

Slavery: A Brief History

This article has been condensed for this course.
For a full version see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Introduction

The origins of slavery are lost to human memory. It is sometimes hypothesized that at some moment it was decided that persons detained for a crime or as a result of warfare would be more useful if put to work in some way rather than if killed outright and discarded or eaten. But both if and when that first occurred is unknown.

PART I Slave-owning Societies

China

Slavery is known to have existed as early as the Shang dynasty (18th-12th century BC) in China. It has been studied thoroughly in ancient Han China (206 BC-AD 25), where perhaps 5 percent of the population was enslaved. Slavery continued to be a feature of Chinese society down to the 20th century. For most of that period it appears that slaves were generated in the same ways they were elsewhere, including capture in war, slave raiding, and the sale of insolvent debtors. In addition, the Chinese practiced self-sale into slavery, the sale of women and children (to satisfy debts or because the seller could not feed them), and the sale of the relatives of executed criminals. Finally, kidnapping seems to have produced a regular flow of slaves at some times. The go-between or middleman was an important figure in the sale of local people into slavery; he provided the distance that made such slaves into outsiders, for the purchasers did not know their origins. Chinese family boundaries were relatively permeable, and some owners established kin-like relations with their slaves; male slaves were appointed as heirs when no natural offspring existed. As was also the case in other slave-owning societies, slaves in China were often luxury consumption items who constituted a drain on the economy. The reasons China never developed into a slave society are many and complex, but certainly an abundance of non-slave labour at low prices was one of the major ones.

Korea

Korea had a very large slave population, ranging from a third to half of the entire population for most of the millennium between the Silla period and the mid-18th century. Most of the Korean slaves were indigenously generated. In spite of their numbers, slaves seem to have had little impact on other institutions, and thus the society can be categorized as a slave-owning one.

India

Slavery existed in ancient India, where it is recorded in the Sanskrit Laws of Manu of the 1st century BC. The institution was little documented until the British colonials in the 19th century made it an object of study because of their desire to abolish it. In 1841 there were an estimated 8,000,000 or 9,000,000 slaves in India, many of whom were agrestic or predial slaves, that is, slaves who were attached to the land they worked on but who nevertheless could be alienated from it. Malabar had the largest proportion of slaves, about 15 percent of the total population. The agrestic slaves initially were subjugated communities. The remainder of the slaves was recruited individually by purchase from dealers or parents or by self-sale of the starving, and they can be classified as household slaves. Slavery in Hindu India was complicated by the slave owners' ritual need to know the origins of their slaves, which explains why most of them were of indigenous origin. Although there were exceptions, slaves were owned primarily for prestige.

Other Asian Countries

Slavery was widely practiced in other areas of Asia as well. A quarter to a third of the population of some areas of Thailand and Burma were slaves in the 17th through the 19th centuries and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, respectively. But not enough is known about them to say that they definitely were slave societies. Other societies in the Philippines, Nepal, Malaya, Indonesia, and Japan are known to have had slavery from ancient until fairly recent times. The same was true among the various peoples inhabiting the regions of Central Asia: the peoples of Sogdiana, Khorezm, and other advanced civilizations; the Mongols, the Kalmyks, the Kazakhs; and the numerous Turkic peoples, most of whom converted to Islam.

The Pre-Columbian Americas

In the New World some of the best-documented slave-owning societies were the Klamath and Pawnee and the fishing societies, such as the Yurok, that lived along the coast from what is now Alaska to California. Life was easy in many of those societies, and slaves are known to have sometimes been consumption goods that were simply killed in potlatches. Other Amerindians, such as the Creek of Georgia, the Comanche of Texas, the Callinago of Dominica, the Tupinambá of Brazil, the Inca of the Andes, and the Tehuelche of Patagonia, also owned slaves. Among the Aztecs of Mexico, slavery generally seems to have been relatively mild. People got into the institution through self-sale and capture and could buy their way out relatively easily. Slaves were often used as porters in the absence of draft animals in Mesoamerica. The fate of other slaves was less pleasant: chattels purchased from the Mayans and others were sacrificed in massive numbers. Some of the sacrifices may have been eaten by the social elite.

Europe

In England about 10 percent of the population entered in the Domesday Book in 1086 were slaves, with the proportion reaching as much as 20 percent in some places. Slaves were also prominent in Scandinavia during the Viking era, AD 800-1050, when slaves for use at home and

for sale in the international slave markets were a major object of raids. Slaves also were present in significant numbers in Scandinavia both before and after the Viking era. Continental Europe-- France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Russia--all knew slavery. Russia was essentially founded as a by-product of slave raiding by the Vikings passing from Scandinavia to Byzantium in the 9th century, and slavery remained a major institution there until the early 1720s, when the state converted the household slaves into house serfs in order to put them on the tax rolls. House serfs were freed from their lords by an edict of Tsar Alexander II in 1861. Many scholars argue that the Soviets reinstated a form of state slavery in the Gulag camps that flourished until 1956.

The Middle East

Slavery was much in evidence in the Middle East from the beginning of recorded history. It was treated as a prominent institution in the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi of c. 1750 BC. Slaves were present in ancient Egypt and are known to have been murdered to accompany their deceased owners into the afterlife. It once was believed that slaves built the great pyramids, but contemporary scholarly opinion is that the pyramids were constructed by peasants when they were not occupied by agriculture. Slaves also are mentioned prominently in the Bible among the Hebrews in Palestine and their neighbours.

Islamic Empire

Slaves were owned in all Islamic societies, both sedentary and nomadic, ranging from Arabia in the centre to North Africa in the west and to what is now Pakistan and Indonesia in the east. Some Islamic states, such as the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Khanate, and the Sokoto caliphate, must be termed slave societies because slaves there were very important numerically as well as a focus of the polities' energies. (see also Index: Islamic world)

Africa

Slaves have been owned in black Africa throughout recorded history. In many areas there were large-scale slave societies, while in others there were slave-owning societies. Slavery was practiced everywhere even before the rise of Islam, and black slaves exported from Africa were widely traded throughout the Islamic world. Approximately 18,000,000 Africans were delivered into the Islamic trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean slave trades between 650 and 1905. In the second half of the 15th century Europeans began to trade along the west coast of Africa, and by 1867 between 7,000,000 and 10,000,000 Africans had been shipped as slaves to the New World. Although some areas of Africa were depleted by slave raiding, on balance the African population grew after the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade because of new food crops introduced from the New World, particularly manioc, corn (maize), and possibly peanuts (groundnuts).

The relationship between African and New World slavery was highly complementary. African slave owners demanded primarily women and children for labour and lineage incorporation and tended to kill males because they were troublesome and likely to flee. The transatlantic trade, on

the other hand, demanded primarily adult males for labour and thus saved from certain death many adult males who otherwise would have been slaughtered outright by their African captors. After the end of the transatlantic trade, a few African societies at the end of the 19th century put captured males to productive work as slaves, but this usually was not the case before that time.

PART II

Slave Societies

Athenians

The first known major slave society was that of Athens. In the early Archaic period the elite worked its estates with the labour of fellow citizens in bondage (often for debt). After the lawgiver Solon abolished citizen slavery about 594 BC, wealthy Athenians came to rely on enslaved peoples from outside Attica. The prolonged wars with the Persians and other peoples provided many slaves, but the majority of slaves were acquired through regular trade with non-Greek peoples around the Aegean. At the time of classical Athens (the 5th through the 3rd centuries BC) slaves constituted about a third of the population. A particularly noteworthy locus of slave employment was the Laurium silver mines, where private individuals could pick out a lode and put their slaves to mining it. As in all other slave societies, it was the profitability of slavery that determined its preeminence in Athens. (Also important were political conditions that made the gross exploitation of citizens impossible.) Slaves were responsible for the prosperity of Athens and the leisure of the aristocrats, who had time to create the high culture now considered the beginning of Western civilization. The existence of large-scale slavery was also responsible, it seems logical to believe, for the Athenians' thoughts on freedom that are considered a central part of the Western heritage. Athenian slave society was finally destroyed by Philip II of Macedonia at the battle of Chaeronea (338 BC), when, on the motion of Lycurgus, many (but not all) slaves were freed.

Romans

The next major slave society was Roman Italy between about the 2nd century BC and the 4th century AD. Initially, Rome was a polity consisting primarily of small farmers. But the process of creating the empire took them away from their farms for extended periods, and the prolonged wars of conquest in Spain and the eastern Mediterranean during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC created a great flood of captives. Nothing was more logical than to put the captives to work farming, especially the olives and grapes that created much of the prosperity of the late republic and the principate. Slaves and freedmen were responsible for much of the empire's commodity production, and in the early principate they ran its governmental bureaus as well. The conditions were right to put the captives to work: private ownership of land; developed commodity production and markets; a perceived shortage of internal labour supply; and an appropriate moral, political, and legal climate. Roughly 30 percent of the population was enslaved. Roman slave society ended as the slaves were legally converted into coloni, or serfs, and the lands

became populated and the frontiers so remote that finding great numbers of outsider slaves was increasingly difficult. (see also Index: Roman Republic and Empire)

Crimea

The Crimean Tatar society was based on raiding the neighbouring Slavic and Caucasian sedentary societies and selling the captives into the slave markets of Eurasia. Approximately 75 percent of the Crimean population consisted of slaves or freedmen, and much of the free population was highly predatory, engaged either in the gathering of slaves or in the selling of them. It is known that for every slave the Crimeans sold in the market, they killed outright several other people during their raids, and a couple more died on the way to the slave market. The reasons for the transition of the Crimean Khanate from a slave-owning society to a slave society have not been studied in detail. Probable reasons, however, include the combination of high demand for slaves throughout the Islamic world, the defenselessness of the sedentary agricultural Slavs and others, and the existence of a relatively poor class of Crimean horsemen, who were led by a predatory elite that got rich by slave raiding. Crimean Tatar slave raids into Muscovy were greatly curtailed by the building of a series of walls along the frontier in the years 1636-53 and ultimately by the liquidation of the khanate in 1783.

Islamic States

Some lesser Islamic slave societies are also of interest. One is the Baghdad caliphate founded in the 7th and lasting through the 10th century. Many tens of thousands of military captives were imported from Sogdiana, Khazaria, and other Central Asian locales. In the 9th and 10th centuries several tens of thousands of black Zanj slaves were imported from Zanzibar to Lower Iraq, where they constituted more than half the total population and were put to work to clear saline lands for irrigation and to cultivate sugar. More long-term was the slavery practiced in the Crimean Khanate between roughly 1475 and its liquidation by the Russian empress Catherine the Great in 1783.

Turkey

It is probable that the Ottoman Empire, and especially its centre in Turkey, should be termed a slave society. Slaves from both the white Slavic north and the black African south flowed into Turkish cities for half a millennium after the Turks seized control of much of the Balkans in the 14th century. The proportion of the population that was slave ranged from about one-fifth in Istanbul, the capital, to much less in remoter provincial areas. Perhaps only people such as the slave owners of the circum-Caribbean sugar islands and the American South were as preoccupied with slaves as were the Ottomans. Slaves in the Ottoman Empire served in various capacities. They were janissary soldiers (see below), and they ran the empire, manned its ships, generated much of its handicraft product, and served as domestic servants and in harems. Contemporaries believed that the absolute power of the ruler was based on his military and administrative slaves. The Tanzimat enlightenment movement of the mid-19th century initiated

the abolition of slavery; by the 1890s only a few slaves were being smuggled illegally into the empire, and the slave population was greatly reduced.

East Africa

Other prominent Islamic slave societies were on the east coast of Africa in the 19th century. The Arab-Swahili slave systems have been well-studied, and it is known that, depending on the date, 65 to 90 percent of the population of Zanzibar was enslaved. Close to 90 percent of the population on the Kenya coast was also enslaved, and in Madagascar half the population was enslaved. It may be assumed that similar situations prevailed elsewhere in the vicinity and also earlier, but studies to verify the proposition have not been undertaken. Another notable Islamic slave society was that of the Sokoto caliphate formed by Hausas in sub-Saharan Africa (northern Nigeria and Cameroon) in the 19th century. At least half the population was enslaved. That was only the most notable of the Fulani jihad states of the western and central Sudan, where between 1750 and 1900 from one- to two-thirds of the entire population consisted of slaves. In Islamic Ghana, between 1076 and 1600, about a third of the population were slaves. The same was true among other early states of the western Sudan, including Mali (1200-1500), Segou (1720-1861), and Songhai (1464-1720).

West Africa

It should be noted that slavery was prominent in Ghana and Mali, and presumably elsewhere in Africa in areas for which information is not available, long before the beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade. The population of the notorious slave-trading state of the central Sudan, Ouidah (Whydah), was half-slave in the 19th century. It was about a third in Kanem (1600-1800) and perhaps 40 percent in Bornu (1580-1890). Most slaves probably were acquired by raiding neighbouring peoples, but others entered slavery because of criminal convictions or defaulting on debts (often not their own); subsequently, many of those people were sold into the international slave trade. After the limiting and then abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, a number of these African societies put slaves to work in activities such as mining gold and raising peanuts, coconuts (palm oil), sesame, and millet for the market. (see also Index: Western Africa, Fulani Empire) Among some of the various Islamic Berber Tuareg peoples of the Sahara and Sahel, slavery persisted at least until 1975. The proportions of slaves ranged from around 15 percent among the Adrar to perhaps 75 percent among the Gurma. In Senegambia, between 1300 and 1900, about a third of the population consisted of slaves. In Sierra Leone in the 19th century close to half the population was enslaved. In the Vai Paramount chiefdoms in the 19th century as much as three-quarters of the population consisted of slaves. Among the Ashanti and Yoruba a third were enslaved. In the 19th century over half the population consisted of slaves among the Duala of the Cameroon, the Ibo and other peoples of the lower Niger, the Kongo, and the Kasanje kingdom and Chokwe of Angola.

PART III

Slavery in the Americas

Caribbean Region

The best-known slave societies were those of the circum-Caribbean world. Slave imports to the islands of the Caribbean began in the early 16th century. Initially the islands often were settled as well by numerous indentured labourers and other Europeans, but following the triumph after 1645 of the sugar revolution (initially undertaken because superior Virginia tobacco had left the Barbadian planters with nothing to sell) and after the nature of the disease climate became known to Europeans, they came to be inhabited almost exclusively by imported African slaves. In time the estate owners moved to England, and the sugar plantations were managed by sometimes unstable and unsavoury Europeans who, with the aid of black overseers and drivers, controlled masses of slaves. About two-thirds of all slaves shipped across the Atlantic ended up in sugar colonies. By 1680 in Barbados the average plantation had about 60 slaves, and in Jamaica in 1832 about 150. The sugar plantations were among the contemporary world's largest and most profitable enterprises, paying about 10 percent on invested capital and on some occasions, such as in Barbados in the 1650s, as much as 40 to 50 percent.

The proportions of slaves on the islands ranged from more than a third in Cuba, which went into the sugar and gang-labour business on a large scale only after the local planters had gained control in 1789, to 90 percent and more on Jamaica in 1730, Antigua in 1775, and Grenada up to 1834. (see also Index: West Indies) Slaves were of varying importance in Mesoamerica and on the South American continent. Initially slaves were imported because of a labour shortage, aggravated by the high death rate of the indigenous population after the introduction of European diseases in the early 16th century. They were brought in at first to mine gold, and they were shifted to silver mining or simply let go when gold was exhausted in the mid-16th century. In Brazil, where sugar had been tried even before its planting in the Caribbean, the coffee bush was imported from Arabia or Ethiopia via Indonesia, and it had an impact similar to that of sugar in the Caribbean. Around 1800 about half the population of Brazil consisted of slaves, but that percentage declined to about 33 percent in 1850 and to 15 percent after the shutting off of imports around 1850 combined with free immigration to raise the proportion of Europeans. In some parts of Brazil, such as Pernambuco, some two-thirds of the population consisted of Africans and their offspring.

U.S. South

The final circum-Caribbean slave society was what became the southern United States. Slaves first were brought to Virginia in 1619. Subsequently, Africans were transshipped to North America from the Caribbean in increasing numbers. Initially, however, the English relied for their dependent labour primarily on indentured servants from the mother country. But in the two decades of the 1660s and 1670s the laws of slave ownership were clarified (for example, Africans who converted to Christianity did no longer have to be manumitted), and the price of servants may have increased because of rising wage rates in prospering England; soon thereafter African

slaves replaced English indentured labourers. Tobacco initially was the profitable crop that occupied most slaves in the Chesapeake. The invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 changed the situation, and thereafter cotton culture created a huge demand for slaves, especially after the opening of the New South (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas). By 1850 nearly two-thirds of the plantation slaves were engaged in the production of cotton. Cotton could be grown profitably on smaller plots than could sugar, with the result that in 1860 the average cotton plantation had only about 35 slaves, not all of whom produced cotton.

During the reign of "King Cotton," about 40 percent of the Southern population consisted of black slaves; the percentage of slaves rose as high as 64 percent in South Carolina in 1720 and 55 percent in Mississippi in 1810 and 1860. More than 36 percent of all the New World slaves in 1825 were in the southern United States. Like Rome and the Sokoto caliphate, the South was totally transformed by the presence of slavery. Slavery generated profits comparable to those from other investments and was only ended as a consequence of the War Between the States.

PART IV

The International Slave Trade

Eastern Europe

Organized commerce began in the Neolithic Period, and it may be assumed that slaves were not far behind high-value items such as amber and salt in becoming commodities. Even among relatively simple peoples one can trace the international slave trade. Thus such a trade was going on among the peoples of Siberia before the arrival of the Russians in the 16th and 17th centuries. The slaves so traded were neighbouring people captured in warfare, who were then shipped to distant points where they would be without kin and whence they would be unlikely to flee. Similar commerce in slaves occurred on nearly all continents and provided the bulk of household slaves throughout the world. The international slave trades that provided much of the chattel for the slave societies flowed out of the great "population reservoirs." Two such reservoirs were the Slavs and contiguous agriculturalist Iranians from antiquity to the 19th century and the sub-Saharan Africans from around the beginning of the Christian Era to the middle of the 20th century. A third such reservoir probably was the Germanic, Celtic, and Romance peoples who lived north of the Roman Republic and Empire and who half a millennium later became the victims of the Vikings' slave raids.

The dynamics of these raids were as follows: A large demand for slave labour prompted neighbouring peoples (typically migratory or nomadic in habit) to prey on the sedentary agriculturalists living in the reservoir. The raiders developed techniques, of which surprise was perhaps the major one, that put the settled peoples at a disadvantage, for they never knew when and where the raiders might strike. Populations in the reservoir could be completely depleted, as happened to the East Slavs living in the steppe south of the Oka and between the Volga and the Dnepr rivers from 1240 to the 1590s, or they could migrate half a continent away to escape the slave raiders, as did the Ndembu in Africa. Ruthenians, frontier Poles, Caucasians, and numerous

African peoples were sorely depleted by slave raids. One alternative was to fight back, as did the Muscovite Russians and the Baya of Adamawa (now northern Cameroon in West Africa), and the consequence in both instances was the creation of an authoritarian garrison state.

The international slave trades developed into elaborate networks. For example, in the 9th and 10th centuries Vikings and Russian merchants took East Slavic slaves into the Baltic. They were then gathered in Denmark for further transshipment and sold to Jewish and Arabic slave traders, who took them to Verdun and León. There some of the males were castrated. From those places the slaves were sold to harems throughout Moorish Spain and North Africa. In the 9th century the Baghdad caliphate got slaves from western Europe via Marseille, Venice, and Prague; Slavic and Turkic slaves from eastern Europe and Central Asia via Derbent, Itil, Khorezm, and Samarkand; and African slaves via Mombasa, Zanzibar, the Sudan, and the Sahara. The Mongols in the 13th century brought their slaves first to Karakorum, whence they were sold throughout Asia, and then later to Sarai on the Lower Volga, whence they were retailed throughout much of Eurasia. Following the breakup of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Tatars took their chattel to Kefe (Feodosiya) in the Crimea, whence it was transported across the Black Sea and sold throughout the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere.

Africa

Arabs developed similar supply networks out of black Africa across the Sahara, across the Red Sea (from Ethiopia and Somalia), and out of East Africa, which supplied the Islamic world and the Indian Ocean region with human chattel. Beginning around 1500 a similar process occurred along the coast of West Africa to supply the transatlantic slave trade. The Africans were captured by other Africans in raids and then transported to the coast; one may assume that the number of casualties of African slave raiding was nearly as high as that of Crimean Tatar slave raiding. The captives, primarily adult males, were assembled on the coast by African rulers and kept in holding pens until wholesaled to European ship captains who sailed up and down the coast looking for slave cargo. (As stated above, the women and children often were not sent to the coast for export but were kept by the Africans themselves, often for incorporation into their lineages.) African rulers, who did not allow the Europeans to move inland, often conducted their wholesale business on the coast, such as at Ouidah in Dahomey (now Benin). (Because of the disease climate the Europeans also were reluctant, even unable, to move inland until the mid-19th century.) But African rulers did everything they could to encourage the European sea captains to come to their port.

North America and the Caribbean

Once a ship was loaded, the trip, known as "the Middle Passage," usually to Brazil or an island in the Caribbean, was a matter of a few weeks to several months. Between 1500 and the end of the 19th century the time of the voyage diminished considerably. That change was important, because death rates, which ranged from around 10 to more than 20 percent on the Middle Passage, were directly proportional to the length of the voyage. The ship captains had every interest in the health of their cargo, for they were paid only for slaves delivered alive. The death rates among the European captains and crew engaged in the slave trade were at least as high as

those among their cargo on the Middle Passage. Of the slave-ship crews that embarked from Liverpool in 1787, less than half returned alive. (see also Index: United Kingdom) Arriving in Brazil or the Caribbean islands, the slaves were sold at auction.

The slave auctions were elaborate markets in which the prices of the slaves were determined. The auctions told the captains and their superiors what kind of cargo was in demand, usually adult males. Credit almost always was part of the transaction, and inability to collect was one of the major reasons companies went bankrupt. After the auction the slave was delivered to the new owner, who then put him to work. That also began the period of "seasoning" for the slave, the period of about a year or so when he either succumbed to the disease environment of the New World or survived it. Many slaves landed on the North American mainland before the early 18th century had already survived the seasoning process in the Caribbean. It can be assumed that the other international slave trades were comparable in many respects to the transatlantic one, but they have not been adequately studied.

PART V

Ways of Ending Slavery

Antiquity

Slavery came to an end in numerous ways. Household slavery ended because of an exhaustion of supplies, because slavery evolved into some other system of dependent labour, because it withered away, or because it was formally abolished. Productive slavery came to an end for the additional reasons that it ceased to be profitable or that it was abolished by warfare or the threat of warfare. Throughout history there have been people who in one way or another believed that slavery was not a good or natural condition. Jean Bodin (1530-96), the French founder of antislavery thought, for example, condemned the institution as immoral and counterproductive and advocated that no group of men should be excluded from the body politic. Nevertheless, remarkably few people found the institution of slavery to be unnatural or immoral until the second half of the 18th century. Until that time Christians commonly thought of sin as a kind of slavery rather than slavery itself as a sin. When concern was expressed for slaves, it was for their good care, not for their unfree status.

Frequently, when slavery passed from the scene, it did so with little fanfare. In most societies, such as ancient Babylonia, Israel, Egypt, or Athens, the institution of slavery had little or no connection with the society's rise or demise. In Rome, on the other hand, slavery began to yield to tenancy and the antecedents of serfdom before the fall of the empire, as the diminishing supply of slaves and the rise of their price coincided with the disintegration of the olive oil- and wine-producing plantations of southern Italy and loss of markets in the face of competition from Spain, Gaul, and North Africa. (This standard interpretation has been challenged, however.) In the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) serfdom was the predominant form of dependent labour, and slavery was definitely secondary. Manumitting slaves became much easier, according to the laws, and the *Ecloga* and the *Procheiron Nomos* (see below) prescribed that the slaves of persons who died without testament had to be freed. Throughout most of Europe household slavery persisted well into the late Middle Ages and even later and only gradually died out. Slavic

slaves were plentiful, for example, in the Italian city-states as late as the 14th century, and African slaves could be found in Spain and Portugal in the 16th century. Serfdom replaced slavery in medieval Germany.

Britain

By the end of the Middle Ages slavery no longer existed in England, and the famous Cartwright decision of the reign of Elizabeth I (1569) held that "England was too pure an air for slaves to breathe in." Slavery persisted longer in eastern Europe. In Poland it was replaced by the second enserfment; the sale and purchase of slaves were forbidden in the 15th century. A similar process occurred in Lithuania, where slavery was formally abolished in 1588. In Russia it came to an end with the first enserfment: agricultural slaves were formally converted into serfs in 1679, and household slaves were converted into house serfs in 1723. In the Caucasus and in Central Asia slavery persisted until the second half of the 19th century. As the Russian Empire grew and its hegemony spread, it adopted the tendency of 19th-century imperialist powers to enforce abolition when embarking upon colonization. Thus the conquest of the Caucasus led to the abolition of slavery by the 1860s and the conquest in Central Asia of the Islamic khanates of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva by the 1870s.

The re-exportation of slaves from England was challenged by a group of humanitarians led by Granville Sharpe. Chief Justice Mansfield ruled in 1772 that James Somerset, a fugitive slave from Virginia, could not be forcibly returned to the colonies by his master. The fate of slavery in most of the rest of the world depended on the British abolition movement, which was initiated by the English Quakers in 1783 when they presented the first important antislavery petition to Parliament. They were following the Pennsylvania Quakers, who had voiced opposition to slavery in 1688. The Vermont constitution of 1777 was the first document in the United States to abolish slavery. Another sign of the spread of antislavery feeling was the declaration in the U.S. Constitution that the importation of slaves could be forbidden after 20 years (in 1808). An act of March 2, 1807, forbade trading in slaves with Africa. Well before the rise of cotton some people hoped that natural processes combined with a prohibition on infusions would put an end to slavery. (see also Index: Constitution of the United States of America)

In 1807 the British abolished the slave trade with their colonies. In the Caribbean, slavery was abolished by British Parliamentary fiat, effective July 31, 1834, when 776,000 slaves in the British plantation colonies were freed. The British imperial emancipation can be attributed to the growing power of the philanthropic movement and a double switch in the focus of the British Empire, geographically from west (the Caribbean) to east (India) and economically from protectionism to laissez-faire. The British move in 1807 to abolish the slave trade had an immediate impact on the juntas struggling for independence in Spanish America. The slave trade was declared illegal in Venezuela and Mexico in 1810, in Chile in 1811, and in Argentina in 1812. In 1817 Spain signed a treaty with Britain agreeing to abolish the slave trade in 1820, but the trade continued to the remaining Spanish colonies until 1880. Chile freed its black slaves in 1823; Mexico abolished slavery in 1829, and Peru in 1854.

North America

The American antislavery movement, linked to the "Second Great Awakening," succeeded in arousing immense hostility between the non-slave North, where most states had voluntarily abolished slavery by 1804, and the slaveholding South, where the "peculiar institution" became even further entrenched because of the spread of cotton cultivation. By the 1850s, however, the old abolition movement had flagged. It took political developments and forces (especially the emergence of the Free-Soil movement and the conflict over the expansion of slavery), the South's secession, the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, to put slavery on the road to extinction in the United States. The proclamation was confirmed by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which put an end to slavery. Puerto Rico abolished slavery (with provisions for periods of apprenticeship) in 1873 and Cuba in 1880. Brazil was the last Western Hemisphere nation to abolish slavery.

The British antislavery movement of the 1810s had almost put an end to the institution, but a thriving world market for coffee revitalized it in the 1820s. In 1850 Britain declared that a squadron would enter Brazilian territorial waters to seize vessels carrying slaves, and later that year Brazil responded by equating the slave trade with piracy. On May 13, 1888, all Brazilian slaves were manumitted. Initially there was some opposition by the coffee growers, but their resistance crumbled immediately. The European colonization movement of the second half of the 19th century put an end to slavery in many parts of Africa, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. The abolition of slavery in both Hindu and Muslim India by Act V of 1843 meant only that the British courts would not enforce claims to a slave, but the Penal Code of 1861 made holding a slave a crime.

Having seen to the abolition of slavery in most of Latin America and South Asia, the British turned their attention back to Africa. They moved onto the continent, took control of those governments that were thriving on slavery, and attempted to abolish the institution. Lagos was annexed in 1861, and all of Nigeria followed. In the 1870s British missionaries moved into Malawi, the place of origin of the Indian Ocean Islamic slave trade, in an attempt to interdict it at its very source. In 1890 Zanzibar was made a British protectorate after the sultan's authority had been destroyed by the struggle over the slave trade. In Dahomey the French abolition of slavery resulted in the cessation of ceremonial human sacrifice. The Imperial government formally abolished slavery in China in 1906, and the law became effective on Jan. 31, 1910, when all adult slaves were converted into hired labourers and the young were freed upon reaching age 25. Slavery was legally abolished in Korea in the Gap-o reform of 1894 but remained extant in reality until 1930.

Some parts of Africa and much of the Islamic world retained slavery at the end of World War I. For this reason the League of Nations and later the United Nations took the final extinction of slavery to be one of their obligations. The league had considerable success in Africa, with the assistance of the colonial powers, and by the late 1930s slavery was abolished in Liberia and Ethiopia. After World War II the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights proclaimed the immorality and the illegality of slavery. Slavery was abolished in most Islamic countries, although it persisted in Saudi Arabia into the 1960s. It finally was made illegal in the Arabian Peninsula in 1962. It is probable that slavery no longer exists as a legal phenomenon recognized by a political authority or government any place in the world.

PART VI

Attitudes Toward Slavery: The Matter of Race

Slaves in most societies were despised. This is best seen in the homology for slaves. The favourite homology was the woman or wife, then the minor child or an animal. Other terms for slaves were the apprentice, the pauper, the harlot, the felon, the actor, and the complex image of the Southern "Sambo" or Caribbean "Quashee." Throughout history slaves have often been considered to be stupid, uneducable, childlike, lazy, untruthful, untrustworthy, prone to drunkenness, idle, boorish, lascivious, licentious, and cowardly. In China slaves were considered to be "mean" and "base"; in India they were fed table scraps. The attitudes of the world's great religions toward slavery are of special interest.

The Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition has been the most tolerant of slavery. Judaic and Islamic canonical texts refer frequently to slavery and treat it as a natural condition that might befall anyone. But they view it as a condition that should be gotten over quickly. Islamic practice was based on the assumption that the outsider rapidly became an insider and consequently had to be manumitted after six years. New Testament Christianity, on the other hand, had no prescriptions that slaves be manumitted. Canon law sanctioned slavery. This was attributable at least partially to Christianity's primary focus on spiritual values and salvation after death rather than on temporal conditions and the present life. Under such a regime it mattered little whether someone was a slave or a free person while living on earth. A major issue in the topic of attitudes toward slavery is that of race.

Although slaves were usually outsiders and often despised, there nevertheless were different kinds of outsiders and different degrees of contempt. Studies have shown that race made a difference. In Rome, where most owners and slaves were white, manumission was frequent. In Africa, where most owners and slaves were black, lineage incorporation was the primary purpose of slavery, and in most societies slaves were allowed to participate in many aspects of social life. In the American South, however, where the owners were of northern European stock and the slaves of African stock, the degree of social isolation of and contempt for slaves was extraordinary. Southern slaves were forbidden to engage in occupations that might demonstrate their capacities, intermarriage almost never occurred, and manumission was almost unheard of as the reigning publicists proclaimed ever more loudly that blacks lacked any capacity to maintain themselves as free individuals. (see also Index: racism)

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