

Call for contributions to a special number

“Middlemen in the work relationship in slave and post-slave societies from the 15th century to the present day”

No. 13 of the journal, May 2026

Esclavages & Post~Esclavages / Slaveries & Post~Slaveries

Scientific editors

Alessandro Stanziani, CNRS-EHESS

Deadline for the submission of articles: before March 1, 2025

Deadline for final version of articles: December 1, 2025

Theme of this Issue

Within the vast topic of coercive labor, middlemen, who stood at the intersection of free, enslaved, and indentured status, play a central but relatively neglected role in historiography. This issue examines their long-term situation, both under slavery and in the post-slavery era. In slave-owning societies, for example, it is important to understand the role of plantation overseers. Enslaved themselves, overseers, and occasionally even recruiters of workers after the abolition of slavery, these intermediaries in the chain of command of coerced labor were essential to the smooth functioning of the slave and post-slave system. What role did they play? Were they agents of coercion or of worker protection?

Naturally, these relationships extended beyond the plantation; middlemen played an equally important role in family relations (e.g., as nannies) and in urban and commercial activities (slave traders, peddlers).

These questions need to be addressed both in terms of time – slavery and post-slavery – and space (the Americas, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Eurasia, etc.) in order to grasp the specific characteristics of plantation overseers in different geographical areas and periods. We will also examine whether the role of these overseers changed with the abolition of slavery and how,

depending on the region, the type of crop (cotton, sugar, coffee, etc.), the production techniques (farm or factory work), or the type of activity (trade, domestic work). Do these factors also condition the race and gender variables of the workers and the race- and gender-defined attitudes of the slave drivers themselves? In what ways?

Before arriving at the plantation, the role of middlemen is equally central to the trafficking of captives, a phenomenon that has been relatively well documented since the early modern period. In the Atlantic, trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Eurasian slave trades, several powers intervened, relying on local personnel (recruiters, translators, overseers, etc.) who had to be identified and then followed until the “Middle Passage” or deportation to the place of work. After the abolition of slavery, these individuals were sometimes themselves responsible for the activities of the workers’ and their supervision in the various areas mentioned.

Submission Procedures

Articles (no more than 45,000 characters, including spaces and references) should be submitted in French, English, Spanish or Portuguese to ciresc.redaction@cnrs.fr by **March 1, 2025**. They should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 3,600 characters including spaces. The full list of recommended guidelines is available [here](#). Articles will then undergo double-blind peer review.

Final versions of accepted articles must be submitted by **December 1, 2025**.

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