

and electoral participation behind the egalitarian abstraction. The sixth chapter highlights the variety of particular categories that shaped the Afro-descendants' citizenship in the debates of the 1810s: enslaved people, those born from free wombs, and their descendants were the "others" within the Republic's sovereign body; they were non-citizens or incomplete citizens. Later, when the criteria for citizenship were predicated on the principle of "color blindness", factors of restriction by occupation, literacy, and income hit the Afro-Argentine population in full. In any case, these restrictions were not insurmountable barriers, and the importance of organizations of men of color in electoral mobilizations of the time is already relatively well known. Candiotti returns to the theme to indicate how these racialized identities, especially among diverse groups of brown people, were also managed by those from below to create their own collective structures of political participation.

The last chapter deals with the final act toward abolition, seeking to identify the intellectual currents that inspired the Constitutional Decree of 1853. There was practically no debate in parliament at the time, and the theme was also scarcely discussed in the public arena, which led the author to compile a miscellany of law dissertations, opinion columns, and essays on political economy in order to infer (with little material in hand) the degree of insulation between the intellectual output and the reflection on the continuation or abolition of slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century.

This underlying base of silence and indifference among Argentine scholars characterized the first module of the long-term interpretative void around the subject. By the end of this last chapter, readers might have an idea of the dimension and importance of the work they have just read. Although the book does not present itself as innovative regarding its methods or analytical framework, *Una historia de la emancipación negra* has the virtue of extensive research and of systematizing advances in the work done by an entire generation of prominent Argentine historians, generously pointing out a wide variety of possibilities for the development of novel studies. As such, the book is an important landmark in the field of studies on the era of abolition in the Americas.

Felipe Azevedo e Souza

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

E-mail: felipeazv@puc-rio.br

doi:10.1017/S0020859022000748

Wage Earners in India, 1500–1900. Regional Approaches in an International Context. Ed. by JAN LUCASSEN and RADHIKA SESHAN. [Politics and Society in India and the Global South.] Sage, New Delhi 2022. 332 pp. \$41.68.

In *Wage Earners in India, 1500–1900*, the editors Jan Lucassen and Radhika Seshan, along with seven other authors, break new ground in the study of wages on the sub-continent across the long period between 1500 and 1900. Should readers hesitate to delve into such a volume, Lucassen and Seshan immediately try to convince them that the remuneration of wage labour and comparing it over time and across space "may be more relevant [...] for India than for any other country". They suggest that

investigating wages is important for settling long-standing debates about India's economic performance across different periods (when and under what ruler did wages increase or decrease?), that it contributes to a better understanding of social inequality in Indian society, and that it sheds light on the comparative economic performance of one of the great civilizations in world history – and thus on the well-known “Great Divergence” debate in which the position of India remains somewhat contentious. In their introduction, Lucassen and Seshan also immediately address the contentious issue of to what extent Indians were dependent on wage labour. This question is crucial, because it is at the heart of some of the critiques raised against wages studies, by Kent Deng and Patrick O'Brien regarding China, for example. Lucassen and Seshan note that, at least by the end of the nineteenth century, perhaps between twenty-five and fifty per cent of the Indian working population was dependent on wage labour for an important or even major part of its income. In addition, Lucassen estimated for Pune in the 1820s that perhaps some thirty per cent of the population was dependent on wages, and between ten and fifteen per cent when looking at the entire Deccan population. For earlier periods, such estimates are largely lacking, but it is argued that wage labour was widespread, and even if it were sometimes only a small part of a household's income it might have made the difference, especially for those families living around subsistence level. Lucassen and Seshan also indicate that non-English language sources provide a treasure trove of information on wages and wage labour, as is suggested through their discussion of Marathi archival materials. This volume thus not only represents a major, empirical step forwards in the study of wages and wage labour in India, it also represents a clear call for more research.

Following the introduction, the volume has eight substantive chapters that deal with various aspects of wage payments in different places across India. All of them have a substantial empirical basis in primary materials, and all tackle different aspects related to the measurement of waged income; some focus on long-run trends, while others assess issues surrounding the cost of maintenance, variations across occupations, or assess the dynamics that may underly some of the observed wage trends. I cannot cover everything in this review, but will highlight two aspects consistently covered in the book.

First, to what extent do the wages we observe reflect the workings of a (freely) functioning labour market? In Chapter One, Carvalhal *et al.* suggest that, due to the recruiting of labour across different cities along the west coast of India (workers from Goa even travelled some 750 kilometres to Diu), labour markets were integrated to a degree. Consistent with this thesis, they observe a slight premium that seems to have been paid for travel, as *bigarins* (unskilled workers) from further away received a higher remuneration. Seshan (Chapter Two, p. 103) discusses an interesting case of wage bargaining by a group of boatmen in Madras which highlights their power and thus the existence of a functioning labour market. When the Madras boatmen's wishes were not granted, they simply left until the company conceded. The boatmen refer to the fact that their colleagues in Pulicat were paid higher wages by the Dutch as an argument for their wage rise. In Chapter Three, Ranade explores supply and demand dynamics on the military labour market, as very high salaries for soldiers are observed in the year following the battle of Panipat in 1761 (p. 155). During that battle, a very high number of Maratha soldiers had died, significantly reducing the supply of military labour. With the expectation of further warfare between

Maratha and the Nizam, demand for soldiers, at the same time, remained high. Vekhande shows in Chapter Five that soldiers' pay, moreover, varied with individual qualities such as the fitness or stoutness of the soldier. Nite observes in Chapter Seven that, over the 1860s, wage increases for unskilled workers working in railway construction implied increased demand for lower paid employees.

Second, how did the mode of payment differ across occupations, regions, and time, and what influenced this? The volume offers an array of evidence, but it is difficult to come to clear-cut conclusions. In Lucassen's case study on the Deccan in the 1820s (Chapter Six), it is noted that in-kind payments were more common when food is cheap, whereas in periods when grain was expensive employers switch to more cash payments. Carvalhal *et al.* (Chapter One), at the same time, show that, in the fifteenth century, workers paid by the Portuguese generally received in-kind payment in addition to a cash payment. Shirsat (Chapter Four), on the other hand, notes on the basis of Marathi materials from Pune that the combination of different types of payment (both in-kind and cash) was found only for those at the higher echelons of the occupational hierarchy, whereas common labourers received only cash payments, implying that payment type depended on the position of a worker on the wage ladder. Seshan shows in Chapter Two that grain prices crucially influenced maintenance payments in seventeenth-century Madras. Shirsat also investigates the frequency of payments and finds that those at the higher end of the wage ladder received their salaries only once per year, whereas lower ranked officials received monthly payments. At the bottom of the wage scale, ordinary workers were paid daily if they were hired by the day, or monthly if they had permanent contracts.

In sum, this volume is a major step forward in the study of wages across India in the pre-1900 period. Substantial additional evidence has been presented to suggest that, besides social hierarchies and the caste system, wages were crucially influenced by market dynamics. At the same time, the volume makes clear that there is still more work to do, as the bulk of the volume has been focused on relatively limited regions and periods, with in particular the pre-1700 period remaining relatively underexplored. Moreover, more evidence on modes of payment in different times and places will be needed for an overarching explanatory model of their determinants. It is hoped many scholars – especially those able to read Indian languages – will take up this volume's powerful call for research.

Pim de Zwart

Department of Rural and Environmental History, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands

E-mail: pim.dezwart@wur.nl

doi:10.1017/S002085902200075X

KÄSER, ISABEL. *The Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement. Gender, Body Politics and Militant Femininities.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2021. xvi, 240 pp. Ill. Maps. £75.00. (E-book: \$80.00.)

In the twenty-first century, the question of the political and the state has re-emerged as a key concern for a number of social movements. These include not only the