fig. 1 a–b) and the British colonialization of India are two characteristic examples of the first and the second forms of dependency. Both forms, the inferiority they imply and the inequality they create, are sustained and legitimized by cultural rationale. Both serve as means to control different parts of the population, which are realized in different ways. In fact, the dependency that the British colonial enterprise introduced in India challenged the local dependency of the caste system. In both cases, however, dependency is an unequal relationship that benefits one group by exploiting the other and is thus framed within power relations of control. Dependency within the context of power relations therefore is understood to have an economic rationale and is asymmetrical by definition, since it entails the appropriation of resources. These could be economic resources such as labor means or other resources or modes of productions that are used in a way that constitutes a social hierarchy around their utilization, exploitation and appropriation. At the same time, whoever exploits the dependent also becomes dependent, on a very different level, on the exploited, who are the source for the exploiter's position of power. In other words, positions of power depend on relationships of dependency. Such sociopolitical dynamics also have a cultural aspect. The inferiority they imply and the inequality they create are sustained and legitimized by cultural ideology. This could be, for example, the belief in the superiority of a certain group of people which legitimizes their position of power and the dependency it entails, or the definition of their position as an "advanced state of development."[2] In either case such views justify the inequality that dependency creates as a form of power relation.

DEPENDENCY THEORY

Balandier's objective was to create a new methodology to analyze what he called "the biggest political problem of our time," namely the rise of nationalisms in the decolonized world. Two years prior to the publication of his article, an innovative direction in economics set a new theoretical framework to rethink the definition of dependency in view of international political and economic dynamics of the de-colonialized world. It came to be known as Dependency Theory. Three influential studies[3] addressed the economic dependency of undeveloped decolonialized countries and revealed the way they became tied into an international economic circle that made them dependent on developed "neo-colonial markets." Dependency Theory, in general terms, maintains that the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of others.[4] In the 1970s and 1980s this was the dominant theory to explain the economic and political dependency of (at the time so-called) third-world countries as an outcome of colonialism. It went hand in hand with another outcome of colonialism: a "dependency complex of the colonized." According to this concept, coined by Frantz Fanon, the colonized were trapped in an inferiority complex in regard to the colonizer, and in a state of dependency of the

RECOGNIZING DEPENDENCY IN OBJECTS

Historians, social scientists and anthropologists have approached the ubiquitous phenomenon of extreme dependency in human societies primarily by analyzing texts and images. As a result, those scholars have concentrated on information and accounts *about* dependent people and the circumstances of their lives. Our approach in this book is very different. Instead of concentrating on texts, we focus on objects and artefacts – on the material world. It is our aim to explore the material evidence of asymmetrical dependencies and to establish the range of information they contain as an equivalent source on asymmetrical dependencies alongside the written word.

Our approach to the study of dependency draws on the so-called 'material turn' in cultural studies, and on recent debates on environmental and biohistory formulated by authors such as Arjun Appadurai, Tim Ingold and Bruno Latour.[1] The material turn is a theoretical perspective that looks at the implications of materiality and material artefacts in different fields of knowledge production and social practice. Its perspective focuses on the role of objects, resources and other material elements in shaping societies, cultures and historical processes.

For scholars studying colonialism and dependency, the material turn opens up new ways of understanding the complex dynamics and structures of these historical phenomena. Traditional methods of researching dependencies often prioritized the role of ideas, ideologies and power relations, thereby primarily emphasizing their normative perspective. But this often neglected the material dimensions that are closely linked to colonial processes.

The material turn foregrounds the material aspects of slavery, extreme dependencies and colonialism. This involves analyzing objects such as traded goods, technologies, architectures (fig. 1) and landscapes that played a central role in colonial exchange and in strong dependencies. The material turn also enables us to examine surviving material traces and remnants of colonial rule and oppression, such as monuments, buildings or economic structures.

In dependency research, the study of objects also allows for a deeper analysis of the material foundations and resources that enabled and sustained colonialism and asymmetrical dependency. This includes the study of raw materials, production methods and trade networks that enabled the colonial powers to expand their economic and political dominance. This approach is also useful in helping us to analyze the dependencies between exploiters and the dependent by shedding light on the role played by material resources and technologies in creating and maintaining these relationships.

Crucially for the study of dependencies, this development has relativized the traditional scholarly focus on written culture, because the majority of those who lived in extreme dependency did not leave

behind any written documents. If we do not want to look at dependency only from a top-down perspective, but also include the everyday lives and experiences of the dependent (fig. 2), it is imperative that we move away from privileging written sources. This requires that we learn to read material culture. Object-based disciplines such as archaeology, art history and cultural anthropology can help us to recognize the significance of materiality and material records as sources for the study of dependency. Material evidence has the potential to restore the voices of the often invisible and 'silent' actors of history, and to provide insights into experiences of oppression and the hidden pockets of agency in human societies.[2] In recent decades, those disciplines of the humanities that study material culture have therefore increasingly sought to establish links with the sciences and their broad spectrum of research methods, so as to be better able to explore the materiality and production of objects and the extraction and control of resources and their trade routes.

Finally, the 'reading' of an object also presupposes that we engage with its own history. Arjun Appadurai developed the concept of a 'social life of objects',[3] based on the idea that objects have histories that go beyond their material existence. Each object has a life story that encompasses its production, the uses to which it is put, and its possible destruction. Objects are reinterpreted in different contexts. An artefact can have one meaning in an ancient society, acquire another meaning after having been excavated in an archaeological dig, and be given yet another interpretation when it is displayed in a museum. This also shows that the significance of objects is never fixed, but rather in a constant state of transformation.

Prisons and penal institutions are physical manifestations of control and discipline. Their architecture and organization are designed to supervise, isolate and control inmates, which highlights the power relationship between inmates and supervisors.

1
Aerial view of Ossendorf prison in Cologne (locally known as *Klingelpütz*) from 2021.

2
Quetzaltenango (Guatemala), 2018: Kaqchikel and K'iche' Maya conducting research on the internet.

This emphasis on materiality does not at all mean that we intend to reject written texts as sources for research into dependencies. Indeed, such a radical departure would reinforce the dichotomy of binary concepts, such as the distinctions between written and non-written, human and non-human, or culture and nature. These dichotomies have deep historical roots in the European-Western tradition. By deliberately including material aspects in studying dependencies we aim to overcome these traditional divisions. We aim to develop a more holistic perspective that takes into account the complex interactions between material and immaterial elements and thus facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of social dynamics.

In modern information societies, computer technology and digital tools can highlight the dependency on knowledge and resources. Individuals with no access to such technology or a lack of the necessary skills may find their professional or social mobility hampered, demonstrating their dependency on those who do.

STAPLE FOODS AND DEPENDENCY

The domestication and cultivation of cereal plants, the so-called ‘agricultural revolution’, took place at different times in different regions of the world. It was a driving force in the move towards sedentarization: barley, emmer and wheat were cultivated from around 8500 BCE in Egypt and in the Mediterranean; in Southeast Asia, rice was grown from around 8000 BCE; and in the Americas, maize from *c.* 8000 BCE. As the cultivation of cereals became more widespread, different forms of dependency developed. One was a dependency on these plants themselves: they became the main source of food for expanding societies, but were always subject to environmental influences and other risks. Mass production and the conditions of cultivation and distribution that were associated with it gave rise to social dependencies. Specialized overproduction meant that it was no longer necessary for all population groups to grow their own food. Here lie the origins of specialized crafts and social stratification, and thereby also of asymmetrical dependencies. The cultivation of cereal crops changed access to and ownership of land, as well as the ways in which food was stored and distributed. Densely populated urban societies saw the specialization of entire regions, and increasing trade. This led to the emergence of dependencies on imports, on distribution mechanisms and related contexts (infrastructure), and on the economic and political parameters.

PRODUCTION

Depending on the prevalent environmental conditions, there were very different forms of cultivation. In addition, crops were continually developed to produce higher yields. In Central America, maize was usually intercropped (planted together) with beans and squashes. It required minimal tilling and yielded two annual harvests. Over time, artificial irrigation systems were installed and cultivated maize cobs were grown to be many times larger than in the original wild plant. Growers in Egypt had depended from the earliest times on the annual Nile floods that inundated the river banks for several weeks. The fertile silt deposited on the floodplain was key to agriculture. Basins, dams and canals were built to harness and distribute the floodwaters. Water-intensive rice cultivation in Asia also required complex terracing and irrigation systems (fig. 1).

In all cultures, the harvested grain was manually processed using a grindstone (fig. 2) or, in the case of maize, a mortar. For larger quantities, and as part of a process of efficiency enhancement, the ancient Greeks, for example, developed lever mills with two moving grindstones. Rotary mills with large hoppers (funnels for feeding grain into the mill), driven by donkeys or slaves (see p. 61, fig. 4), were introduced in the Roman Republic (2nd – 1st centuries BCE) to meet the growing needs of the city's population. Water mills, which became increasingly widespread in the Roman Empire and allowed quasi-industrial production, represented a real technological revolution. Scholars estimate, for example, that the watermill complex of Barbegal in southern France, built in the 2nd century CE, was able to produce up to 4.5 tonnes of flour per day to supply the military stationed nearby.

Grain was made into loaves (fig. 3) or flatbread, porridge or cakes, as well as beverages, especially beer. The food was prepared in individual households or, in larger towns and cities, on the premises of bakeries and other specialized businesses.

In just the small Roman town of Pompeii, which was buried in a volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius, archaeologists have found evidence for more than 30 bakeries of various sizes (see p. 57).

Many different actors were involved in the production of staple foods, and in many pre-modern societies their roles changed over time. Peasants, who cultivated land as owners or tenants to provide food locally and regionally, existed everywhere. They were particularly vulnerable to crises such as crop failure or war, which threatened their livelihoods: they could become dependent on large landowners through debt bondage, serfdom or slavery. In Roman Italy, there was a shift from subsistence peasant farming to a slave economy, which was based on large agricultural villas with

Rice, like grain and maize, is one of the most important staple foods for humanity. It is grown in many Asian countries on irrigated terraces. This historic photograph shows men and women in traditional dress planting rice seedlings.

1
Photo, Japan, early 20th century.

2
Painted wooden figurine of a woman grinding grain, Egypt, Middle Kingdom (c. 2100 – 1800 BCE), Egyptian Museum of the University of Bonn, inv. BoSAe 2125 and 2128, height 7.0 centimetres.

rows of slave cells, as well as various production and storage facilities (see p. 57).

In the medieval Islamicate eastern Mediterranean, grain production lay in the hands of personally free, autonomous peasants. However, there were constant conflicts due to their dependency on the state, which owned the land, levied taxes and controlled the grain storage depots (see p. 85). In Russia, a form of dependency known as serfdom developed, under which unfree peasants had to pay taxes to their lord and were also subject to his jurisdiction (see p. 97).

There are not very many depictions of grain production, and the few that exist show more or less idealizing scenes in which the workers' social status is indicated by their activities, their tasks and their clothes, although their legal status cannot be clearly identified. Occasionally, however, the peasants' unrelenting toil is shown by their bent postures (p. 59, fig. 1). This should not be taken as social criticism, however, but instead either as an expression of pride in the hard work, or as a visual means of emphasizing the power of those who commissioned such paintings: usually landowners or officials responsible for collecting rents or taxes.

Small statues depicting people grinding grain, baking bread or brewing beer are often found as grave goods in Egyptian tombs. Their hard work in food production symbolically shows that the deceased would be provided with all necessary goods in the afterlife.

3
Carbonized loaf of bread, Boscoreale (Italy), 1st century CE, Boscoreale, Antiquarium.

STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

The intense heat generated during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE carbonized organic fibres, thereby at least preserving their shapes. This loaf provides rare insights into the highly standardized Roman production of bread, in which bread moulds were used.

The current war in Ukraine illustrates the fragility of the dependency on food resources: the disruption of harvests and the interruption of transport routes severely disrupted global wheat transport chains (fig. 4). The securing of agricultural land and trade routes has therefore always been a central task usually carried out by state institutions. From the 16th century onwards, securing the supply and correct storage of grain was an important aspect of legitimizing the rule of the Russian tsars (p. 97). In ancient Athens in the 5th century BCE, merchants who supplied large amounts of wheat in wartime could be awarded honorary citizenship. The political rise of the general Pompey in 1st-century BCE Rome was due in part to his victories against the pirates who were severely disrupting trade routes in the Mediterranean.

The storage of grain is of great importance for the food supply of the population. It was usually the responsibility of the authorities or the ruler, sometimes also of large landowners or merchants. Control over the storage and distribution of supplies according to the principle of redistribution was an important factor in the creation of asymmetrical dependencies, both among the Maya and in the Near East or in Egypt. The biblical story of Joseph in Egypt is emblematic (see p. 98): Joseph, who had been enslaved, was able to correctly interpret Pharaoh's dream of seven lean and seven fat cows as a sequence of seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. As a result, Joseph was made vizir, i.e. the chief administrator of Egypt, and put in charge of the granaries; he was able to alleviate famines by distributing grain (fig. 5). It seems that Egypt's granaries were still well filled in the hellenistic period: King Ptolemy III, for example, sent over 30,000 tonnes of grain to the strategically important Greek city of Rhodes after it was hit by an earthquake in 227 BCE.[1] In Rome at the time of Augustus, 200,000 people – around one third of the population – received their grain for free. The purpose of this grain dole, known as the *annona civica*, was apparently to maintain social peace in the city (see pp. 57–58).

There is archaeological evidence for grain storage from the level of local households to central storage facilities. The large facilities in the Near Eastern and Minoan and Mycenaean palaces from the 2nd millennium BCE, for example, are well preserved. They have many small chambers, just like the much younger (by two thousand years) Roman *granaria* and *horrea* that have been excavated in the city of Rome's port of Ostia and in military camps (*castra*) and rural estates (*villae rusticae*). Roman authors such as Columella and Pliny give precise instructions on how to construct such storage facilities, so that they could store grain and other foodstuffs for long periods of time protected from damp and rodents. Models of granaries from Egyptian tombs are particularly instructive. The model found in the tomb of Gemniemhat in Saqqara is uncovered, allowing us to look in from above and see workers loading and measuring grain, as well as a scribe who is recording the information (fig. 6).

The crucial importance of the grain supply can be seen in numerous images, especially from the private sphere. Tomb paintings from the Old Kingdom onwards (c. 2700–2200 BCE) show the cultivation, harvesting and storage of grain to show that the deceased would have enough to eat in the afterlife: in the tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el-Medina the husband is seen cutting corn, while his wife collects the ears in a basket. In the tomb of Nakht, the deceased official is shown twice: seated under a canopy, he supervises various agricultural activities that are depicted in detail, which, as the inscription tells us, took place on his own land (fig. 7).

Dependency on the supply of staple foods such as grain always has been and still is under threat, including from armed conflict. Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022 led to a blockade of the sea routes in the Black Sea. As part of an agreement between Turkey, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Nations in order to address the global food crisis, the cargo ship 'Razoni', which the day before had taken on board 26,000 tonnes of wheat in Odessa (Ukraine), was able to cross the Bosporus in Istanbul on 3 August 2022.

4
Photo of a Ukrainian grain freighter in the Bosporus (Turkey), 3 August 2022.

THE POLITICS OF CEREAL PRODUCTION IN MEDIEVAL SYRIA

As with most agrarian societies of the pre-modern period, cereal production was the most important sector of the agricultural regime in the medieval and Early Modern Islamicate world. It was the foundation of the economy. Taxes on cereals contributed the highest revenues for the state; bread and other cereal-based products (such as porridges) were the staple of the local diet[1] (fig. 1). From the 11th century, military officers were paid through a decentralized system of tax collection called *iqṭā*ʿs, which gave them the right to collect taxes from designated properties; the most lucrative of these quasi-feudal grants were of agricultural land devoted to cereal cultivation. In times of drought and famine, state officials, who controlled the grain stores, hoarded wheat and barley and sold it off at inflated prices. Economic misery and hunger were, in the minds of the masses, associated with the unethical management of cereal land and distribution of grain.

In spite of the central role it played in the economy, Muslim rulers rarely intervened directly in cereal cultivation, compared with the cultivation of plantation-style crops as sugar cane. Where to plant cereals, which cereal to cultivate, and how to do so were entirely in peasant hands. Peasants in the Muslim world, moreover, enjoyed certain freedoms denied to their counterparts in medieval Europe. They were not serfs; in legal terms, they were not "tied to the land". They were not part of the estate; as freeborn people, they had the legal right to move elsewhere. They did not own the land, but they had generations-long rights to cultivation, and these claims were seldom challenged by the authorities. The reality of peasant life, however, was a different matter. Peasant flight – to escape unbearable taxes and armed conflict – was an economic threat to the state, which brought an urgent response. In the Ottoman period (16th–early 20th centuries CE), peasants in Palestine, for example, were hunted down and returned by force to their villages. In the Mamluk period (13th–early 16th centuries CE), peasants were forced to do corvée labor on imperial estates. None of this was technically legal, but it became regular practice.

As a result of these factors, a complex relationship developed between peasants and the state as regards cereal production and distribution, resulting in mutual, but unequal, form of economic and political dependency. Without peasant labor, the state would politically and economically collapse. Peasants needed the law-and-order provided by the state to maintain irrigation canals and agricultural terraces, to sow and harvest, and to keep the land productive. There was never any question, however, who controlled natural resources, whether land or water. Cereals were cultivated on state land, as opposed to other kinds of crops. Peasants had the right to a percentage of the cereals they harvested, but neither the land nor, in fact, the products of their labor were theirs. Conflicts over taxes and use of water regularly erupted between peasants and the officials. Violent confrontations could take place at the threshing fields (where taxes in kind from cereals were collected), irrigation canals (where siphoning of water took place), and cereal storage depots. The asymmetrical dependencies of the peasants of the time are most vividly traced at these places, rather than the fields or the villages.

Current fieldwork by the University of Bonn at the site of Tall Hisban in central Jordan has begun to reconstruct the details of cereal cultivation and conflicts centered on this industry in the 13th and 14th centuries (fig. 2). The site is ideally suited to such a study, as it was a regional breadbasket for both the Roman and Mamluk states (fig. 3). We have learned that local peasants cultivated a wide range of wheats and barleys, with certain varieties planted specifically for the state and for long-distance transport and long-term storage, and others for local consumption, and short-term storage. For several decades in the 14th century, wheats were irrigated, at a time of repeated drought and increased demands for this crop from the state[2]. Grains used for local households in Transjordan and Palestine were typically stored in the numerous caves of the region and repurposed cisterns[3]. Large-scale storage for transport to the cities was done in built facilities called *shunah*s.

The "grain boom" of the 19th century opened doors to local agrarian entrepreneurs in cereal export. Contemporary with this development were reforms within the Ottoman government (called the *Tanzimat*), which required individuals, to register land in their own names rather than the community. While this did not in the end benefit peasants, it did urban elites with the means and access to credit to purchase land, hold title to it, and participate in the international business of the cereal trade[4]. This period, on the other hand, witnessed peasant indebtedness, further alienation from land they had been cultivating, and new forms of dependency, as new forms of land tenure developed. As in earlier times, peasants in this period had little control over their own labor, although there were no formal obstacles to their migration to other places. One of the most vivid expressions of this new form of "cereal capitalism" are the *quṣūr* – walled farmsteads that contained *shunah*s. From there the stored grains were transported to further markets and ports (fig. 4).

1 Walker 2020. **2** Walker et al. 2017.
3 Walker 2011. **4** Abujaber 1993.

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1 Walker 2020. **2** Walker u. a. 2017. **3** Walker 2011. **4** Abujaber 1993.

Archaeological, botanical, residue, and textual analyses suggest it was used for slow-cooking of a wheat-based porridge flavored with figs, a staple of the local diet.

1
13th-century stewpot from a kitchen at Tall Hisban.

2
Excavation of the stewpot at Tell Hisban (Jordan)

In one of the ruins of a farmhouse at Tell Hisban, a 13th-century cookpot was uncovered. The pot preserved traces of the last meal prepared in it by the residents of the house, before it was reoccupied by a wealthier family in the 14th century.

TEXTILES AND DEPENDENCY

We all use textiles in our daily lives as clothing and for interior decoration. But they also have an important function as status symbols. For many thousands of years, both the raw materials – cotton, linen, wool and silk – and the production of textiles played an important role in various social and global processes, which were often linked to the emergence of human dependencies, and they continue to do so today.[1] In ancient Mediterranean societies, tribute and taxes could be paid in textiles. People abducted from Africa and taken to the Americas in the transatlantic slave trade were exploited as labourers on the cotton plantations. Dependent wage labourers stood at the beginning of industrialization in the European textile factories of the 18th century. Even today, exploitation and forced labour still occur in the production of textiles in some world regions – such as in South and Southeast Asia – connected to the need of Western societies for cheap 'fast fashion'.

Different varieties of cotton have been grown independently in different parts of the world for thousands of years.[2] Some of the earliest evidence for the domestication of cotton comes from what is now India and Pakistan, particularly the Indus Valley, dating back to around 6000 BCE. The domestication and systematic processing of cotton can also be traced back to the 6th millennium BCE in some regions of Africa, the Arab world and Syria. There is also remarkable evidence for the domestication of cotton on the north coast of Peru beginning with the 5th millennium BCE. Recent research indicates that harnessing this raw material for the systematic production of nets for fishing was crucial for the emergence of sedentary, complex societies (see pp. 66 and 129), rather than – as is often assumed – for the production of food through agriculture. In the Mesoamerican region, the use of cotton for the production of clothing and other textiles was prevalent from the 3rd to the 2nd millennia BCE.

In contrast, cotton was largely unknown in the ancient Mediterranean region. Instead, fibres for textile production were obtained through the domestication of sheep (for wool) and the cultivation of flax. It was not until the Arab conquest of Egypt in the 7th century CE that cotton was introduced on a large scale in the region, gradually replacing linen as the main fibre. This example shows that the use of different resources has always also depended to a certain degree on the prevailing cultural character and political power relations.

Silk was introduced in the Andean region as a new fibre after the Spanish conquest – a resource that only became available with the change in the global balance of power and the colonization of the New World. Silk production enabled the Chinese empire to extend its influence across the Eurasian continent, including Japan and certain regions of the northwest coast of Africa, by establishing the Silk Road as a trade route and economic engine.[3] Today, the global power China is using the symbolic power of silk as the namesake for its 'Silk Road 2.0' project, a programmatic initiative involving considerable financial investment that aims to strengthen China's influence in the global marketplace for many years to come.

PRODUCTION AND DEPENDENCY

The first step in textile production – after extracting and cleaning the raw material – is to create thread by spinning. In many pre-modern cultures, a simple hand or drop spindle was used to produce a continuous thread by pulling and simultaneously twisting the individual fibres (fig. 1). A drop spindle is operated by tucking the distaff – usually a long, wooden stick – under one arm and loosely binding the prepared fibres to it with a cloth to hold them together. Alternatively, the loose fibres can be placed in a basket. The fibres are then pulled out one by one with one hand and fed to the spindle, which is twirled with the other hand. The spindle whorl, which is attached to the spindle, acts as a swing weight to make the spindle rotate evenly (fig. 2).

Pictorial representations of women with spindles and distaffs, as well as finds of such tools as grave goods in women's and girls' burials, indicate that spinning was considered a typically female activity in antiquity (and beyond). Various stages of textile production in a domestic setting are depicted on a Greek, Attic black-figure *pyxis* (a jewellery container) from *c.* 530/520 BCE (fig. 3 a–b)[4]: on the left stands a woman in a long robe, holding a spindle in her left hand and turning the woollen thread hanging from the distaff with her right hand; a small, naked boy looks on. To the right, we see another woman sitting on a stool, in front of her, we can just make out a *kalathos* (a wool basket) with a strand of wool pulled upwards, and a standing girl; beside her sits another woman who holds a strand of wool in her hands and turns to face the other woman. A naked boy points with his right hand to a *kalathos* standing on the ground between the two women; while the woman seated next to them leans slightly forward and braces her left leg against the stool on which another woman sits. She uses both hands to pull a strand of wool from a *kalathos* standing on the floor and passes it over her lower leg, which is stretched out forwards. Next, a small female figure walks to the right, turning her head backwards. The last seated woman in the row is probably of higher social standing: she is dressed more elaborately than the others, in a mantle, and also holds a wreath in her left hand. Two young, beardless men approach her from the right, each with his right hand raised in a gesture of speech. The rest of the frieze focuses on Dionysian themes: the divine couple Dionysus and Ariadne, a large vine and a satyr.

1
Spindle and distaff with raw and spun cotton, Salasaca (Ecuador), 20th century, bamboo, wood, terracotta, Bonn, BASA Museum, inv. 3025e, length 41.0 and 76.0 centimetres respectively.

Spindles were used to process cotton and wool into thread. The cotton bale on the distaff has been wrapped in a purple cloth for a better grip. Although cotton and camelid wool were replaced by sheep wool and synthetic fibres in the early 20th century, the old materials are still being used in many rural areas today.

2
Terracotta spindle whorl, Greek, Attic, 6th–5th century BCE, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 27.25, height 3.8 centimetres.

The spindle whorl would have been attached to one end of the spindle as a swing weight to make the spindle rotate evenly. Elaborately made and decorated whorls such as this one were also deposited in women's tombs as grave goods. In antiquity, spinning was the preserve of women.

3 a–b
Black-figure *pyxis* (a jewellery container) with lid, terracotta, Greek, Attic, 530–520 BCE, Bochum, Art Collections of the Ruhr-University, inv. S 1212, height 11.8 centimetres.

The figurative scene on the vessel depicts various stages of textile production in a domestic setting. Different social groups, such as citizen women, servant women and slaves, are differentiated by their size and clothing.

SILK, GOLD AND PURPLE

TEXTILE PRODUCTION AND DEPENDENCIES IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Textiles, like food, meet a basic human need. Their production, distribution and consumption have therefore played an important role in the economies and the cultural life of all societies. Textile production was already highly specialized in antiquity,[1] and associated with different forms of dependency: the availability of resources, forced labour, unequal gender roles and the level of technical progress. These aspects of unfreedom can be observed in textile production in almost all cultures and periods, and of course they have not been eliminated everywhere even now. This chapter focuses on the late antique Mediterranean, i.e. the period between the 3rd and the 7th centuries CE (fig. 1).

DEPENDENCY ON RAW MATERIALS: SILK, GOLD AND PURPLE

An important source for the study of late antique textiles are finds from Egypt, where the hot, dry climate has preserved fabrics and dyes in amazingly good condition. Most finds are from graves: the deceased were buried in their everyday clothes and wrapped in blankets and hangings. Because of their close relationship to representations of clothing and soft furnishings in mosaics and paintings, textile finds from Egypt are considered representative of the entire late antique Mediterranean region.

Linen and wool were raw materials that were equally available in late antiquity. Depending on what was required, people would choose the cooling, tear-resistant qualities of linen (fig. 2) or the warming, dye-absorbing properties of wool (fig. 3). Cotton did not come into wider use until the Arab conquest of Egypt in the 7th century, increasingly replacing linen as the most important fibre throughout the Mediterranean region in the Middle Ages.[2] This shows how the availability of raw materials depended on political rulers who introduced their own materials into conquered territories and made sure that they took root there.

The textile luxury goods of late antiquity were silk (fig. 4), gold and purple dye. These materials had limited availability because of their rarity in nature and the elaborate processing techniques they required. Silk was imported into the Mediterranean region from China and Central Asia. Written sources report that the emperor Justinian had silkworm eggs smuggled from Central Asia to Byzantium in the mid-6th century, thereby establishing silkworm farming in the Mediterranean.[3] True purple, which produces reddish and blue hues, was extracted from the glands of sea snails found in coastal regions of the Mediterranean in an extremely complex process. True purple had been a status symbol since the Bronze Age.[4] In antiquity, clothing and soft furnishings with gold threads were highly prestigious.[5] The gold threads were made of sheet gold cut into strips and wound around a thread core. With diameters of only 0.1 to 0.2 millimetres, gold thread was produced by specialized goldsmiths.

The limited availability of silk, purple and gold thread was further restricted by imperial legislation, which imposed a monopoly, held by the imperial house, on the production and sale of pure silk garments, textiles dyed with true purple, and gold fabrics. However, archaeological finds of gold, silk and purple textiles in private contexts show that loopholes in the law were exploited, or the law circumvented.[6] The influence of these luxury materials on textile production is particularly evident in the ways they were imitated: the mesh patterns typical of silk were imitated in cheaper materials such as wool and linen, vegetable dyes such as madder and indigo were substituted for genuine purple, and the luminous effect of gold thread was imitated by yellow wool.

GENDER-SPECIFIC ROLES IN PRODUCTION: SPINNING

Textiles were produced in several stages: raw material extraction, thread production, weaving, fulling and dyeing. Written evidence suggests that these operations were mainly carried out in professional textile workshops.[7] While the occupations associated with fabric production were carried out by men, thread production, i.e. spinning, appears to have been an activity carried out exclusively by women in the home.[8] Spinning the thread used in weaving was very time-consuming, with between 122 and 350 hours of labour required to spin the wool or linen thread needed to make a single tunic.[9] Only the hand spindle was used, which consisted of a wooden or bone rod to which a terracotta, stone or bone whorl was affixed. Evidence for domestic spinning has been found around the Mediterranean in the form of remains of spinning tools in dwellings in many late antique settlement excavations (figs. 5 – 6).[10]

Spinning was considered a typically female activity, associated with the feminine virtues of diligence and care. Thus spinning tools became typical attributes of women, both in representations of the living and in death. Spinning tools were placed in women's graves and women were depicted on gravestones with a spindle.

In wealthy households, spinning tools made of precious materials such as ivory, amber or jet were considered status symbols.[11] The image of the Virgin Mary spinning entered Christian iconography with the Annunciation scene.[12]

FORCED LABOUR: PAYING TAX WITH TEXTILES

In order to provide for the soldiers of the Roman Empire, from the 2nd century CE onwards citizens were obliged to pay taxes to pay for the soldiers' food and clothing.[13] The tax for military attire, known as the *vestis militaris*, could be paid in cash or textiles. We know this from legal texts, documents and letters. A papyrus tells us that in the years 310–311 CE, the village of Karanis in Upper Egypt had to supply a total of 24 tunics and eight cloaks for the Roman legions.[14] A document from Antinoopolis in central Egypt records that in 324 a woman named Isadora delivered a *chlamys*, a semicircular cloak, and a *stichárion*, a tunic, as payment of the *vestis militaris*.[15]

Apart from his armour, a soldier's clothing was no different from that of a civilian: soldiers wore a tunic and a *chlamys*, a semicircular cloak held together by a brooch on the left shoulder. Special padding and protective textiles needed to be worn under the armour.[16] Textiles from a military context have been preserved from Dura Europos, a 3rd-century CE Roman military base in modern-day Syria (fig. 7).[17]

RECAPITULATION

Textile production in late antiquity was associated with various forms of dependency, as were all parts of the ancient economy. We looked at some of these aspects here. Slaves were undoubtedly employed in textile production; there are isolated references to this in the written sources, but it is impossible to draw a clear picture from them.

1 Droß-Krüpe 2011, 47–102. **2** Bouchaud et al. 2019, 21. **3** Hildebrand – Paetz gen. Schieck 2020. **4** Bogensperger 2015. **5** Gleba 2008. **6** Steigerwald 1990. **7** Droß-Krüpe 2011, 245. **8** Droß-Krüpe 2011, 48–51, 58, 86. **9** Droß-Krüpe 2011, 37. **10** Trinkl 2004; Gazda 2004, 27; Fahldieck 2021. **11** Gottschalk 2015, 116–118. **12** Taylor 2018. **13** Herz 2019. **14** Gazda 2004, 15–16. **15** Livingstone 2023, 89. **16** Wild 1979. **17** Granger-Taylor 2012, 68–73.

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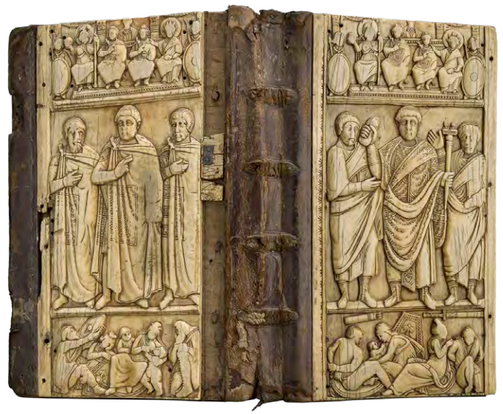

1
Consular diptych of Flavius Constantius, the later Western Roman Emperor Constantius III, 414 or 417 CE, Cathedral Treasury and Cathedral of St Stephen and St Sixtus in Halberstadt, Germany. Height 28 centimetres.

Ivory folding tablets, which were coated with wax on the inside and could be inscribed, were used as gifts for high-ranking members of society to celebrate and announce the assumption of a new office. The central panel shows the new consul (left) standing between two smaller figures and making a speech gesture. On the right we see him about to drop a folded cloth (the so-called *mappa circensis*) to mark the opening of circus games. The sumptuous clothing of the figures, which is shown in great detail, is very notable. In the Middle Ages, the ivory panels were reused as covers of a liturgical manuscript.

In the hot, dry climate of Egypt fabrics were preserved exceptionally well. Most finds are from graves, where people were buried in their everyday clothing.

2
Linen tunic with decorative panels worked in purple wool, Egypt, 5th–6th centuries CE, Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, Germany, inv. T 207.

STIMULANTS, LUXURY FOODS AND DEPENDENCY

Throughout human history, access to luxury foods and stimulants has always been a factor in the emergence of social inequalities and relationships of asymmetrical dependency. Luxury foods are products that are primarily consumed for their agreeable flavour or relaxing effect. They often serve to promote pleasure and social interaction and are frequently an integral part of cultural traditions. Typical substances include alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea and certain food products such as chocolate. In contrast, stimulants are substances that increase the activity of the central nervous system and result in increased alertness, energy and attention. These effects can be both physical and psychological. The best-known stimulants today include caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines and cocaine. However, the line between stimulants and luxury foods is rather blurred, as many luxury foods are also stimulants.

It is likely that long before they developed sedentary lifestyles, humans were already acquainted with the stimulating and mind-altering properties of certain plants. Shamans used such special plants to modify their perceptual system and induce visions, whilst they were presumably also aware of the plants' healing properties.[1] To this day, healers and religious practitioners of different cultures continue to ingest psychoactive plant substances to achieve euphoric or even trance-like states, with the aim of communicating with non-human entities. Certain archaeological finds of ground seeds and other remains of psychoactive plants provide evidence of their targeted use by humans, long before the domestication of crops.[2]

Among the earliest luxury foods whose production and consumption we know of are alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is produced through the fermentation of sugar contained in berries and fruits, but also that deriving from the starch of grains, wild grasses and cereals. With the cultivation of cereal crops such as barley (12,500 years ago), wheat (10,000 years ago), maize (7000 years ago) and rice (6000 years ago), humans gained access to starchy grain crops, which not only served to make bread and as a source of carbohydrates (see p. 169), but whose starch could also be fermented into alcohol through the addition of yeast fungi or saliva.[3] The first evidence of beer brewing can be traced back to Egypt

1
Relief fragment, marble, Ur (Iraq), Sumerian, 2900–2350 BCE, Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraqi Kurdistan.

Depictions of banquet scenes are widespread in Sumerian culture. An important component is the communal consumption of beer. Beer was an everyday staple in ancient Mesopotamia.

and Mesopotamia (fig. 1).[4] In both cultures, beer was a luxury substance as well as a staple food, and it was produced in large quantities in breweries (see p. 169). The fermentation of starchy crops into beer was also practised in other parts of the world: in China, beer was made using the starch contained in rice from as early as the 4th millennium BCE;[5] throughout the Andes, maize and other crops such as quinoa and amaranth were used to make *chicha* (maize beer);[6] additionally, the drink called pulque in Mesoamerica was made from the fermented juice of the maguey agave (figs. 2–3).[7]

Plant-based luxury foods and stimulants not only formed the basis for alcoholic beverages, but were also consumed in various other forms. This is strikingly illustrated in the history of the Andean region through the coca plant, whose cultivation plays a vital role and dates back to over 8000 years (see pp. 193–194). Coca leaves, which contain numerous alkaloids, including the stimulant cocaine, not only promote oxygen circulation in the body, but are also used for their psychotropic effects.

In Central and North America, on the other hand, tobacco was consumed by means of smoking, snuffing or chewing (see pp. 185–186). Archaeological findings have shown that the stimulating and psychotropic effects of tobacco were already known to the Indigenous inhabitants of the American continent 12,000 years ago.[8]

The consumption of tea leaves in China was first documented more than 2000 years ago. The leaves of the wild tea plant were originally used for medicinal purposes. Over time, however, their refreshing taste and stimulating properties were also recognized, which resulted in the systematization of the plant's cultivation (see pp. 207–208).

The history of coffee follows a similar path. Although the exact origins of coffee consumption have not been clearly established, there are indications that people had already discovered the stimulating effect of coffee as far back as ancient times. It is believed that members of the Oromo people in Ethiopia were among the first to use coffee beans and prepare a beverage from them.[9] From there, coffee

2
Cylinder vase, terracotta, Maya, c. 600–800 CE, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 2003.775; height 19.1 centimetres. Rollout of decoration.

The polychrome vessel shows a group of ten men drinking agave beer (*pulque*) during a feast. Some appear to be heavily intoxicated, as evidenced by the fact that they are in an advanced state of undress and some of them have to be held up. Two of the jars in the picture are labelled with the glyph for agave beer.

3
Jars, terracotta, Che Chem Ha cave (Belize), c. 600–800 CE.

Drinking rituals, during which large quantities of lightly fermented agave beer were consumed, often took place in the seclusion of caves. The beer was prepared and transported in ceramic jars, which were often left behind in the caves.

TEA AND COLONIAL INDIA

Tea as a common beverage originates in China, and until the 18th century it was widely cultivated only in the Far East. During the 17th century, the hot drink produced out of brewed tea leaf became increasingly popular, first in Portugal and Britain and from the 1700s also in Holland and Germany. If we look at tea as a popular drink, a number of strong asymmetrical dependencies become apparent.

Initially only green tea was drunk in Europe, with black tea becoming available from the 18th century onwards. Both are derived from the same plant but are processed differently. The British East India Company was founded in 1600 in order to compete with the Portuguese and Dutch trade enterprises. Tea was first recorded as on sale in London in 1657 as a luxury commodity. Initially, the Chinese accepted only silver in exchange for tea, representing an enormous drain on the European traders' finances. In 1660, tea was ten times more expensive than coffee.[1] The growing popularity of tea led to an increased consumption and a dramatic rise in tea imports to Europe from China (fig. 1).

The demand for ever-increasing quantities of Chinese tea soon became a challenge for the merchants of the East India Company. This prompted the British to attempt to grow tea themselves in order to end their dependency on China.[2] They experimented by sending seeds of various tea species, first to Kew Gardens in England and then to selected British colonies which had appropriate soil conditions and climates, including the Americas and the West Indies. But as the sea voyages were too long, the seeds did not germinate. Following this, they produced small seedlings and sent living plants back to Britain. However, the Chinese variety of tea (var. *sinensis*), which has relatively small leaves, was difficult to transfer to different habitats. Fortunately, at this time, wild indigenous tea shrubs (var. *assamica*) were discovered to exist in the Himalayas, especially in the area of Assam, in 1823.[3]

The Indian foot hills, with the states of Assam and Darjeeling, as well as the island of Ceylon, today Sri Lanka, provided ideal settings for the large-scale cultivation of tea. Long monsoon periods of four to five months of light but persistent rains at mild temperatures provided the perfect temperate climate for tea cultivation.[4] The first plantations were established in the Assam Valley in 1830. They spread exponentially from the 1860s onwards, when a so-called 'tea mania' evolved in Britain. A desire for a constantly available, low-priced, pure and unadulterated, home-controlled source of tea provoked an expansion of the Empire. The aim was to enlarge territory on which tea could be grown and manufactured within British-controlled regions. As a consequence, imports of tea to England from India in the 1880s for the first time exceeded tea purchased from China.[5]

From the 1830s onwards, tea contributed to building and expanding the colonial British Empire.[6] More land was annexed and land grants were given to British planters at extremely low prices.[7] Forests had to be cleared to make space for plantations, and the skills for processing freshly harvested tea leaves had to be acquired at first from qualified Chinese tea makers (fig. 2).[8] The tea industry grew further during the last quarter of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, with the labour force and the area under tea cultivation expanding exponentially. Towards the end of colonial rule in 1947, 89 percent of the Assam Valley was controlled by British tea-managing agents based in Calcutta.[9]

POWER STRUCTURES ON THE TEA PLANTATIONS

The tea industry became a major employer of wage labour during colonial rule. As tea leaf had to be plucked manually on often steep slopes, pickers were an essential necessity. The tea leaves were collected in woven baskets carried on the backs of the pickers and strapped to their heads (fig. 3). Chronic labour shortage was a serious problem in all tea estates. Initially, Chinese workmen were employed, but they were expensive and the local hill valleys often only sparsely populated. Therefore, pickers were procured locally from the peasant community of the wider area but increasingly imported from neighbouring Bengal.[10] The imported workers, who did not own land locally and had no agricultural responsibilities of their own, were considered more reliable and could be controlled more easily by the British.[11]

Tea production was export-oriented, and an increasingly competitive world market with constantly fluctuating prices for tea created a very aggressive environment. In order to control the labour force and to prevent the formation of collective labour organizations, protests or strikes, the British established a tight hierarchical power structure in which the tea pickers (*coolies*) were immobilized within the closely guarded plantation complexes (*coolie lines*) and prevented from having contact with the outside world. This allowed the largely British plantation owners to set up and sustain a tight structure of dominance over the workers for more than a century.[12]

The wages offered to the tea-picking workers were seriously inadequate. Living and working conditions were harsh and inhumane, and mortality and desertions of tea pickers were high.[13] With a need for labour and their longer-term control came coercion. During the 1860s and the boom in demand for tea in Europe, an indenture system was introduced in India, which bound labourers by legal contracts to work for the tea gardens for a fixed period of time.[14] The indentured labourers, who came from poor and vulnerable backgrounds, were economically exploited and treated almost as slaves. The majority of them were—and still are today—women and members of low or outcast social groups, such as Ādivāsīs and Dalits (fig. 4). As workers often travelled and worked in family groups, child labour was also common. Whilst there were permanent workers, many were employed as casual or seasonal labour only.[15] Those who tried to

desert were physically punished and absconders tracked. The tea pickers were oppressed by the dominant planters in a milieu of racial prejudice and virtually unlimited power.[16]

TEA CONSUMPTION IN BRITISH SOCIETY

Most Britons during the Victorian age probably knew little of this overtly coercive labour regime, enforced by the companies associated with the British Rāj in India. Nevertheless, tea from India, which by the 18th century was purchased and drunk by wide sections of British society, connected home and the Empire. In the course of a single century, its consumption had changed from being an overtly exotic luxury, affordable only to a few and usually consumed in public, to an everyday drink, enjoyed by ordinary people at home. During the 19th century, tea became the 'national beverage' and developed into a symbol of domesticity and national identity, which was not only English, but imperial.[17]

Although from the 18th century onwards middle- and working-class people consumed tea at home, it never entirely lost its exotic and slightly luxurious connotation. Advertisements stressed the dual significance of tea: as a luxury and a daily necessity.[18] In order to emphasize the element of exceptionality, which had been integrated into ordinary life, the wealth and the fashion sense of the lady of the house, glamorous tea sets were manufactured. Some were made of bone china, decorated with Far Eastern scenes (fig. 5). Expensive, silver-plated teapots, strainers, sugar bowls and milk jugs were also fashioned. Whilst Chinese tea was traditionally drunk with lemon, Indian tea was taken with milk. Much of the public debates focussed on the purity of the tea, and in this context, the packaging of the tea leaf played an important role. Even though it was an exotic commodity from India, its packaging, traditionally in metal tins with bold, colourful designs, stressed the Britishness and safeness of the product. In the home, tea caddies in various designs and materials were used to keep the tea fresh (fig. 6). Tea cosies – knitted or made of fabric – were made to keep the pot warm for longer.

During the 1920s, labour resistance to the indenture system grew and eventually led to its official abolition, but not until 1926.[19] Between 1937 and 1940, trade unions emerged on various tea estates. Despite this, adverse power structures, characterized by physical coercion, violence and extra-legal methods of labour control by planters in many instances continued to operate.[20] Today, multinational blenders and retailers dominate the scene, leaving little reward for the tea pickers.[21] Nevertheless, the tea industry is still one of the largest employers in India today.

Nowadays, there is another strong dependency apparent in relation to tea: the dependency on a changing climate. In the context of global warming, the hilly regions of South Asia, which for tea cultivation depended on regular and continuous rains, have become so dry that plantations have to be irrigated artificially, leading to higher prices on the global market, less competitive wages for the tea-picking workers and the loss of some tea gardens. Nonetheless, after China, India is still the second largest exporter of tea today.

1 Pickersgill 2017, 395. **2** Varma 2017, 17. **3** Fromer 2008, 531, 535–537; Pickersgill 2017, 399–400; Varma 2017, 15. **4** Varma 2017, 17. **5** Fromer 2008, 532. **6** Fromer 2008, 532, 534, 537. **7** Behal 2006, 145. **8** Varma 2017, 15, 19, 21. **9** Behal 2006, 143–144, 156. **10** Behal 2006, 156; Varma 2017, 39–42. **11** Varma 2017, 25–26. **12** Behal 2006, 145, 156, 159. **13** Behal 2006, 156–158. **14** Behal 2006, 156. **15** Gothoskar 2012, 33–34; Varma 2017, 16. **16** Behal 2006, 158–159. **17** Fromer 2008, 531–532. **18** Fromer 2008, 537–540. **19** Behal 2006, 169. **20** Behal 2006, 145, 150, 153. **21** Gothoskar 2012, 33, 36.

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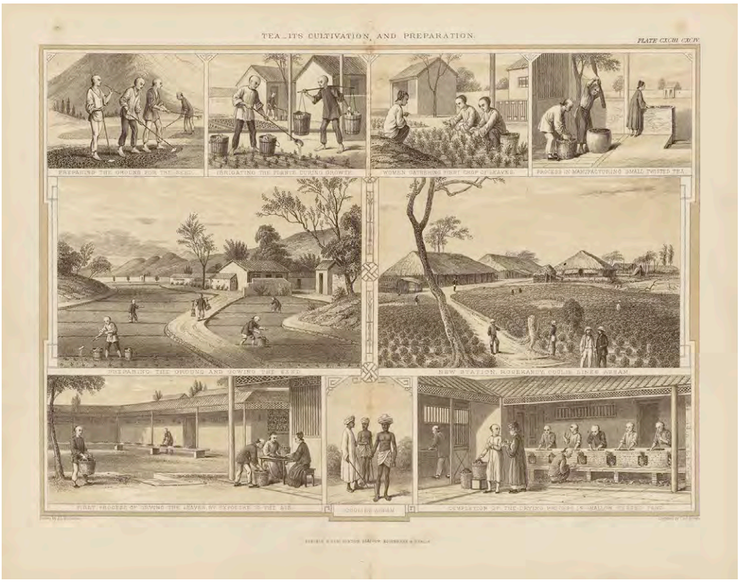
1
'A Family of Three at Tea', oil on canvas, Richard Collins, *c.* 1727.

Tea, which originated in China, became popular in Europe from the 17th century onwards, green tea first and later black tea. Initially it was a luxury product, but over time it increasingly became a popular beverage for the middle classes.



2
Steel engraving, Thomas Brown (after Joseph Lionel Williams), 1850.

Dependency on the limited Chinese market for tea led to the creation of large new tea plantations in India by the expanding British colonial empire in the 19th century. The cultivation and processing of tea were optimized.

3
Photo, workers wearing baskets during the tea harvest on a plantation in Darjeeling (India), October 2004.

The tea industry became a major employer of wage labour during colonial rule. The tea pickers (*coolies*) were economically exploited by the mostly British plantation owners through poor working conditions under coercion and low wages.

4
Photo, women in Assam (India) sorting tea leaves under male supervision, c. 1862–1885.

Many women and sometimes children worked as tea pickers. They were often members of low or outcast social groups, and lived and worked under strict control in the plantations' tight hierarchical system.

5
British tea service from the Chelsea Porcelain Manufactory, 1758–1769, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 54.163.7 a, b–.34.

The growing consumption of tea led to the creation of exclusive services, such as this one with gilt and enamel. They were often decorated with colonial motifs such as exotic animals.

6
Two tea caddies and a sugar box in a case, Paul de Lamerie, London, 1738–1739, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2022.254 a–g.

Even though tea was an exotic commodity from India, its packaging stressed the Britishness and safeness of the product. In the home, tea caddies in various designs and materials were used to keep the tea fresh. This set of two silver tea caddies and one sugar box came in a boxwood and ebony case with silver fittings.

For as long as human beings have lived together, they have been dependent on a variety of factors, whether on natural and environmental conditions or on each other. The texts in this book explore the wide range of human dependency relationships, including slavery, captivity, or serfdom, through the lens of three thematic areas: staple foods, textiles and luxury foods, in relation to resources from a cross-cultural and diachronic perspective. The case studies presented in this book take images and other material objects as their starting point. They cover a large geographical area including Europe, parts of Africa, Asia and the Americas, and several millennia: from the sedentarisation of humans through the emergence of early state societies and the fundamental changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, to the present day, with the threat of global food shortages and the social situation of textile workers far from the Western world.

SANDSTEIN