

en waarin hij het heeft over de kunstenaars die in de loop van de negentiende en de twintigste eeuw lid waren van de loge en er elkaar vonden in gezamenlijke projecten en ideeënuitswisseling. Het boek sluit af met een uitgebreide bibliografie, een bijlage met een lijst per maçonniek werkjaar van alle officieren-dignitarissen (te vergelijken met de leden van de raad van bestuur) van *La Liberté* van 1866 tot en met 1960 en een *index personae*.

Tenslotte nog iets over de vormgeving en de *mise en page* van het boek. Deze publicatie logenstraft het vooroordeel dat boeken over vrijmetselarij slechts kunnen uitgegeven worden op slecht papier met hier en daar een wazige foto van bedenkelijke kwaliteit. De uitgave kwam tot stand door een samenwerking tussen het Liberaal Archief en ASP – een uitgeverij die zich sinds kort onder meer specialiseert in het uitgeven van maçonnieke werken. Het werd gedrukt op glanzend papier waardoor de vele – vaak paginagrote – kleurenfoto's perfect tot hun recht komen. Conclusie: dit boek lees je niet alleen om wat meer te weten te komen over de Gentse loge *La Liberté* en de Gentse – en bij uitbreiding Belgische – vrijmetselarij, maar ook om je te overtuigen dat de vrijmetselarij academisch nog steeds een *neglected topic* is met onvermoede researchmogelijkheden.

Kris Thys

Karin Hofmeester and Pim de Zwart (eds.), *Colonialism, Institutional Change, and Shifts in Global Labour Relations*. [Work around the Globe: Historical Comparisons and Connections.] (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018). 373 p. ISBN 9789462984363.

DOI: 10.18352/tseg.1048

This volume is one of the tangible outcomes of the flagship research project of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam: the Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations, 1500-2000. The project has two objectives, to provide statistical insights into the global distribution of labour relations, including women's and child labour, and to explain the worldwide changes in labour relations since 1500. This book caters to the second objective, focussing on the variegated impact of European imperialism and associated economic institutions on shifts in labour relations over the past five centuries. The volume offers a selection of papers that were presented at a workshop at the IISH in 2014, containing a fine mix of in-depth case studies, wide-ranging survey chapters, for example on issues such as industrialization, monetization and maritime labour, and a number of chapters with carefully designed comparative and transnational analyses. Com-

binning a global scope with in-depth accounts of local, time-specific determinants of shifting labour relations in eleven chapters – including the editorial introduction by Hofmeester and de Zwart – is a formidable challenge, but the result is impressive. The scope of this volume is truly global. All periods and Southern continents are covered (Asia, Africa, Latin America), and all the chapters are of (very) high quality, offering clear and well-argued take away points for a broad range of readers interested in labour history. The blend of authors with academic roots in the IISH (Barragan, Bosma, de Zwart, Hofmeester, Lucassen, van Nederveen Meerkerk, van Rossum) and a select group of social-economic historians from elsewhere (Clarence-Smith, Green, Fourie, Mandala, Pallaver) is excellent.

What this volume does really well is to instil readers with a deeper awareness of the enormous variety of labour relations in colonial settings, and the complexities of their historical roots. A lot of chapters effectively prick myths of superficial narratives and causal accounts, which link (tropical) commodity production and colonial rule to easily to a dominant set of labour relations. Clarence-Smith convincingly challenges the nineteenth century de-industrialization thesis in his opening chapter. Bosma demonstrates the variety of (shifting) labour relations adopted in the global diffusion of cane sugar, where slavery was not the dominant nor necessarily the most profitable form of labour organization, as is often supposed. Hofmeester's intriguing comparison of labour relations in the diamond mining industries in India, Brazil and South Africa also show how subtle differences in endowments and power relations has led to different labour regimes. The chapters by van Rossum, on maritime labour, and van Nederveen Meerkerk, on textile production in the Dutch empire, show how changing labour regimes in the metropole affect colonial labour relations and vice versa. Mandala's account of the cotton export sector in Malawi emphasises the continuity of colonial and post-colonial institutions in shaping the cost-structure of peasant cotton production. And Barragán convincingly deconstructs the idea of the *mita* as a paradigmatic example of an extractive institution in the silver mines of Potosí, arguing that the institution operated in a context of both unfree and free labour, and changed considerably over time. Fourie and Green offer an insightful analysis of the effect of an exogenous shock, the 1807 ban on slave imports, to labour relations in the cape Colony. And finally, the chapters by Pallaver on colonial currencies and wages in Kenya, and Lucassen on deep monetization in Eurasia, reveal the great importance of a too often overlooked relationship between the production and circulation of coins and the development of commodified labour.

What this volume doesn't do well is to live up to the promises stated in the introduction, that is, it analyses, but it does not really explain shifting labour relations at the global plane. The main message seems to be that historical reality is more complex than often supposed, which is fine of course. Yet, moulding newly

disclosed complexity in an alternative explanatory model, or even just a new narrative, has clearly been a step too far. This is a missed opportunity. The introduction, which is certainly not the strongest part of the book, partly reveals why it is so difficult to tie up the insights of ten chapters in a new causal framework, call it a historicized theory of shifting labour relations in a colonial context. The main problem is that the conceptual framework jams into circular reasoning. The editors argue that 'labour relations define for or with whom one works *and under what rules*.' (p. 12, italics are mine), to then state that the main purpose of the book is 'to analyse and explain the development of labour relations by looking at the institutions pertaining to various economic resources in society: commodities, land, labour, and capital.' (p. 13). Clearly, if 'institutions' or 'rules' are part of the very definition of labour relations, one cannot invoke the same institutions pertaining to labour to explain labour relations. What goes wrong here is that causal accounts require a sharp distinction between explanatory variables and the phenomena to be explained, between determinants and outcomes. The building blocks are present in the volume, but readers will have to put them into place themselves. Perhaps the feedback loops between institutions and labour relations, if one were to set these apart, are so strong, that an attempt to set up a grounded explanatory framework, will require a more thorough reading into theories of institutional change and labour market economics than the obligate references to *Why Nations Fail?* That said, future attempts to complete the Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations by doing full justice to its second objective, i.e. explaining the global shifts, will greatly benefit from the empirical building blocks provided by this book, which does take the field a step closer towards the ultimate ambition.

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Harry Lintsen et al., *De kwetsbare welvaart van Nederland 1850-2050. Naar een circulaire economie*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2018). 571 p. ISBN: 9789044636444.

DOI: 10.18352/tseg.1057

Er zijn niet veel geschiedenisboeken die het aandurven tot in 2050 door te lopen. Dit geeft al aan dat dit een bijzonder boek is, dat meer beoogt dan pure geschiedenis te schrijven, maar dat zich expliciet richt op een maatschappelijk debat – over duurzaamheid – en sterker nog, zich richt op een expliciete politieke doelstelling, het streven naar een circulaire economie. Historisch onderzoek wordt natuurlijk heel vaak ingegeven door de grote vragen van vandaag, maar dat gebeurt zelden zo expliciet als in dit geval. Het is bovendien een uiterst ambitieus boek, dat een