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The Evolution of the Slave Trade in South-East Asia

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The Evolution of the Slave Trade in South-East Asia

Rosanna Pat

Western Michigan University

Abstract

Modern slavery has managed to persist through the 21st century as it has shape-shifted into new occupations and various forms of entrapments. However, my research will prove that despite its seemingly different situations, multitudes of modern industries continue to employ harsh and unfair working conditions which utilize labor laws that restrict protections for employees. To fully comprehend how these new-age jobs are in fact new forms of old-age slavery, it is paramount to look into past forms of enslavement – primarily looking into Columbus’ discovery of Hispaniola and the Atlantic Slave Trade. To aid us easing into modern-day enslavement, a comparison of colonial and post-colonial variations of slavery in specific context to Malaysia under British colonial rule will further depict the similarities in old and new forms of servitude. Lastly, we will look into the industries that continue to employ illegal and inhumane work practices and regulations such as the Thai shrimp and seafood industry, the Vietnamese migrant labor worker industry, as well as the Indonesian migrant domestic worker industry. Through thoroughly examining all these differing contexts of slave use, we will ultimately create a new definition of ‘modern slavery’ that encapsulates the main characteristics of ‘slavery’ without a sociocultural background attached to it.

Additionally, I will incorporate a sociological perspective to this paper by including personal accounts that I have collected over the years I spent growing up in Malaysia – telling the stories of five Indonesian migrant domestic workers, as well as explain Marx’s labor theory of value and the feminization of the workforce, to create a well-rounded overview of modern-day slavery. I hope that by incorporating these

personal accounts, I will enable the procurement of empathy and allow us to view these migrant workers' struggles from a first-hand perspective.

Introduction

“As an institution, slavery is defined as a form of property which gives to one person the right of ownership over another. Like any other means of production, the slave is a “thing”” (Davis, 1970).

Slavery has often been defined as an issue of the past and is deemed to have been abolished a long time ago. Despite the overwhelming number of communities and individuals who have accepted this stance to be true, it is merely a false preconception of the issue at hand. I say this because slavery never truly ended, but simply shape-shifted and moved to other forms in other nations. My thesis will follow the origins of slavery – beginning with Columbus and his discovery of Hispaniola as well as the Atlantic Slave Trade, then compare the differences and similarities that slavery shares between its past and present states in specific regard to the slavery utilized in Malaysia – during its colonial era and post-independence. This in-depth look into past uses of slavery will aid in setting the stage for the next half of my research paper, in which I will explore multiple modern industries that still promote the use of “cheap labor” in the form of slaves today – beginning with the Thai shrimp industry, followed by the Vietnamese labor worker industry, and finally ending with the Indonesian domestic worker industry. Lastly, I will touch on how to alter the way modern slavery is perceived and what steps

are needed to end its existence, and ultimately work towards developing a new definition of slavery that accurately reflects its evolution into what and where it is right now.

The entire research paper will aim to evaluate the evolution of the slave trade through both a political lens – focusing on labor laws and the treatment of individuals in certain industries, and through a sociological lens – thoroughly explaining how communities and the individuals involved interact with each other and how they adopt various master statuses throughout their exploitations. I chose these specific perspectives as the political lens will ensure the most in-depth explanation of how slavery was able to grow in a legal sense, as well as its development through the minds of societies, and the sociological lens will enable us to comprehend how humans came to the conclusion that the act of modern slavery is socially and constitutionally acceptable. To add to the sociological aspect of this paper, I will touch on how slavery, which was once deemed as an act so cruel and inhumane, still manages to prevail in current times, and the reason why humans no longer perceive it as such a big point of contention anymore.

Being a Malaysian citizen and having spent most of my life there, I have had the opportunity to witness first-hand experiences of modernized slavery – especially in the Indonesian and Vietnamese migrant labor industries. Thus, throughout the paper, I will include mini stories in which I will tell the tales of Indonesian women that I have gotten to know very well, either through our own employment of domestic labor or through friends and family. These stories will be dispersed through the paper, in hopes that it will incite empathy in whoever is reading this, bringing my research onto a more personable level. I hope that by reading the stories of how these women got to where they were in

life, further depicts the struggles and obstacles they have to endure on a daily basis, simply because they need to survive. For the sake of the women mentioned in this paper, I have altered all their names, but their stories are unfortunately completely true and real.

Suriani's Story

For the first personal account, I would like to focus on Suriani, a girl who was merely 19 or 20 years old when she worked for my mother and I on a part-time basis. At the time, I was in high school so I wasn't much younger than she was. Due to our similar ages, we would often have lengthy conversations when she was done with her housework or if she had time to spare in between chores. She informed me that despite her terribly young age, she was already a mother of three children – a four-year-old, a two-year-old, and a one-year old baby. Since she was working fulltime and residing in Malaysia, she had left her three children in the care of her elderly mother who was already in her late 70s. Suriani did disclose that she got married to and immediately got pregnant with the father of her children at the age of 13, which she communicated was very common in the village that she was from. When she worked for us, she was no longer married to him as she called him a womanizer that always had another woman around and did not care at all for his children. For this reason, she decided to legally divorce him after he had left her. As a result, she had no choice but to take a job as a domestic worker in order to feed her children and mother back home, becoming the sole breadwinner for four. Unlike the rest of the maids, Suriani had managed to sneak in a

handphone which she would hide with the rest of her clothes. Whenever she worked at our house, she would ask us for the Wi-Fi password so that she could call her children in Indonesia. Regardless of how careful she was, it wasn't long until her agency found out about her secret handphone and immediately confiscated it, along with giving her a hefty scolding. I will explain in the later sections of this thesis that owning a phone, or anything that could link the domestic worker to her life back home was seen as a precarious liability, as this could increase the risk of her fleeing back home prior to the end of her contract. After the confiscation, she no longer had contact with her family or the outside world.

Furthermore, Suriani would always tell us of these severe chest pains she endured whenever she did anything too strenuous, pointing out that she was previously diagnosed with having a hole in her heart back in Indonesia. When my mother had asked her why she didn't just go to a clinic or hospital to get it checked, Suriani informed us that if she were to get it looked at by a professional, the agency would deduct the consultation and possible hospitalization fees from her salary. On top of that, she was worried that if the condition proved to be too severe, they would send her home for being too weak to work long shifts. Hence, she simply pushed on with her acute aches and pains for the remainder of her two-year contract.

Economic Reasons for Slavery in the Past

Now, I will touch on how slavery was used in the past and how its main goal was always to procure the maximum value of profit utilizing intensive labor practices and

unfair working conditions. Through the example of the Atlantic Slave Trade, it is blatant to see that slavery was only used because it was deemed as the simplest way to create large amounts of wealth, since the usual race and class factor of slavery was non-existent at the time. Additionally, slavery was the only option at the time that allowed for the employment of such large numbers so promptly, as only through importing people into these countries, were they able to put together such a sizable workforce.

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Slavery is an act so innately against our so-called human nature, that has somehow managed to persist in most pre-industrial and developing nations on this planet, till this day. Its reasons for existing however, have varied all over the globe. One clear example of slavery would be the African slave trade that began with Columbus and his discovery of Hispaniola in Central America, that prompted the eventual African American slave trade in the United States. However, I would like to touch on the Atlantic Slave Trade prior to delving into Columbus' slave journey, as I deem it pertinent to defining the economic side of using slavery as one's main source of labor, as well as aiding in depicting the roots of Columbus' expedition and slave routes.

Shepherd (1999) states that the "westward movement of African slavery within the Atlantic preceded the Columbus mission, and was a noticeable trend as early as the mid-fifteenth century". The Atlantic Slave Trade lasted from about 1400 to 1900, with a whopping 10 million slaves brought into the Americas from Africa (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). Making this the largest migration of individuals across borders at the time. It is

stated that “the Atlantic Slave Trade developed out of an earlier Mediterranean/Black Sea slave trade that lasted from the eleventh until the sixteenth century” which involved Italian merchants purchasing slaves from both the Crusader Islands and Black Sea ports they visited, and eventually selling them to islands that had vast sugar plantations – such as in the Mediterranean and in southern Spain and Portugal (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). This informs us that slavery has existed prior to Columbus’ slave expedition in Central America, and will help explain how slaves were initially moved from Africa to Europe.

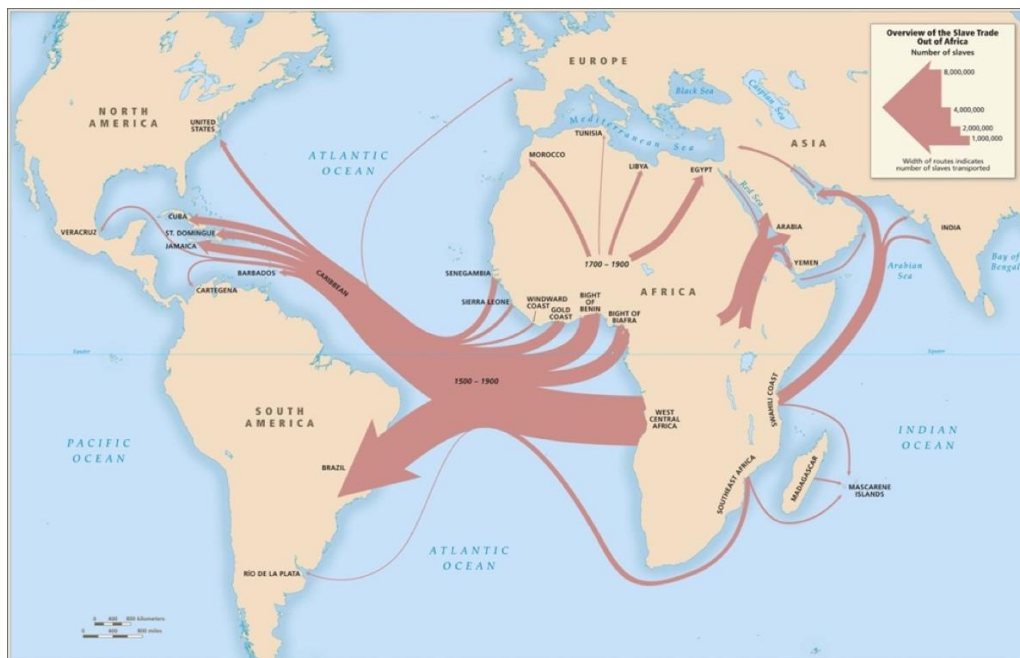
The main motivation behind the implementation of the slave trade in Latin America had less to do with class status or race, and instead focused more on increasing profitability through engaging in an integrated market (Shepherd, 1999). Europeans only began utilizing slavery in their economies after they began exploring the Atlantic, which soon thereafter they were controlling slaves in the Middle Ages (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). The island of Madeira in the Atlantic Ocean “provided the link between sugar production by European Christians in the Mediterranean and the plantations of the New World” (Shepherd, 1999). Thus, in this context, ‘integrated market’ refers to the mixing of races and cultures in Madeira as a result of the sudden influx of non-native peoples to their land. Those emigrating from Spain were of a smaller number, with an estimated 539,000 shifting over from 1580 to 1760, noting that due to the lack of bureaucratic movement restrictions and keeping in mind that many of them crossed illegally, these numbers are likely to be much higher (Allen, Murphy, & Schneider, 2012). These individuals were not slaves, instead they were individuals looking to benefit economically from the natural resources that the New World had to

offer. Their sudden migration to this land prompted the Atlantic Slave Trade as they instantaneously required a large source of hard labor – that they found to be the most profitable through slavery.

They believed at the time that slavery would serve as the most lucrative income source as the countries they colonized did not have a working population extensive enough to match their export and manufacturing goals. Slavery would enable them to bring in herds of workers that would work, although unwillingly, for no cost at all. Despite considerable cultural clashes, rising social tensions, and social disintegration, the Europeans still held the stance that utilizing people to work as slaves would off-balance all of the aforementioned negatives.

Portugal played a key role in establishing the Atlantic Slave Trade due to its strong connections with South-East Asian countries from the 1400s to the 1600s, as it allowed them to obtain specific goods that African sellers wanted to obtain (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). To add, Portugal had a close relationship with the King of Congo at the time – with many Congolese individuals adopting Roman Catholicism, exchanging ambassadors, and aiding their counterparts in military complications regularly (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). This incited the entire African slave trade as Congo and its neighbors eventually became the number one source for African slave labor to be transported to the Americas (Atlantic Slave Trade, 2013). To be specific, the “Portuguese African trade evolved from raids along the African coast that began in 1441 to more peaceful exchanges with African chieftains and merchants by the 1450s” (Africa: Portuguese Colonies, 2013). Ergo, Portugal maintained its dominance throughout the years as the main importer and exporter of slaves, with Spain coming in

second place later on. Where Portugal obtained its slaves can be broken up into four periods of time – with slaves being imported from Guinea in the 16th century, Angola and Congo in the 17th century, Ghana and the Bight of Benin in the 18th century, and lastly Angola and Mozambique in the 19th century (Africa: Portuguese Colonies, 2013).



(Overview of the slave trade out of Africa, 1500-1900) (Slave Voyages, 2010)

The Atlantic Slave Trade was a form of imperialism, despite it not solely originating from one specific country or colony, which would be seen later on in history. Instead, the trade integrated multiple groups of people from multitudes of European nations and those residing in the Americas. I say this can be counted as imperialism because “imperialism is a system of capital accumulation based on the export of capital from advanced countries to less developed regions ... accompanied by the utilization of political and military resources to protect and maintain the means of production over which control has been acquired” (Smith, 1981). This fits perfectly, as in this scenario,

slaves were the main means of production, not seen as humans but instead as a product used to maximize their employers' economic goals.

Moreover, in regard to the Atlantic Slave Trade, Allen, Murphy, & Schneider (2012) have found, through their research on the differences in wages across labor-intensive jobs in that century, that there is a reason for the overindulgence in use of human exploitation in Latin America, that was not seen in other parts of the Americas. They (2012) mention that the distinct difference between the supply source countries and destination countries was their supply and demand network – focusing on the dependency at the time on natural resources and export commodities. In both locations, improvements made to “natural resources, technological efficiency, transportation costs, the ratio to export to import prices, and the quality of institutions” would have raised the demand for human labor (Allen, Murphy, & Schneider, 2012). Due to the horizontal supply curve of the Latin American economy that was overfilled with an extensive labor force that was provided to them through the utilization of natives as well as international migration via the slave route, “increases in demand would not raise wages but instead increase population and total GDP of the colony” (Allen, Murphy, & Schneider, 2012) Ergo, the supply of unskilled wage labor in Latin America had almost no means of escaping this economic model, as when their production and export demands kept rising, they would in turn need more slave labor, which at the time fueled their economy, without ever increasing their wage rates. This process was circular as the better they performed economically, the more colonizers felt they needed to bring in more slaves. This produced a never-ending cycle of slave entrapment and so-called development.

Other than that, North America had the resources and equity to develop their infrastructure whereas Latin America did not. Ergo, when North America acquired high wages and growth rates in their economy, they focused their newfound wealth on increasing “the incentive to invent and adopt labor-saving machinery ... [which] increased the productivity of labor and wages leading to further invention and wage increases” (Allen, Murphy, & Schneider, 2012). This circular model of progress was not implemented in Latin America as they had a so-called surplus in human labor for the amount of jobs that were available, and were insufficient in the organization and government involvement that would have aided their infrastructure development to procure said jobs. This left Latin America in an eminently vulnerable position as it required more jobs to build its economy and foundation to withstand its hefty population, but did not have the means to do so.

This notion of placing wealth as the central focus of one’s plans, despite possible moral violations, can also be applied to how Columbus eventually ‘discovered’ Hispaniola in 1492. Due to the resistance he and Isabella, the Queen of Castile, faced from the indigenous people they were attempting to enslave, Columbus felt that it would be wiser to simply import African slaves over to Hispaniola. This process would eventually lead to the beginning of the African slave trade in the United States, that lasted for 246 years. The Queen’s motives were purely economic – as she was fixated on extracting Gold and Silver from regions nearby, such as Potosi. This is a blatant example of how slaves were solely used for the profits they could deliver, much like how they were used later on in the United States – working on farms, under intensive labor conditions, and as household servants, with no rights to one’s own name.

The form of slavery implemented under both the Europeans' and Columbus' rule was named chattel slavery. It entailed "a system of socio-economic exploitation" that only became a familiar aspect of life in the post-Columbian era, to both Europeans and Africans (Shepherd, 1999). This method of slavery, also known as European chattel slavery, constituted of Africans being deemed as "lesser human beings" under both social and legal terms (Blakely, 2016). Smallwood (2019) states that "territorial conquest and chattel slavery" complement each other in regard to the "tools of settler colonial dominion across the hemispheric Americas" (Smallwood, 2019). European chattel slavery was based upon the fact that practicing slavery was considered 'legal', according to their past beliefs. For this reason, it is interesting how the Europeans were comfortable in compromising their beliefs when using banditry to capture Africans against their will (Blakely, 2016). Once again, the slave owners, even though they might've previously held moral and religious virtues, would often cave when presented with lucrative opportunities, such as agricultural profit, and imperialist and colonialist goals.

Problems with Economic Reasoning

Using slavery as a means to push forward economic goals has long been the main reasoning behind its implementation. Even though it has been the initial response to economic hardship and has supposed success in the past, the use of slave labor has since amounted to serve numerous problems, other than those rooted in ethics. Davis (1970) concludes that using slaves to promote one's economy does not constitute a

viable and long-term solution to economic growth for three reasons: “a barrack slave system does not reproduce itself and slaves have to be obtained either through purchase on a slave market or by conquest ... thus [creating] acute labour shortages”, “slaves require considerable political surveillance, because of the threat of slave revolts”, and “it is difficult to force slaves to perform skilled labour tasks without additional incentives”. In regard to the slave system being unable to reproduce itself, this is the case because despite slaves being able to reproduce within themselves to produce new child slaves, children would not be able to work immediately and would require supervision and additional support and care for many years before becoming profitable to their employers. During this time, slave mothers would also have to reduce their work load in order to care for said children, ergo reducing overall profits.

Additionally, even though integrating slave labor into one’s production scheme may seem beneficial at the beginning, it has been found that “slavery [has] inhibited the development of the forces of production because there was little incentive to develop labour-saving technology” (Davis, 1970). Which in turn has detrimental effects on the economy, as other nations that have opted out of utilizing slavery as their main source of labor have been able to progress their infrastructure and have modernized their economies on a faster scale. Meaning those countries that relied heavily on the use of slave labor would more often than not refuse to invest in building up mechanical manufacturing infrastructure as it wouldn’t be compatible with the use of slaves, who would not know how to operate the aforementioned machinery. Hence, slavery is incompatible with modern day capitalism which is both democratic and competitive in

nature. As capitalism requires the use of free labor markets in which the use of slavery would not be able to sustain (Davis, 1970).

Similarly, in a sociological context, this can be related to Marx's Labor theory of value which entails that "the product value is defined in full by the quantity of invested labor" (Gennady, 2011). This fits perfectly with the model of exploitation as the worker, or the producer of the goods, is kept separate from the profits he/she/they will generate. This encapsulates only one relationship present in a successful economy – the capital-wage relationship (Thompson, 1983), and leaves out other crucial aspects that altogether determine the growth of one's economy. Thompson (1983) adds that in regard to the "slave theory of value", the slave is of no use to the owner unless he/she/they is producing a surplus in profits – this is due to the fact that the slave is only ever producing enough to manage his/her/their own subsistence. The persuasion to work harder to ensure a surplus in value is often a large feat for employers since the main "difficulty in the slave system of production was the low productivity of slave labor" causing them to employ harsh methods of constraint and forceful coercion (Thompson, 1983). "At such an approach the profit of capitalist[s] and businessmen can be obtained only by way of exploitation, in other words, by the appropriation of a part of the labor", meaning that although Marx's labor theory of value may have worked in pre-industrial societies where the use of slavery and harsh working conditions were ever-present, it cannot possibly sustain itself today (Gennady, 2011). Gennady (2011) states that this theory of value can only persist in a stationary economy – where there are no profits, investments, or growth – also known as an economic crisis, since the total value of goods produced is equal to the value of the workforce. Thus, this model of economic

'growth' and subsistence is unstable and will lead to further "unemployment and needless redistribution of resources between various sectors of economy" (Gennady, 2011). In whole, Wolff (1981) mentions that Marx is incorrect in stating that the reason why workers can be exploited is because labor is deemed as the substance of value, because it is only the substance of value when workers can be exploited. This is true as labor does not necessarily equate to the value of the product, it is just set as so because the worker, or slave, has nothing else to offer – leaving them in an unfortunate position in a capitalist economy.

Melur's Story

For the second personal account I will talk about Melur, our neighbor's live-in maid. Now, because she didn't personally work with us, we didn't get to know Melur as well as we got to know the other women. This didn't halt us, however, from witnessing the day-to-day tasks that Melur was subjected to under the authority of her employer. A typical morning for Melur consisted of waking up at 5am to perform tasks like wiping down all the windows, which would then be followed by her plucking out the weeds in their garden at about noon – note that in Malaysia it is about 35 degrees Celsius every day, especially at noon when the sun is ever so bright and humidity is unbearable – and finally being done with her chores at around midnight. This meant that Melur only ever got a maximum of five hours of sleep per night, every single night, for years.

One day my mother decided to ask her neighbor, who was also a friend at the time, why Melur was constantly kept busy – no matter the time of day. Our neighbor's

response was that she had to keep her busy all the time in fear that if she didn't, Melur would begin to misbehave. Thus, she enforced a strict set of rules in place for her to follow on a daily basis to ensure that Melur had no time left to stir any trouble. This was a common way of thinking amongst many employers – constantly living in fear of getting stolen from or having a runaway maid issue on their hands.

Comparison of Past and Present Slavery in Malaysia

To further comprehend how labor migration in regard to slavery has evolved over the years, I have chosen to closely examine the ways Malaysia has transformed itself with the immense aid of colonization. Before I delve into the details, I think it is important for me to define the current racial mix of Malaysia. Malaysia consists of three main cultural groups, Malays, Indians, and Chinese. There is no exact 'Malaysian' race as it is a country of immigrants, much like the United States. These migrants, however, did not initially arrive in Malaysia on their own accord as they were brought in by British colonizers – as is the case with the Indian and Chinese population, or were married off to royalty – which is how the Malay identity was formed, through the marriage between Chinese and Indonesian royalty. This is different from the United States where most people came to be American by fleeing warzones in their home countries or simply voluntarily seeking a better life elsewhere. After slavery was deemed illegal in 1910, the British implemented a new form of supposedly 'legal' slavery called indentured servitude. In this sense, slaves voluntarily migrated to Malaysia to obtain better paying jobs and it wasn't until they arrived, that they realized they had signed up to be slaves.

In present times, if one were to ask any Malaysian of their heritage or race, they would identify as Malaysian, and not as Indian, Chinese, or Malay, fully embracing their Malaysian culture. Currently, the Malays have the highest status, followed by the Chinese, and finally the Indian population holds the minority status in Malaysia. There are stark differences in their social standings as well as their economic successes which are blatantly seen on a daily basis. However, I will not be focusing on the inequalities present within the Malaysian society, but instead on the mistreatment of those who are employed by Malaysians. For this section of my paper, I will first begin with depicting the use of slavery in both colonial and post-colonial Malaysia, followed by the sociological basis that enables the continuation of slave labor even in modern times.

Pre-Colonial Malaysia

Prior to its colonization, Malaysia only consisted of its native people – called Orang Asli – and they were of an exceedingly small number. These people lived and worked in the rainforests, often utilizing their own hierarchies within families. The use of slavery was non-existent in these societies. I have befriended and had lengthy conversations with many Orang Asli, in which it is clear to see that they work in familial units without employing any external forces for labor, other than that of animals. Thus, I will promptly move onto Malaysia's slave journey during its colonization and after, as it pertains more accurately to my topic.

Colonial Malaysia

First, I will touch on the use of Indian slave labor in Malaysia. Initially, prior to the establishment of the Slave Emancipation Act of 1834, British colonies engaged heavily in the use of slavery to develop their newly obtained lands (Kaur, 2013). This entailed that Indian workers were brought against their own will to Malaysia to work as slaves for the British colonies, meaning they would not be paid at all and were legally owned by their employers.

After the Slave Emancipation Act of 1834 became law, the British could no longer legally subject their inhabitants – which were usually low-caste South-Indians who were mostly poorer and darker skin toned, as well as some convicts – to slave work. Ergo, they opted to create a new system of ‘legal’ slavery called indentured servitude.

During the British colonization of Malaysia – which lasted from 1824 to 1957 – slavery was used extensively in the means of indentured servitude to quickly and completely transform what was once just vast land consisting of nothing more but tropical rainforests and jungles to a pre-industrial society. The British did so by engaging in developing Malaysia’s “modern economic growth and the commodification of labour” (Kaur, 2013). These “labour migrations comprised mostly [of] Chinese and Indian male migrants who were recruited for mining and plantation enterprises and public works construction in the colonies” (Kaur, 2013).

This was done through creating economic corridors between the colonized countries of China, India, and nations in South East Asia, through new labour

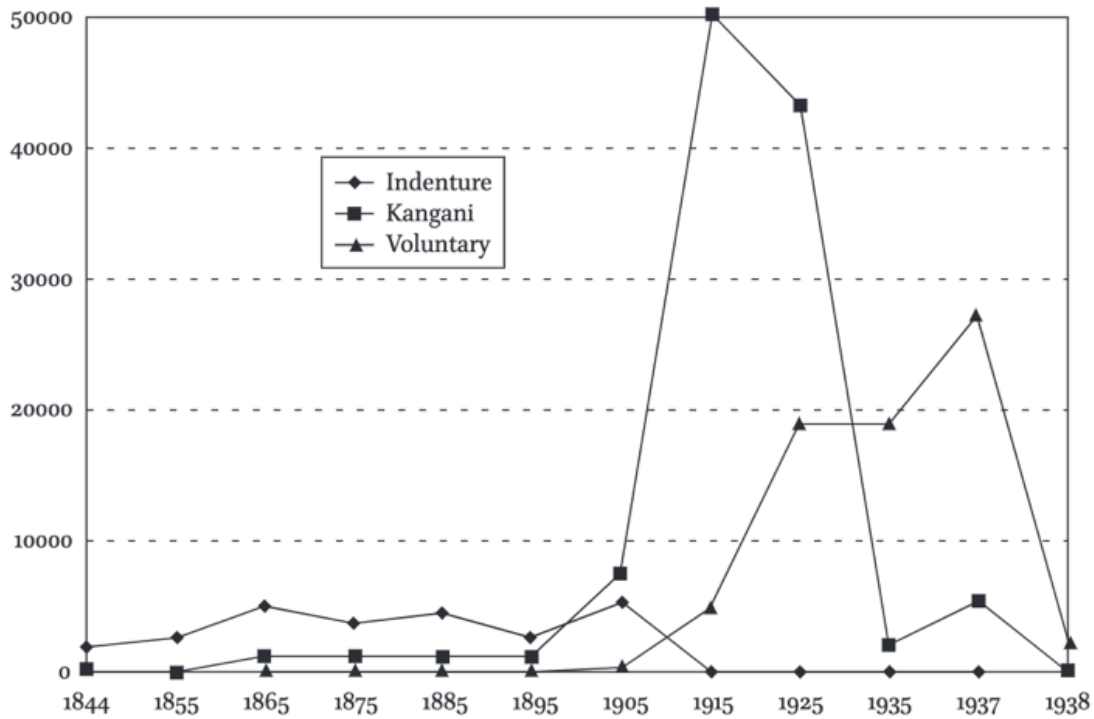
agreements. By promoting labor migrations between the countries using an “open border policy”, Britain was able to create job opportunities for those in their colonized economies and lands (Kaur, 2013). This was done easily as Malaysia at the time had the most lucrative stance in regard to its resources, in comparison with China and India. Thus, those from China and India saw it beneficial to work overseas in order to obtain more money. “In return for passage and guaranteed employment, they either verbally agreed to work, or signed contracts for specific service periods” (Kaur, 2013). Most of them were used for developing Malaysia’s agricultural labor, which was deemed their most valuable asset – comprising of rice, rubber, and palm oil. This is similar to the Atlantic Slave Trade as the colonizers opted to invest in developing the infrastructure of one nation, often building roads and railways that would stretch to Malaysia, thus promoting the jobs there and not in their other colonized nations. By not developing their other colonies, such as China and India, the colonizers were once again able to create disparities in supply and demand, meaning these residents had little to no choice but to work abroad as migrants.

Despite the lucrative monetary advantages that presented themselves through this line of work, China’s and India’s overall poverty and lack of jobs in their home country also caused the increase in migrant workers abroad. These harsh living conditions were what many wished to flee from, especially under strict colonial rule, in which these groups of people were oppressed on a daily basis. Again, this was all done on purpose by the colonies as they knew that if they oppressed the less lucrative nation and developed the other, people would flow to where the money was.

Indentured servitude differed from 'slavery' in the way that these migrant workers voluntarily opted to leave their home nations in search of better paying jobs and that even though they were sent on a contractual basis, many migrants ended up residing and creating lives in these new nations, which is evident in Malaysia (Kaur, 2013). Indentured servants were usually set out to work for a fixed amount of time, lasting around three to five years, under indenture, until they were able to clear their debts with their employers (Kaur, 2013). When I mention debt, I am referring to the transport and living costs of these migrants which were legally given to their employers to settle, and not the migrant workers. However, instead of immediately paying them salaries, the employers would keep all their earnings until they had worked off what the employers had to initially pay to finance their labor. This was exceedingly unfair, because it meant that the employers were basically obtaining free labor, whilst the migrants were actually paying to work for others. These migrant workers were "'bound' to employers who used sanctions to enforce labour contracts ... [and] breaches of these contracts were regarded as criminal" at the time (Kaur, 2013). In regard to the word 'bound', I want to make it clear that these migrants were treated exactly as slaves were treated prior to the emancipation act, they were just given a new 'legal' title and paid very little money. Due to their overwhelming debts, many of these migrants had to extend their contracts for years on end just to cover their costs, without ever earning any profits. Which explains why so many indentured servants ended up having families and began building their own new lives in Malaysia.

Indian Indentured Servants in Malaysia

Indian migrant workers were brought in using “two migration methods ... the indenture system and the kangani system” bringing in about 250,000 indentured servants between 1844 and 1910, as well as around 50,000 to 80,000 kangani laborers on a yearly basis (Kaur, 2013). Kaur (2013) adds that “The British Malayan administration essentially regulated Indian labour migrations, while the task of labour recruitment was carried out by labour brokers or intermediaries”. Since we are already familiar with indentured slavery, first, I will briefly explain what the ‘kangani’ system entailed. ‘Kangani’ means overseer in Tamil, an Indian dialect mostly spoken by South-Indians. “Typically, a labourer already employed on the plantation, was entrusted to recruit workers from his village, thus introducing a chain migration outcome ... in South India” (Kaur, 2013). Eventually when indentured labor was deemed illegal in 1910, the use of kangani workers became ever more popular – because they were often much cheaper and easier to conduct, as employers didn’t have to recruit anybody themselves (Kaur, 2013). These workers were often not treated as badly as those in indentured contracts because the Kangani would usually try their utmost best to ensure the safety of his people from his employer. Despite this slight protection they may have received, these workers were still abused terribly, working endless shifts in the hot and humid Malaysian sun for hours on end until they could no longer work, much like on the plantations in the African American slave trade.



(Assisted and Voluntary Indian Immigration, 1844-1938) (Kaur, 2013)

Chinese Migrant Workers in Malaysia

Unlike their Indian counterparts, Chinese migrant workers were not regulated by the Malaysian government as they had already established merchant capital in the “Straits Settlements and [had connections with] ... certain Malay chiefs who invited the Chinese merchants to develop tin mining in their territories” (Kaur, 2013). Kaur (2013) adds that it was only when they ran out of labor sources, that these merchants began recruiting more migrant workers from South China to work in Malaysian mines – which the Chinese government did not support.

Much like the case with the Indian migrant workers, the Chinese immigrants “normally entered into verbal or written contracts for the repayment of their debt in the form of labour service” (Kaur, 2013).

Table 3. Estimated Population Outflows from China to selected Southeast Asian Countries, 1851–1925 (thousands)

Year	Malaya	Indonesia	Philippines
1851–1875	350	250	45
1876–1900	360	320	20
1901–1925	125	300	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available.

Source: Adapted from Lynn Pan, ‘Patterns of Migration’ in Lynn Pan (General Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Archipelago Press for the Chinese Heritage Centre, 2000), 62.

(Estimated Population Outflows from China to selected Southeast Asian Countries, 1851-1925) (in thousands) (Kaur, 2013)

Post-Colonial Malaysia

	Domestic workers	Construction	Manufacturing	Services	Plantation	Agriculture	Total
Bangladesh	133	105 960	106 350	30 284	19 626	14 665	277 018
Cambodia	4 045	268	3 539	1 048	274	350	9 524
China	231	4 475	527	7 114	45	30	12 422
India	949	9 893	4 007	61 196	24 333	39 246	139 624
Indonesia	106 788	248 790	128 553	42 732	259 561	89 915	876 339
Lao PDR	36	3	22	7	2	4	74
Myanmar	130	20 852	98 332	17 653	2 615	5 979	145 561
Nepal	78	18 886	403 675	116 148	7 223	20 174	566 184
Pakistan	53	29 849	828	6 245	8 846	24 393	73 214
Philippines	42 186	4 122	4 663	5 839	4 876	4 835	66 521
Sri Lanka	1 709	177	3 926	1 072	305	297	7 486
Thailand	352	927	358	10 011	557	1 831	14 036
Viet Nam	895	5 533	47 626	1 830	114	593	56 591
Others	76	346	142	309	34	12	919
TOTAL	157 661	450 081	805 548	301 488	328 411	202 324	2 245 513

(Number of Foreign Workers Registered Under the PLKS by Sector and Nationality, as of June 2015) (ILO, 2019)

Post-colonialism in Malaysia comprised of an extension of British labor practices as well as British values and trade beliefs. For this reason, the thorough use of slavery continued on even after receiving full independence from British colonization in 1963. Those in charge saw slavery as well suited to adapt to their new growing economies, that they were now suddenly in-charge of. The sudden shift in authority was the main factor for why these nations opted to maintain the use of slavery, as it was the only thing they had been accustomed to and they were not about to risk the growth and progress

of their newly obtained nations to try a new method of development. Kaur (2013) writes that “in countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, governments have promoted economic growth through neo-liberal policies, including trade, financial, and investment liberalization”, making these nations “labour-destination states ... [that] rely on migrant workers for labour force growth”. This is true as the poorer nations that surround these somewhat more developed countries, often look to Malaysia as a means of exporting their poor workforce in order to generate profits through work-labor contracts and remittances – due to their own inabilities in providing an adequate number of jobs for their large populations. Examples of countries that export migrant labor to Malaysia are “Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand, India, China, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam” and they are often employed to work in either “export-oriented manufacturing ... [or in] domestic service sectors” (Rahim, 2015). To do this successfully, Malaysia “regulate[s] migration through elaborate administrative frameworks and border controls while private labour brokers carry out recruitment and placement of migrant labour” (Kaur, 2013). The working sectors for export migrant labor in Malaysia are still exceedingly gender segmented – only allowing men to work in “restaurant, construction, cable, farming, and agriculture” related jobs, whereas women are only subjected to work in domestic service-related industries (Rahim, 2015).

Year	Legal Migrants (Millions)	Illegal Immigrants (Millions)
2007	384000	1.98
2008	410,000	1.92
2009	2.4	1.6
2010	1.44	1.8
2011	1,135,499	952,859
2012 (6PProgram)	2,320,034 *(1,016,908 legal labours plus 1,303,126 illegals labours legalized)	Estimated twice the number of legal migrants.

(Number of Legal Migrants and Illegal Immigrants in Malaysia) (Rahim, 2015)

Sofia's Story

For the third personal account, I will speak about Sofia – one of the more depressing stories unfortunately. Sofia was only in her mid-20s when I met her, but her story tells us so much more. It depicts how these agencies treat these women so poorly and the means to which they train and dispose of them.

Her story began when agents visited her rural village in Indonesia, telling her and her family that if she were to work for them, she would get 600 Ringgit Malaysia, which is about \$140 US, per month working as a live-in housemaid. She mentioned that for someone from such a small village, she knew she wouldn't be able to get such a well-paying job anywhere else especially without any prior academic qualifications or language skills. Upon signing the contracts and agreements, she and about 20 other girls, from varying parts of Indonesia, were taken to the capital, Jakarta. From there,

they were flown out without their Indonesian agents, all alone to Malaysia. Almost all of these women had never left the country before and having to take such a big step alone to fly on a plane was daunting for many of them, including Sofia.

Upon arrival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's largest city, they were meant to be greeted and welcomed by their Malaysian agent counterparts at the airport – but they were nowhere to be found. These women had come to Malaysia with literally nothing on their backs but some clothing items and maybe a few mementos that they were allowed to bring with them, most of them not carrying any cash at all. This group of 20 women waited and waited, and eventually their agent came to collect them, after three whole days of them sitting in an airport, with no phone, no food, and no money. Many of them had fainted due to starvation and whatever little money they had, they pooled together to share a small packet of rice. The agent clearly only viewed them as objects and had no issues with leaving them to starve until they were ready to get them – treating them just like cargo.

Finally, these women were transported to a house, in which they were told they would be trained for the duties of a household maid for three months – learning how to iron clothes, mop floors, sweep stairs, and wash bathrooms, amongst other chores. This house did not only consist of the 20 new maids that came with Sofia, but many others who had arrived prior to them and were still undergoing their training process. During these three months, none of them were paid, instead they were simply fed and given the bare minimum accommodation possible.

Once her training period had been completed, Sofia was meant to be placed with one family to be their live-in maid for two years, as her contract had previously noted.

Despite what she had been promised, she was sold off to another maid agency that only provided part-time housework as a service. She told us that this was common, as the training agency would often pass their maids around like commodities, from one agency to another. It is pivotal to keep in mind that part-time work is a lot more strenuous, as instead of working in one house and living with them for a couple years, she would instead work in 3 different houses every day. Starting at 9am to 1pm, 1:30pm to 5:30pm, and finally 6pm to 9pm, respectively – with no off days at all, seven days a week. Additionally, part-time work should technically be paid by the hour and not with a flat rate salary. This was however non-negotiable as she was told she would still only be paid the flat 600 Ringgit Malaysia a month, which is considered legal under Malaysian labor laws. On top of that, she was given no holidays whatsoever, even during Chinese New Year where she was supposedly given three days off from work. During this time, she would be made to clean her agent's own house in preparation for the big celebration. To add, their living conditions were extremely bleak – consisting of four maids sleeping on the floor of the kitchen, in a corner that was made into a makeshift room with the simple addition of a curtain hanging halfway across the space – giving these women no security or privacy whatsoever.

These women were meant to have their meals in between shifts, usually whilst in the car on the way to the next house. Despite being given regular meals, she told us and often even showed us the food they gave her – which usually comprised of a small bun and coffee in the morning before they left, a small serving of rice and spinach or tofu for lunch, and a similar meal for dinner. She often explained to us that they were not fed well and so many of the girls that lived with her, including herself, lost terrible

amounts of weight and had acute gastritis. Due to their immense malnourishment and the fact that they were overworked, they often fell ill, which their agents would remedy by handing them a painkiller before sending them back out to work.

Once, I recall Sofia coming into work having a severe case of gastritis. After that, my mother and I agreed that we would feed her every time she worked for us, which was sadly only once a week. We would give her a breakfast of hot cocoa and bread and jam, and then we would serve her lunch half an hour before her shift was over so she would have time to eat. On many occasions, Sofia would pack half of her food to take back home, or if we gave her a bag of biscuits or a Tupperware of muffins I baked, she would take it all back so she could share it with the other women at the agency. Even though this seemed harmless to us, she begged us not to tell her boss that we were feeding her, as she knew she would get reprimanded for not working through all the hours we were paying for, so we didn't.

Repercussions were harsh with these agencies, extending all the way from degrading verbal abuse to neglect to physical violence. Sofia often told us how afraid she was of her agents, as well as other homeowners she worked for, as they would treat her like trash on a daily basis. Her fear was evident even to us, as I remember once my mother gave her some fried fish, which is usually eaten with rice and vegetables in Malaysia, and she decided to bring half of it home to eat tomorrow. It was sad to see when my mother walked in on her tearing away at an old newspaper that was left on the floor in our dusty storeroom, just so she could wrap her half-eaten fish in it. When my mother asked her why she didn't just take a plastic bag from the kitchen, she told us that when she had done the same thing in other houses, she was scolded

terribly for using their things without permission. Keep in mind that plastic bags are often given free of charge with a purchase, and so there would be no real loss if she had taken just one. These employers simply enjoyed asserting their dominance in the most unnecessary ways.

On another occasion, Sofia had accidentally burnt one of my mother's blouses whilst completing her ironing for the day. She walked up to my mother with the most petrified look on her face and started apologizing for such a simple mistake. My mother immediately began consoling her and telling her that it was completely fine and that we burnt clothes all the time when we ironed too. It was after she calmed down that she stated that when she had made the same mistake in other homes, she was yet again given a severe scolding, treated to immense verbal abuse, and was made to pay for the damage she had done – out of what little salary she was already getting.

To add to the examples of mistreatment that Sofia had to endure, there is the story of when she worked in another house that would employ her for a whole day of work. She told us that the wife was an expatriate and so she used to cook the most amazing Western meals every day for her family – things Sofia had never even seen or tried before. Despite this, every time she worked there, she was given the same meal – rice and one fried egg. This was a common trait of many families that had live-in maids. They would only feed them scraps or leftovers and would never let them dine with them at the same table. Making them wait patiently until everybody was done eating, the table was cleared, and the dishes were done, until she was allowed to begin eating her meal alone in the back.

Industries that Promote Slavery Today

Despite the immense lack of media coverage given to the modern-day issue of slavery and the absence of the problem in the majority's eyes, the issue still manages to persist. This can be blatantly seen in a multitude of industries, especially growing in lesser- or under-developed nations where their lack of transparency and government assertiveness tends to enable the continuance of the practice behind closed doors. For this research paper, I have chosen to look deeply into Thailand's fast-paced and globally renown shrimp industry, and the use of Vietnamese construction workers and Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia. All three of these industries have been able to operate almost freely, utilizing highly illegal means and justifications, purely based on the fact that their victims are mostly voluntarily placing themselves in these scenarios, unaware that the life they are about to embark on is hardly close to the ones they have been promised. For this reason, after going in-depth on these individual industries, I will touch on the various reasons that these corporations manage to sustain their slave networks and how these individuals come to find themselves being exploited monetarily, physically, and emotionally.

Thailand's Shrimp Industry

Economic Reasoning

"They don't treat us like humans. They treat us like dogs" (Asia News Monitor, 2016).

The estimated \$7 billion US (Asia News Monitor, 2016) Thai shrimp industry is a prime example of current day human trafficking, manipulation, and slave labor. The industry is widespread in its exports globally with its main customers being the U.S., which purchases “22% or 22 billion baht of Thailand’s ... exports” and the “EU countries together account for 13% of Thailand’s shrimp exports” (Arunmas, 2014). Major retailers in these nations are heavy consumers of Thailand’s cheap produce, such as Walmart and Whole Foods in the U.S. (Hill, 2016). However, since the immense global awareness on the Thai fishing issue has come about, Thailand has been downgraded by the U.S. to Tier 3 status, which is the lowest possible level in the 2014 “Trafficking in Persons” (TIP) report (Arunmas, 2014), which they hope will deter large corporations from engaging in regular business with these companies that do not regard for human rights. However, because of how well-stretched the exports are, and the monopoly Thailand has on exceedingly affordable seafood products, even sanctions from the U.S. would not hurt them significantly (Arunmas, 2014).

To provide a clear contrast between Thailand and its consumer nations, there is a stark difference in the GDP per capita of all countries involved. In 2019, Thailand’s GDP per capita was \$7,808.2 million US, whereas the United States had a whopping \$65,280.7 million US and the United Kingdom had \$42,300.3 million US in 2019 alone (World Bank, 2019). The blatant differences in each country’s GDP per capita informs us that Thailand is a labor-outsourcing nation and the other two more developed countries are labor-recruiting nations. In addition to that, Thailand received \$7,075 million US in remittances in 2019, making up 1.3% of their yearly GDP value (World

Bank, 2019). This indicates that the inflow of remittances is somewhat significant to the Thai economy.

The shrimp industry mainly involves individuals that have been trafficked into Thailand under false job promises that end up being victims of the trade (Asia News Monitor, 2016). “About 80% of workers ... are from” Burma, a less-developed nation in which its own economy and government structure inhibits young people from obtaining stable jobs with steady incomes (Arunmas, 2014). It is said that, “approximately 37,000 economic migrants, mainly from Cambodia and Burma, work in Thailand’s fishing industry, paying brokers to help them find work (Marschke, 2014). All of these countries have similar characteristics, being less-developed nations with little to no development and unstable governments that are often highly corrupt. The lack of enforcement and engagement within these governments cause their economies to fall, creating a surplus of young and often educated youths that are actively on the lookout for well-paying jobs, or simply any work that pays. These domestic issues develop into monetary constraints that push them to look for good pay elsewhere, often adopting strenuous jobs just to afford to send remittances back to their home nations. Thailand is a prime example of a country that resides in an area of immense poverty that has used its significant wealth advantage in exploitative manners.

The employment of slave labor tends to go through a middleman that shrimp export organizations employ to supply their labor needs. This makes it rather difficult for authorities to pinpoint who is in-charge or to blame for the employment of slave labor. As the blame often doesn’t fall onto the employer, and the middleman is usually well

hidden amongst his ranks. These brokers tend to be either close friends or relatives – as is in the case of the sex trade – leaving many to the ruins of false judgement.

The main reason that the issue manages to persist in the Thai economy, despite numerous attempts by outside actors such as the EU and the Associated Press, as well as a dense amount of international pressure, is due to their overwhelming lack of transparency in their governmental bodies. These agencies, like the police and higher-up officials in government branches, are all involved in heavy levels of corruption, and often work hand-in-hand with the middlemen in their ‘recruitment’ process. Despite Thailand’s multiple promises and so-called recent government efforts to aid the issue at hand, many of those enslaved who have found their way out of the trade speak of how law enforcement was usually a main player in their enslavement (Hill, 2016). Much like the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred in America in 2020, these people cannot change their way of life because their country’s officials are hindering any possible developments. The lack of faith in one’s government is a deadly issue to have as without a body that can be wholly trusted in times of crisis, its people are left to fend for themselves, in regard to human rights as well as for monetary opportunities.

Bad Treatment

“We have been improving working conditions in the industry for eight years and are sure there has been no child or forced labour in the production chain’ said Poj Aramwattananont, president of Thai Fishery Producers Coalition, which comprises eight associations” (Arunmans, 2014).

“In some cases, vulnerable people have been smuggled out of their home countries, coerced into taking illegal narcotics as stimulants, and forced to fish around the clock out of fear for their lives” (Grijalva, 2018). Some individuals are even smuggled onto long-term fishing boats for expeditions that typically last around six months stretching to multiple years. In these cases, slavery is the most pervasive as these victims have no outlet for help and are treated like commodities instead of slaves, where their lives are often placed on the line for simple misbehavior. Despite all the evidence of mistreatment and slave use, the Thai government refrains from admitting that slavery is present in their home, releasing multiple statements on a yearly basis in regard to their epitome of human rights standards and job safety protocols.

This dilemma will regrettably continue to persist in Thailand for as long as large corporations continue to supply them with immense business and as long as no external nation or government body attempts to intervene in Thailand’s ‘fishy’ politics. Thereupon, I surmise that the main reason for the persistence of Thailand’s extensive shrimp and seafood industry is monetarily based. This is blatant as all the issues stem from those individuals in higher ranks wanting to get a bigger cut – whether it be the large corporations in well-developed countries looking for the cheapest imports, Thai police officials that make the decision to turn their cheek to these discrepancies in order to get a small cut out of the brokering deal, or even those in-charge of Thailand’s government and economy who are hoping to maximize their countries wealth and at the same time theirs as well.

Vietnamese Construction Workers in Malaysia

The employment of construction and labor workers from Vietnam in Malaysia follows the same storyline as that with the Thai shrimp industry – consisting of structural inequalities and deeply imbedded issues in their local government systems. “As of 2016, the state [Vietnam] has signed intergovernmental agreements to send more than 520,000 contract-based migrants to work in over sixty countries and territories in east and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and the former Eastern Bloc countries ... [primarily focusing on] domestic and factory ... construction and service jobs” (Trần & Crinis, 2018). Their top labor markets between the years of 2000 and 2010 were “Taiwan (237,643 people), Malaysia (184,614 people), South Korea (90,744 people), Japan (42,299 people), and Africa and the Middle East (54,014 people)” (Trần & Crinis, 2018). As of 2015, there are an estimated 56,000 Vietnamese migrant workers residing in Malaysia, which is a large increase from just 19,000 in 2002 (ILO, 2019).

Economic Reasoning

“I make 18.5 ringgit [USD 4.45] per day and receive only 1.5 ringgit [USD 0.36] for lunch. But for two years now, I always cook my own rice and bring lunch to work to save money. It is very expensive to eat out, ... In two years, I had sent home a total of VND46 million (about \$2,300 US) to my parents. I had wanted to send the first year’s earning to my parents, and the second’s year’s earning to send my younger sister to college,” – Ms. Chuong (Trần & Crinis, 2018).

Much like in Thailand, and in Indonesia in the next section, Vietnam engages with Malaysia to create strong labor-relations as a means to reduce their own poverty levels at home. This is blatant as “the Vietnamese state has policies and targets to promote global labor migration through 2020 as a poverty-reduction strategy” (Trần & Crinis, 2018).

Much like the other supply and demand countries mentioned above in regard to the shrimp, and also the domestic worker, industries, Vietnam and its labor importers have stark differences in their global economic strengths. To demonstrate, Vietnam’s GDP per capita was merely \$2,715.3 million US whereas Malaysia’s GDP per capita was \$11,414.8 million US in 2019 (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, Vietnam received \$17,000 million US in remittances in 2019, making up 6.5% of their entire year’s GDP value (World Bank, 2019). Trần & Crinis (2018) state that “over 90 percent of migrant workers send money home periodically (every two to three months) to address the most pressing needs of their families”. This data implies that Vietnam relies rather heavily on the inflow of remittances to their country, even more so than Thailand does.

Bad Treatment

“They did not like their jobs, or their jobs did not provide enough overtime work for them to earn enough to pay back debts and save a little; those men ended their contracts early, went underground, and many joined gangs as a way to make money, or got into

drinking and gambling, which got them further into debt.” – Ms. Chuong (Tràn & Crinis, 2018).

Much like those employed in the Thai shrimp industry, as well as in the Indonesian domestic service industry, there is an immense presence of worker exploitation present in the Vietnamese migrant worker trade. Tràn and Crinis (2018) add that “international activists have pointed to Malaysia’s poor human rights record in the lead-up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement with the United States and outlined the exorbitant recruitment costs, human trafficking, modern-day enslavement, detention, injury, and even death of thousands of poor migrant workers”. Rahim (2015) states that there were over 400 complaints received by the Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) in 2010 alone – encompassing “non-payment of wages, arbitrary and unexplained wage deductions, breach of working hours, including overtime pay, annual leave, paid public holidays and weekly days of rest”. To add, they are constantly “harassed with contract fraud, debt bondage, and subsistence wages for above-average working hours, including structural unpaid overtime, and with obligatory wage deductions for food and accommodation provided by their employment agencies” (Rahim, 2015). Additionally, the ILO (2018) mentions that some examples of their forced labor conditions are “passport confiscation, wage fraud, contract violations, and restricted movements”. As I will explain in the section discussing the use of Indonesian migrant labor in Malaysia, it is exceedingly common for employers to take possession of their employees’ passports, despite it being illegal under the Malaysia Passport Act of 1955 (ILO, 2019). Furthermore, the ILO (2018) states “Vietnamese workers were found

to have paid the highest recruitment fees – 3,500 Malaysian ringgit (MYR), or about \$1,100 [US]”. These exorbitantly high recruitment fees disable these men from ever successfully clearing their debt, which is extremely similar when looked at through an indentured servant lens. These men often have to take on more contracts to simply pay off their debts before ever actually beginning to make a profit for themselves.

Growing up in Malaysia, witnessing the lives of these Vietnamese men was a common factor of daily life for me. I would often be awoken at the crack of dawn with machinery noises which would run all the way up till the sun set at 6pm daily. These men would be expected to tile roofs, build walls, and tear down old buildings, all whilst enduring the piercingly hot tropical heat that we have on a daily basis. Vietnamese people tend to have slightly fairer skin, resembling that of Chinese or Japanese descent. However, all of these men’s skin tones were very dark, from spending 12-hour days in the sweltering sun, with no skin protection afforded to them at all. The only days that they were not expected to work was when it rained, for it would be physically impossible for them to carry out labored work in such weather, otherwise these men were not given any days off from their hard labor.

Once the sun had set and their workday was over, these men would either reside in the half-built homes they were constructing or would be subjected to live in makeshift shelters built flimsily with leftover scrap metal sheets and plastics from their work site. When I was back home, it was very common to walk past a construction site at night and witness these men taking showers in the open public, since they would not be given a proper place to bathe. Instead, they would only be supplied with one porta-potty per site – which would serve at least 20 men at a time. As we walked by, there would be

naked men showering in public, trying their best to conceal themselves behind large sheets of metal or makeshift barriers they made by hanging their towels up on clothing line strings. Upon nightfall, these men would sleep in their shacks, with no beds or lighting, just a sheet of metal hovering above them, supposedly providing them with shelter from possible rain or storms, despite it not being leak-proof at all.

Puteri's Story

For the fourth personal account, I will speak about Puteri, a live-in maid that my grandmother had for four years – which comprised of two two-year contracts. She was much older than the majority of the women that come to find themselves in this field of work, being around 45 years old at the time. She had a husband and three children – the eldest son was working, her eldest daughter was married, and her youngest son was only about 13 years old. The reason she felt the need to go overseas to find work was to ensure she had the finances to send her youngest son to college, because he had previously expressed to her that he wanted to further his education – which isn't very common in rural Indonesia. Even though Puteri had a husband back home to care for their children, he wasn't ever much help as he was an avid gambler and alcoholic, spending any little money they had, the moment he got his hands on it. Ergo, yet again much like Suriani, Puteri left her mother in-charge of taking care of her children.

Prior to becoming a domestic worker in Malaysia, she worked as a snack vendor at the local morning wet market back home in Indonesia, selling steamed rice cakes that were filled with beef. She and her son would arise at 2am every day to begin preparing

and cooking about 200 pieces of the 'kuih' – which means snack in Bahasa Indonesia. She stated that they had to be up so early because they needed to be completely done at 5am to make the initial rush of the morning market crowd. Despite working nonstop until about 8am, they wouldn't make much money as each 'kuih' was sold at only 50 Indonesian Rupiah, which to give a comparison, 100 Indonesian Rupiah is equivalent to \$0.01 US. Given the exceedingly low profit margin that they were obtaining, she knew that if her son were to continue his academic career past high school, she would need to find a more monetarily substantial form of work.

Once she had already begun working in Malaysia, upon her husband's persistent requests, she would send a little bit of her money back home every month so that her husband and mother could go and buy groceries and food for her child. After about a year of repeatedly sending money back home every month, she received a call on my grandmother's landline, since she did not have her own handphone, from her son. He had called her crying and weeping, telling her how hungry he was and that there wasn't any food left to eat at home. It was soon after this that she found out that every single cent she had given to her husband was not used for the family but was instead used to finance his gambling and alcohol addictions. After her first contractual term in Malaysia, which lasted for two years, she decided to go back home for a short while to divorce her husband, get a new place for her son and mother to live in, and eventually came back to Malaysia to work for my grandmother again. Meaning she opted to extend her contract to work another two years with us.

After her fourth year working in Malaysia as a live-in maid, she was finally ready to go home and use her savings for her son's college education. It is important to note

here, that Indonesian banks are heavily corrupted, as since they know that many women will be returning to their home country with foreign cash, they place a high commission on currency exchange – often leaving these women with less than half of what they earned over the many years of working strenuously abroad. Ergo, many of them often preferred to change their foreign currencies in the country they worked in and then carry suitcases full of cash back to Indonesia. This was very common, and unfortunately many others were aware of this trend as well. Once Puteri had arrived in her hometown’s airport, she then had to take a bus ride to reach her small village. It was during this bus ride that she was robbed. Someone had stolen her suitcase full of years and years of savings and hard labor. Luckily for her, she had already sent a lot of her money back home prior to the end of her contract to her mother, but she still did lose most of her savings – that was purely meant for her son.

Indonesian Domestic Workers in Malaysia

Economic Reasoning

Next, I will touch on how the use of ‘maids’ have become a popular fashion in Malaysia as their labor is exceedingly affordable due to the currency exchange when coming from an under-developed country. “In 2006, 680,000 Indonesians travelled abroad as undocumented migrants and in total there are believed to be around 4.3 million Indonesian migrants” (Lindquist, 2010). These documented numbers are often smaller than in reality due to the lack of documentation in the process of migration. It is believed that about 40% of the 680,000 in 2006 migrated to Malaysia and 45% to Saudi

Arabia – with 80% being women and 88% of them obtaining work in domestic help jobs (Lindquist, 2010). To further explain the differences between the receiving and outsourcing labor between these nations, I will add that in 2019, Indonesia’s GDP per capita was only \$4,135.6 million US, whilst Malaysia’s was \$11,414.8 million US (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, a majority of these workers – 78% – tend to work in the informal sector of work focusing in the domestic realm, particularly as either part-time or live-in maids or for elderly care (Hosen & Raharto, 2013).

Destination Countries	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Asia							
Brunei	5,773	8,502	1,146	6,503	4,978	7,431	4,321
Darussalam							
Singapore	34,295	16,071	6,103	9,131	25,087	28,545	23,613
Hong Kong	23,929	20,431	3,509	14,183	12,143	19,211	21,282
Taiwan	38,119	35,992	1,930	969	48,576	40,923	35,222
Malaysia	110,490	152,680	89,439	127,175	201,887	207,426	151,998
South Korea	3,391	4,273	7,495	2,924	4,506	5,959	2,175
Thailand	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sri Lanka	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Macau	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Total	216,012	237,880	109,622	160,885	297,177	309,495	238,713
Middle East and Africa							
Saudi Arabia	103,235	213,603	169,038	196,342	150,202	268,202	16,715
United Arab Emirates	11,027	7,779	1,475	7,237	5,622	22,190	19,578
Kuwait	3,343	16,418	12,268	15,989	16,842	22,630	18,610
Bahrain	1,558	666	88	0	21	639	1,465
Qatar	1,029	916	180	62	1,002	7,546	7,302
Jordan	379	1,233	226	68	2,081	10,352	10,256
Others	609	1,346	495	1	1,216	4,962	5,121
Total	121,180	241,961	183,770	219,699	336,521	336,521	249,047
Japan/Europe/USA	1,800	552	302	106	114	532	910
Others*	na	na	na	na	na	na	137
Grand Total	338,992	480,393	293,694	380,690	474,310	646,548	488,807

(Indonesia: Indonesian Workers deployed overseas by destination country, 2001-2007)

(Hosen & Raharto, 2013)

Again, as similarly seen with the Thai shrimp and seafood trade, the main reason for their large transnational migration to more developed countries is their country's lack of

wealth, government transparency, and ongoing blatant corruption. Lindquist (2010) mentions that the use of Indonesian domestic labor increased substantially after the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997 – with the number of migrants between 1997 and 1999 summing up to more than that of the past 25 years altogether. This proves that the migration of individuals across borders in order to obtain a job, is not one that is done without haste or desperation, as their home countries are often not in a secure place financially, thus disabling a healthy and competitive job market from emerging. Additionally, the Indonesian government – because of its poor financial status – actively promotes the act of transnational migration to acquire remittances. Lindquist (2010) states that international labor migration has been a critical aspect to the Indonesian economy since the 1980s and ergo, has immensely aided their national development through the expansion of the labor market and the influx of foreign capital through brokering agencies, as well as through the resurgence of their own economy through remittances sent back home to be used domestically. Statistically, Indonesia received \$11,667 million US in remittances in 2019, making up 1.0% of their whole GDP value. These remittances have fueled Indonesia’s economy for many decades and so unlike its Thai counterparts, they have opted to engage in it wholeheartedly and supposedly ‘legally’, much like with the case of Vietnam.

Malaysia is a prime location for Indonesian women to seek employment as Malaysia is a developing country that has seen a large rise in working women over the past few decades in the formal sector of the economy. For this reason, Hosen & Raharto (2013) state that many of these working women require additional assistance at home to aid in caring for their household as well as their children. “In the absence of affordable state-

funded childcare and other services, governments have facilitated the recruitment of foreign domestic workers and caregivers mainly through labour accords to lighten women's 'double' burden" (Kaur, 2013). In regard to why Malaysians prefer Indonesian workers, it is because Bahasa Malaysia – the national language of Malaysia, and Bahasa Indonesia – the national language of Indonesia, are exceedingly similar. To the point where two individuals from either two countries would be able to converse almost smoothly. To add, the national religion of Malaysia is Islam and Indonesia currently holds the largest population of Muslim people in the world. These cultural similarities allow for an easier transition to the new country as well as an easier employer-employee relationship for those involved. With Malaysia being a developing nation, primal jobs such as domestic care, farm work, and manual labor, are not jobs that Malaysians want or even apply for. This leaves a large gap in the economy for structural jobs, thus organizations tend to opt to employ foreign workers, such as those from Indonesia and Cambodia, as they are willing to do the hard work that nobody else will do, and their work wages are set significantly lower than it would be for a Malaysian worker (Hosen & Raharto, 2013).

The main difference between the Thai shrimp industry and the Indonesian domestic worker industry that I would like to note here is that Indonesia has put in a great deal of effort to ensure that all transnational migration on the basis of work be done in a legal manner. Unlike in Thailand, where people are either smuggled across the border or given false documentation for work permits. Lindquist (2010) adds that the Indonesian authorities as well as international organizations that focus on labor – such as the International Labour Organization – have produced campaigns to educate those who

wish to engage in this labor about the significance of maintaining a legal status even when abroad. This is mainly done through utilizing 'labor recruitment agencies' that focus their efforts on placing these Indonesian females in jobs that suit them and their skills overseas. In comparison, in Thailand, this would be done using an illegal labor broker.

In regard to payment, these women tend to make "600 ringgit, or \$175 US per month, with six months' salary deducted for fees from each two-year contract" in Malaysia (Lindquist, 2010). Keep in mind, that through my personal relationships with Indonesian domestic workers, they have informed me that they were unaware of the fact that they would only get paid for one and a half years out of their two years spent abroad. Even so, this is still a lot more money than they would ever be able to make in their home country and so it is an extremely lucrative offer, despite the numerous years spent abroad at a time, away from their families and lives. This is also due to the fact that most of the girls who get recruited do not have much academia on their side – with most of them just studying until the age of 13, with a small handful of them completing either elementary or middle school, and most of them never having attended high-school. This leaves hardly any job opportunities for them as they are highly under-qualified and often illiterate.

Before delving into the means of mistreatment that these women have to persevere through in order to work and live 'comfortably' in Malaysia, I would like to add my personal experience with the way in which they are recruited and persuaded into the trade. Firstly, the recruiters that the agency employs, who are usually from other towns, begin their recruitment process by construing an elaborate scheme, that has a lot in

common with those of the sex trade, in which they find exceedingly rural villages and reside in them for a minimum of six months and often up to a year. During this time period, they befriend the locals and become a positive, popular member of the society. These recruiters are also often elderly men or women, to promote the idea that they can be wholly trusted, adding to the scheme. One lady that we knew once mentioned that the recruiter in her village would visit her father on a daily basis for about half a year, just to have tea and talk. This shows us how devious these agencies are. Once the recruiters feel as though they have gained the trust of the community, they then approach them about these 'high-paying' jobs, offering them a great life abroad with a nice family, with no mention of any negative aspects or mistreatment. After recruiting almost all the girls in the village, these recruiters have been known to just disappear without a trace, leaving their families clueless as to what is going on with their daughters, wives, and mothers.

Bad Treatment

“The maid was chained to the backdoor to prevent her eating the employers’ food while they went out” (Hosen & Raharto, 2013).

Upon departure from Indonesia, women are stripped of any personal belongings that might cause them to flee home upon arrival – such as cellphones and any other forms of communication (Lindquist, 2010). This is done because if the maid flees once

already in Malaysia, the Indonesian labor recruitment agency is held responsible for the consequential costs (Lindquist, 2010).

Despite having such high regulations and agencies set in place to conduct legal transnational migration, Indonesia still ceases to provide aid to their people once they set foot abroad. “Economic gain does not stop these female workers [from] being exposed to considerable risks of exploitation and discrimination because of their limited knowledge of workers’ rights and obligations” (Hosen & Raharto, 2013).

The mistreatment, which often includes sexual abuse, that these women have to withstand is often overlooked by their employers as they are viewed as lower-class citizens from a less-developed country. The feminization of domestic work adds to the inequalities they face on a day-to-day basis as well. I say this because there is a stereotype when it comes to these workers – that females are easier to control and manage. Often, these women work from 5am until 12am at night, either living in one house as a live-in maid or by jumping from house to house the entire day as a part-time maid. They are only given about one to two days off per year and are often only fed scraps, leftovers, or perishable items that are on the verge of expiring. Their personal belongings are confiscated by employers in Malaysia and thus they only get to communicate with their children and families on the off chance an employer was to lend them his/her/their phone.

The question persists though, why would these women ever sign a contract that would enable their mistreatment? Well, the short answer is, they wouldn’t. Labor recruitment organizations more often than not lie about the job scope and working conditions in which they will be subjected to upon their arrival. These women are

promised weekends off, a nice living situation, as well as fully cooked meals. To their dismay, they don't get to enjoy any of the aforementioned benefits, as they work almost daily, live in compact and dirty make-shift rooms where beds are stacked next to each other on the floor with cardboard partitionings, and hardly get fed proper, nutritious meals. "This kind of ill-treatment is technically not an abuse under the law, meaning there is no legal recourse" (Hosen & Raharto, 2013). In addition to the harsh living and working conditions they have to endure, there is also the issue of payment. These women are often "abused, cheated, not ... paid wages, threatened with arrest, or ... treated like slaves" (Hosen & Raharto, 2013). For instance, all of them are promised the life of a live-in maid, to work and live in one house for the duration of two years, being paid 600 Ringgit Malaysia per month. Upon arrival, they come to realize that almost half of them have been arranged to work as part-time maids. Part-time maids work in three houses every day from around 5am till midnight, but still only get paid the flat rate of 600 Ringgit Malaysia per month. This is a massive loophole in Malaysian labor law as they should rightfully be paid by the hour under minimum wage regulations.

For those who actually get to be live-in maids, they are not aware that the first six months of their salary will be sent straight to the agency they work for, leaving them with only one and a half years of their salary at the end of their contract. This is yet again another aspect of Malaysia's labor laws – stating that within the first six months of employment, if anything were to happen that would disallow the maid from working, it is completely the agency's responsibility to replace her or make up the costs. After the first six months, the maid is no longer in contract with the agency, but instead with her employer, meaning their salaries go straight from the homeowner to them.

In both scenarios, whether they are full-time or part-time maids, they are given no allowance money unless their employer wishes to, have no handphones or any connection to their homes, and are forced to leave their passports with the agent until the end of their contracts. The withholding of passports is exceedingly unfair and illegal as this is their only form of documentation in the country. Ergo, by keeping them undocumented, they don't have any way to flee or leave the country, or report any abuse, unless allowed to do so by their agent.

To add to the legal argument of this issue, these women are usually afraid to confront their employers about any mistreatment or even to report something to the authorities. This is the case as the police in Malaysia have been known to be heavily corrupt and thus these ladies have told us that when reporting an issue to the police, they often get asked to perform sexual favors because the police are aware that these women have no rights. So, despite having a legal working status in Malaysia, they are not afforded any protections under the law. The law is always on the side of the maid agencies and they sometimes even pay off the authorities to ensure they can continue their inhumane practices without any hinderances.

Sociology that Permits its Continuation – Feminization of the Domestic Workforce

“The feminization of the job supply in conjunction with the growing politicization of native women may well create a growing demand for immigrant women” (Sassen-Koob, 1984).

Feminization of the workforce is a growing issue in most developing and unsurprisingly, in under-developed nations as well. This is true, as I previously mentioned women in developing nations are beginning to engage in more formal parts of their economies, thus leaving them with little to no time to maintain their other stereotypically 'female' duties – such as those entailed within motherhood and marriage. “A conflict between work and family continues to exist and is worsened by the fact that many companies do not provide flexibility in managing women’s careers and difficult schedules” (Reznik & Prevatt, 1988). Additionally, Ball (2008) states that “neoliberal structural adjustment generally leads to greater feminization of the workforce for both demand- and supply-side reasons”. This is clearly the case in Malaysia, as well as other developing and mainly first-world countries.

What is hardly discussed however, is the feminization of workforces in less-developed countries, where women are economically necessary to the sustenance of their nations but are still treated as though they were only second-class citizens, with little to no rights. This paradox between their clashing agendas and resources causes these women, such as those hoping to become maids in Malaysia, to feel exceedingly conflicted in their decision-making in regard to their lives and families.

Hossain, Mathbor, & Semenza (2013) add to my point by stating “the pressure of global competition forces employers to substitute men’s labor with cheap female labor to keep unit costs down”. This can be blatantly seen as many women in under-developed nations are given opportunities to enter the workforce through the jobs presented to them by more developed nations searching for cheaper and easily obtainable labor sources. The feminization of the informal sector of the economy is

saturated with certain sociological assumptions that lead employers to favor women over men. For instance, women are often more docile and sincere, tend to accept lower wages, less mobile, and are less likely to join trade unions (Hossain, Mathbor, & Semenza, 2013). All of the above stated preconceived notions of women are all arbitrary and are based upon their exploitation. These women tend to be docile and hold onto their jobs without making a fuss or starting a union because of the lack of opportunities present for them. They cannot revolt against the job they have as they fear not being able to obtain another, after possibly losing it simply for fighting for one's rights. Thus, it is blatant to see once again that the capitalist system in which these women are trying to forgo and enter, does not reciprocate anything to them.

To be more specific, there is an ongoing increase in the feminization of 'wage' labor (Sassen-Koob, 1984). This encapsulates the Indonesian maid export industry much better as it encapsulates the "employment of immigrant women in highly industrialized countries" and how "waged employment represents for many immigrant women a first labor market experience, but it is increasingly becoming a continuation of patterns already initiated in countries of origin" (Sassen-Koob, 1984).

Siti's Story

"30,000 domestic servants reportedly run away from their employers in Malaysia each year" (Lindquist. 2010).

The fifth personal account will be about Siti, a slightly older woman in her late 30s who worked part-time for us for a brief period of time. I was very fond of Siti because she was such a sweet lady, always saying the kindest things, effortlessly polite, and also had a wonderful and contagious sense of humor. We loved her company so much that my mother and I would sit down next to her whilst she ironed our clothes just so we could chitchat for a couple hours.

Siti wore glasses but it wasn't the right prescription as she told us it was a really old pair. Once, she even came in with it broken and barely taped up with cellophane tape, attempting to piece it together. Thus, she was rather blind and often didn't clean as thoroughly as we would've liked her to, but it didn't matter to us, it was clean enough. I remember my mother and I cleaning some of the things she had just finished cleaning after she left and laughing about how she really did try her best. Unfortunately, not all of her employers felt the same way. She told us how stressed she always was about this one family she worked for that would always reprimand her for not being clean enough, even though she truly couldn't do any better with her bad eyesight. Siti was always very upset and hated her job and the life she had unknowingly signed up for. Ergo, Siti would always ask my mother if she would hire her as a full-time maid to live in our house so she wouldn't have to work anywhere else anymore, but my mother and I had no need for a full-time maid, so we had to say no.

Siti disliked her job so much that one day, she ran away. Prior to this, she would always tell my mother that she did love working for this one apartment in which a single man resided in. She told us stories of how kind he was to her and how well he treated her compared to everyone else. It wasn't long after she ran away, that her replacement,

provided by the agency, told us in confidence that Siti wanted us to know that she was alright and has never been happier. This is how we came to learn that on one day whilst working at his house, he hid her and told the agency that he had left the house momentarily and returned to her absence. This was a lie, as he had asked her to run away to come live with him and be his wife. Many months later, we were informed that they had officially gotten married and he had gotten her a new, but fake, Malaysian passport so that they could return to her small village in Indonesia because he wanted to meet the rest of her family.

I understand that this research paper is about the tragedies and mistreatment of these wonderful ladies, but I thought it would be important to include this one happy tale, as it brings me joy every-time I remember that she is now living her best life. However, it goes to show that these harsh living conditions and strenuous work hours cause these women to resort to extreme measures – such as running away and illegally obtaining a passport.

How to Get Rid of and Reduce Modern Slavery

Finally, I will now explain the ways in which we can curtail the use of modern-day slavery through both individual actions as well as government reforms in labor practices and law. Hosen & Raharto (2013) state that the Indonesian government should “reform immigration-sponsorship policies so that domestic workers’ visas are no longer tied to their employers, develop protocols and train law enforcement officials on how to respond to domestic workers’ complaints appropriately, and how to investigate and

collect evidence in such cases”. To add, they should also implement “comprehensive referral and support services, including health care, shelter, consular services, and legal aid” (Hosen & Raharto, 2013). All of these developments would aid in establishing a legal presence for these workers once they step foot abroad.

Additionally, in cases such as the Thai shrimp industry, I believe that utilizing the information we have now on fair trade purchases should be our main goal. In this current day and age, it has never been easier to know whether an organization engages in illegal labor. Thus, people should only buy from those who are known to be fair trade companies. That being said, it is exceedingly difficult for the average consumer to constantly be aware of the backgrounds of every single item they opt to purchase. For this reason, I still believe that large corporations, and especially governmental bodies, must take a strong stance in whether or not they wish to support and invest in organizations that conduct inhumane practices.

Conclusion – Old and New Definitions of Slavery

Before delving into what I have sufficed is considered to be ‘modern’ slavery, I would like to touch on the work of Kevin Bales – as he has in countless articles and interviews, been able to define the evolution of slavery in its past forms to what we would name as slavery today. He (1999) mentions that there are three main causes for the persistence of slave use till this day – the “dramatic increase in global population since World War II”, “government corruption”, and “the impact of rapid social and economic change ... made worse by the population boom”. All of these factors have

created an unequal workforce in developing nations as the numbers of those in the lowest socioeconomic classes grew just as much as those in the elite classes, creating a tiny portion labelled as the middle-class.

Slavery has been defined time and time again by multitudes of varying scholars and academics, all attempting to define it as rigidly as possible. The issue with this is that the actual course of slavery and what it entails for its subordinates have altered significantly throughout the years. Due to this, it is only possible to closely define what slavery is in the modern age by noting down the characteristics that enable one to determine an act is slavery without a socio-cultural context attached to it. Being objective and opting to remove oneself from the current political and socioeconomic climate will provide us with a blank slate to depict the main characteristics of 'slavery'. Once we have finalized the definition of 'slavery' as an act on its own, we will be better equipped to engage in defining what slavery means in our ongoing timely context.

It may be difficult to construct a completely new definition of "modern slavery" as it is often "closely related to other forms of bondage such as serfdom, helotage, and peonage" (Patterson, 1977). We can see the distinct differences in how past sociologists have defined slavery and how it has evolved through dissecting old definitions of it. Here, it is blatant that the main focus is on its legalistic aspects which promote the idea that "slavery is a property relationship: that condition in which a human being is owned by another or by a group of persons" (Patterson, 1977). This view was contested by many because of its many gaps in reality. The discrepancies between how slavery was interpreted and how it was actually acted out include the lack of "exclusive property rights" over slaves and the lack of fully developed property rights in certain

societies (Patterson, 1977). This means that the aforementioned definition was overtly specific and did not allow for evolutions in slavery to be accounted for. Thus, there are multitudes of various, in-depth definitions available for almost every slavery-related situation to exist.

Unlike his/her/their colleagues, Herskovits (1965) manages to word his/her/their definition of slavery in a way that enables it to be used in various contexts – “whatever the manner of acquisition of slaves, and whatever the work required of them, their status as human beings invaded to a considerable extent their status as property”. This definition states that no matter what work the slave is forced to do or the way in which they were captured, the general worth amounted to a slave is equal to that of his/her/their production value, as property. Patterson (1977) however, depicts slavery as a “condition in which there is an institutionalized alienation from the rights of labor and kinship”. This encompasses the alienation from bearing one’s own children, raising a family, and from socializing with the outside world. This extreme form of alienation speaks to the previously stated notion of slaves being defined by their sense of property. Hence, the main factor to focus on when depicting what ‘slavery’ is, should be the fact that they are not deemed to be humans but instead as commodities that should be worked to the maximum end to extend profit margins.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLD AND NEW FORMS OF SLAVERY	
<u>Old Forms of Slavery</u>	<u>New Forms of Slavery</u>
Legal ownership asserted	Legal ownership avoided
High purchase cost	Very low purchase cost
Low profits	Very high profits
Shortage of potential slaves	Surplus of potential slaves
Long-term relationship	Short-term relationship
Slaves maintained	Slaves disposable
Ethnic differences important	Ethnic differences not important

(Differences between old and new forms of slavery) (Bales, 1999)

To add, there are stark differences I must note between the ‘old’ definitions of slavery and its ‘new’ counterparts. The old definitions tend to focus on how slaves were involuntarily brought to new lands to work labor intensive jobs, often with no salaries, but only provided with food and minimal accommodation. To compare this with modern-day slavery, slaves are no longer forced against their wills to work in these heinous jobs for below minimum wage, as they have chosen this life. This is not to say that they are voluntarily opting for this lifestyle and master status, but their socioeconomic status and lack of social stratification, education, and jobs present in their own nations impede their choices – making this lifestyle of a slave the most lucrative, to survive in this overtly capitalist economy.

Ergo, my second point is that even though modern slavery is usually done voluntarily, it is merely due to their lack of other choices that pushes them to resort to these jobs. In whole, both old and new forms of slavery are involuntary – with old slavery consisting of physical capture and forced labor, and new slavery comprising of economic, specifically debt bondage, and social capture and forced labor. Both

circumstances are just as extenuating, the only difference is that one has been overlooked and checked as 'legal' in multiple nations – as it has been done in South-East Asia. To surmise, new-age slaves are subject to four main issues – debt bondage, unawareness of labor rights, low wages and manipulation of wages, and a lack of rights to basic needs (Rahim 2015).

To add, Bales (1999) states that there are five main differences between what we consider to be 'old' slavery and 'new' slavery:

1. There is no legal ownership of the bonded laborer – instead they are held captive under physical threats of violence or debt bondage.
2. The laborer is responsible for his/her/their own upkeep – meaning that no allowances or meals or accommodation is required of the employer, making it even more cost-effective for those in-charge.
3. If ever the laborer cannot participate in his/her/their work, there are no safety guidelines set in place to protect the worker – making them highly disposable to the employer.
4. Caste, religion, and ethnicity are no longer the main differentials between those employed and the employer. Instead, the main defining aspects of modern slavery is of the wealth, power, and status that they hold.
5. Slavery today produces very little profits as even though the cost of production is as low as it can possibly be, industries that utilize labor as their main means of production have lost its overall value in current times.

All of these characteristics are caused by both the increase in population sizes globally and how we have adapted these issues into new social perceptions. An important point that I would like to state is how modern-day slaves have become disposable to their employers because of how many impoverished communities there are presently that are in search of any job that pays (Bales, 1999). “Their value is so low that it has completely changed the way they are seen and used ... [making them] no longer major investments” (Bales, 1999).

Despite the overwhelming data that steers towards this being too big of a problem to conquer on an international level, this data proves otherwise: with “27 million slaves in the world” ... making it the “largest number of slaves to ever live at one point in human history, it is also the smallest fraction of the human population to ever be in slavery” (Bales, 2009). This informs us that despite its seemingly overwhelming numbers, the number of slaves today is still comparatively lesser than it was in the past. He (2009) adds that “a collection of policies, the investment of time, and resources will all be necessary to accomplish this worthy end”. Hopefully, larger corporations and governmental institutions begin to see the wrong in these inhumane practices and realize that through utilizing proper and fair working conditions, profits could be much higher.

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