Ibarz, Jordi (Universitat de Barcelona), *Recent trends in dockers history*

This work constitutes an initial approximation of the available bibliography about port workers published in the last twenty years. It is a provisional work elaborated as the first part of a study about the diffusion of scientific knowledge in the investigative field of dock workers history. Digitalization and internet-based distribution, as well as the existence of ever-more efficient tools for the recuperation of information have allowed for the viewing of historiographic traditions that were rarely highlighted in the previous period, beyond one’s own national context. The consideration of scientific production about the history of port workers demonstrates how some general characteristics exist in these studies.

In reference to the geographic setting, the majority of the works considered have a local character, referring to a single port. Even so, there are also a few more general studies referring, for example, the United Kingdom or those of the United States or France. Comparative studies are very scarce.

From the perspective of the discipline utilized, social history studies are very abundant. That said, there are studies undertaken from the perspective of the traditional history of the labor movement. Beyond the disciplines of history, there has been an incorporation of different analyses, like labor geography. Also, depending on the national traditions, as in Brazil, for example, the anthropological dimension is important in many studies.

Regarding the thematic dimension of the investigations, the majority continue to be studies referring to the organizational triad of work, unionism, and labor conflict. Conflict is understood almost exclusively as an analysis of strikes. These three aspects are often articulated around the discussion about technological change and modernization, referring, basically, to the spread of containerization. Many of these analyses refer to the consequences of modernization for port workers.

A new chronological frontier for historical analyses has appeared, this being the beginnings of the 1990s. This coincides with the new legal regulations and the changes in organization produced in the ports of different places around the world in these years.

Some aspects that had been sparsely considered in earlier stages now arise with force. This is the case of professional illnesses, well-centered on mortality caused by the effects of asbestos. The same is true for the analysis of the collective identity of port workers, with the prevalent use of masculinities as the most useful concept for consideration. The incorporation of studies referring to the ports of the so-called “global south” has made evident the importance of different forms of un-free labor in port manipulation. These themes do not exhaust the novelties, for which we should consider studies of specific groups of port workers, like boat workers or the study of female dockworkers.