



Moving beyond the isolated-victim paradigm typical of most modern slavery discourses, this paper takes into account the “voice” of both the bonded workers and the kiln owners in order to understand the social nature of debt bondage. I revisit comments from interviews and conversations collected in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2014 and 2015. Although the history of labour exploitation in these two countries deserves individual attention, my goal is to underline the transversal elements that are salient in both contexts. The crucial links and similarities between Afghan and Pakistani brick kilns are useful to pinpoint the bonding force of debt. Thus this paper focuses on how workers describe brick kiln labour and the role the dimension of “future” plays in their lives. Can work at the brick kiln be just a phase to attain a job, or does it stretch beyond a phase as the debtor/worker’s life is carried out?

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