

# GREEK AND ROMAN SLAVERY

THOMAS WIEDEMANN



London and New York

First published 1981 by Croom Helm Ltd

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 0-203-35899-6 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-37575-0 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-02972-4 (Print Edition)

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## PREFACE

In recent years, the study of slavery amongst the Greeks and Romans has increased considerably. Students, and their teachers, have become generally more interested in social and economic questions than in political and military history of the traditional kind. In North America, comparisons and contrasts between the roles and conditions of slaves in the ancient Mediterranean world and in the West Indies and United States have underlain many studies of ancient slavery since the nineteenth century. Another intellectual tradition going back to nineteenth-century presuppositions has also directed attention towards ancient slavery: Marx's analysis of slave-holding as one of the characteristic types of organising an economy (or, in the debased 'vulgar-Marxist' form, one of the economic stages through which all human societies inevitably have to pass). Many of the studies on ancient slavery undertaken in Europe since the war have been initiated either by Marxist scholars, or in response to the questions posed by them. Scholars are agreed that many particular historical problems associated with slavery have yet to be solved before a comprehensive 'account' of Greek and Roman slavery can be written—and that such an analysis will effectively have to be an account of ancient social and economic patterns as a whole.

Simply because slavery was something which affected virtually every aspect of society, ancient references to it are unsystematic and occur in a wide range of sources of different kinds, epigraphical as well as literary. No selection of such sources has hitherto been published, even in the original languages; and it is not always easy for readers interested in social and economic history who do not know Latin and Greek to locate the texts and inscriptions to which books and articles about slavery appeal as their evidence. This selection is intended primarily to assist such readers. It is not intended as a substitute for a systematic treatment of the subject—something altogether more ambitious—and it is assumed that readers will be using it in combination with other books on the subject, or within the framework provided by a school or university course. Hence only a minimal attempt is made to introduce the reader to even the most basic theories about how ancient social and economic institutions functioned, or to explain different interpretations of why slavery was so widespread in Greece and Rome and what roles it performed. Some

users would no doubt have preferred more detailed introductions to the passages selected; but on consideration it was thought better that a non-classicist reader should have to turn to a separate reference book (such as the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*) for explanations of names and events with which he might be unfamiliar, than that the amount of original material here presented should have had to be restricted yet more. The selection is limited enough as it is, and many readers will inevitably feel disappointed that some passages which they would consider crucial are omitted. Limitations of space have been keenly felt: perhaps epigraphical and papyrus evidence has suffered proportionately more than it should. But it is in the nature of a selection that a great deal of material has to be left out. References are made to parallel passages in Lewis and Reinhold's useful source book, *Roman Civilization*, and in Austin and Vidal-Naquet's stimulating *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece*. Except where absolutely necessary, I have avoided duplicating material provided in these selections.

The omission of many illuminating passages from drama and poetry is less easy to defend. Rather than take passages out of their dramatic context (which would generally have required a detailed commentary), I have thought it better to omit such ambiguous material altogether; the hope is that when readers find a reference to such passages in any of the books or articles they are using, they will wish to look up the whole of the poem or play in question. This particularly applies to comedy, both Greek (especially Menander) and Roman (Plautus and Terence)—full of allusions to the behaviour and treatment of slaves which can be considered only in their context. Homer, too, will be conspicuous by his absence; here the defence is that, however we understand the system of slavery in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, this is not the chattel slavery of classical Athens. The assumption has been that most users will be interested primarily in slavery as it appears in the classical periods of fifth and fourth century Athens and of Rome in the first centuries BC and AD. As with other institutions, there were very different forms of slavery in other times and places in antiquity; and not just the Homeric period, but Graeco-Roman Egypt and the late Roman colonate are not dealt with here.

Of course even in the two 'classical' periods there will have been major differences in the way slavery was practised in each particular Greek *polis* and Italian municipality—indeed, no doubt each individual household was unique. But a social institution like slavery does not consist merely of a series of individual cases occurring over historical time: it is a set of ideas in men's minds. The arrangement of material by themes is intended to bring out the ways in which Greeks and Romans had similar (and occasionally different) perceptions of what slavery meant—many of them naturally shared by other societies which practised slavery. It is hoped that readers who prefer historical narratives to be in chronological sequence, and believe that enough evidence exists for a diachronic picture of slavery in the ancient world, will nevertheless be able to make some use of this selection with the help of the indices.

A word of explanation may also be needed regarding the English transliteration of Greek personal names and place names. The problem is well known: in the English cultural tradition, ancient Greek names have been rendered in the form of transliterations made by the Romans. There seems to be no reason why these distortions have to be maintained in modern English—after all, transliterations of contemporary Greek names are not made via Latin; and the French and German conventions for classical names are quite different. On the other hand, Latinised versions of Greek names have become so familiar that many of them are accepted as English: this is particularly so for place names. I have therefore refrained from spelling Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as Sokrates, Platon and Aristoteles, but have given most Greek names in a form approximating to the Greek alphabet. (Where names which are clearly Roman occur in a Greek literary text, I have generally given them in a Latinised form.) With place names I have been even less consistent; in order to avoid confusion, all but the least significant places are given in the forms in which they are most frequently referred to in English (at least by historians); most of these are Latinised, and many are given in modern (French, Italian etc.) forms. The objective has been to preserve the ‘flavour’ of the Greek, but not at the expense of confusing the reader.

A similar principle lies behind the rendering of certain Greek words like *doulos* and *oiket s*; generally both have been translated ‘slave’. In passages where the author may conceivably have intended an important distinction (principally in Athenaeus, No. 80), *oiket s* is given as ‘house-slave’ or some similar phrase, or in the last resort transliterated, in order to make the distinction plain.

The translations are all my own; to assist readers who wish to look up the wider context of these passages, an Index of Passages Cited is provided, with references to where the original text may be found, and to the most accessible modern English or French translations (which may be rather more readable than the literal versions here offered). It is to be hoped that there will not be too many occasions on which readers will find that a particular reference has to be checked against its context for the full significance to become clear, but sometimes this will be inevitable—Aristotle’s analysis, for instance (No. 2), can only be fully understood in the context of his ethics as a whole.

It would be impossible for me to mention by name all the friends and teachers in London, Oxford and Bristol as well as other parts of Europe, who over recent years have been prepared to discuss social and cultural history with me, and who have encouraged me in the preparation of this book. Nevertheless, I must make explicit my gratitude to Professor Dr Joseph Vogt—not just for his advice and assistance but also for the kindness and hospitality he has shown to me in Tübingen. Professor Peter Brunt of Oxford and Professor Sir Moses Finley of Cambridge have given helpful advice at various stages in the preparation of this selection. Dr Peter Parsons was kind enough to answer some questions regarding papyrus evidence. I must thank Dr Oswyn

Murray for first arousing my interest in this subject. Jean Bees kindly prepared the maps, Hilary Betts helped with the typing, and Mary Sheahan with proof-reading. Richard Sheahan gave constant help and encouragement.

T.E.J.W. Bristol

# ABBREVIATIONS

AVN	M.M.Austin and P.Vidal-Naquet, <i>Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction</i> (London, 1977); passages are cited by number.
Bruns	C.G.Bruns, <i>Fontes iuris Romani antiqui</i> , 7th edn (Gradenwitz, 1909); passages cited by number.
<i>CIL</i>	T.Mommsen <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1863–).
<i>CTh.</i>	<i>Code of Theodosius</i> .
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (Berlin, 1873–).
<i>ILS</i>	H.Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> (Berlin, 1892–1916).
L&R	N.Lewis and M.Reinhold, <i>Roman Civilization</i> (two vols., New York, 1966); passages cited by number.
<i>PG</i>	Migne, <i>Patrologia, series Graeca</i> (Paris, 1857–).
<i>PL</i>	Migne, <i>Patrologia, series Latina</i> (Paris, 1844–).
Schwyzler	E.Schwyzler, <i>Dialectorum Graecarum Exempla Epigraphica Potiora</i> (Leipzig, 1923).
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i> (Cologne).

Square brackets [ ] represent an editorial comment, or a restoration of a lacuna in the text.

A crux † represents that the original Greek or Latin text is corrupt or uncertain at this point.

Numbers in **bold type** refer to excerpts included in this book.

# WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND CURRENCY

Attic measures:

<i>talent (talanton)</i>	=60 minae	26.196 kg or 57.8 lb
mina ( <i>mna</i> )	=100 drachmae	436.6 gr (just under 1 lb)
statèr	=2 drachmae	8.73 gr
drachma ( <i>drakhme</i> )	=6 obols	4.36 gr
obol ( <i>obolos</i> )		0.73 gr

The stade (*stadion*) is equivalent to 178.6 m (approx. 1/9 mile)

Roman measures:

*libra* (pound)=12 *unciae* 327.5 gr (11.5 oz)

*uncia* (ounce)=6 *denarii* 213 gr (0.963 oz)

*denarius* ('ten-As-piece')=4 Sesterces originally 4.55 gr; during period from c. 200 BC to AD 64, 1/84 lb or 3.98 gr; by the late 2nd century AD, it had fallen to 2.3 gr

*sestertius* ('HS', ie. two-and-a-half Asses)

As originally 10, later 16, to the *denarius*

Gold coins:

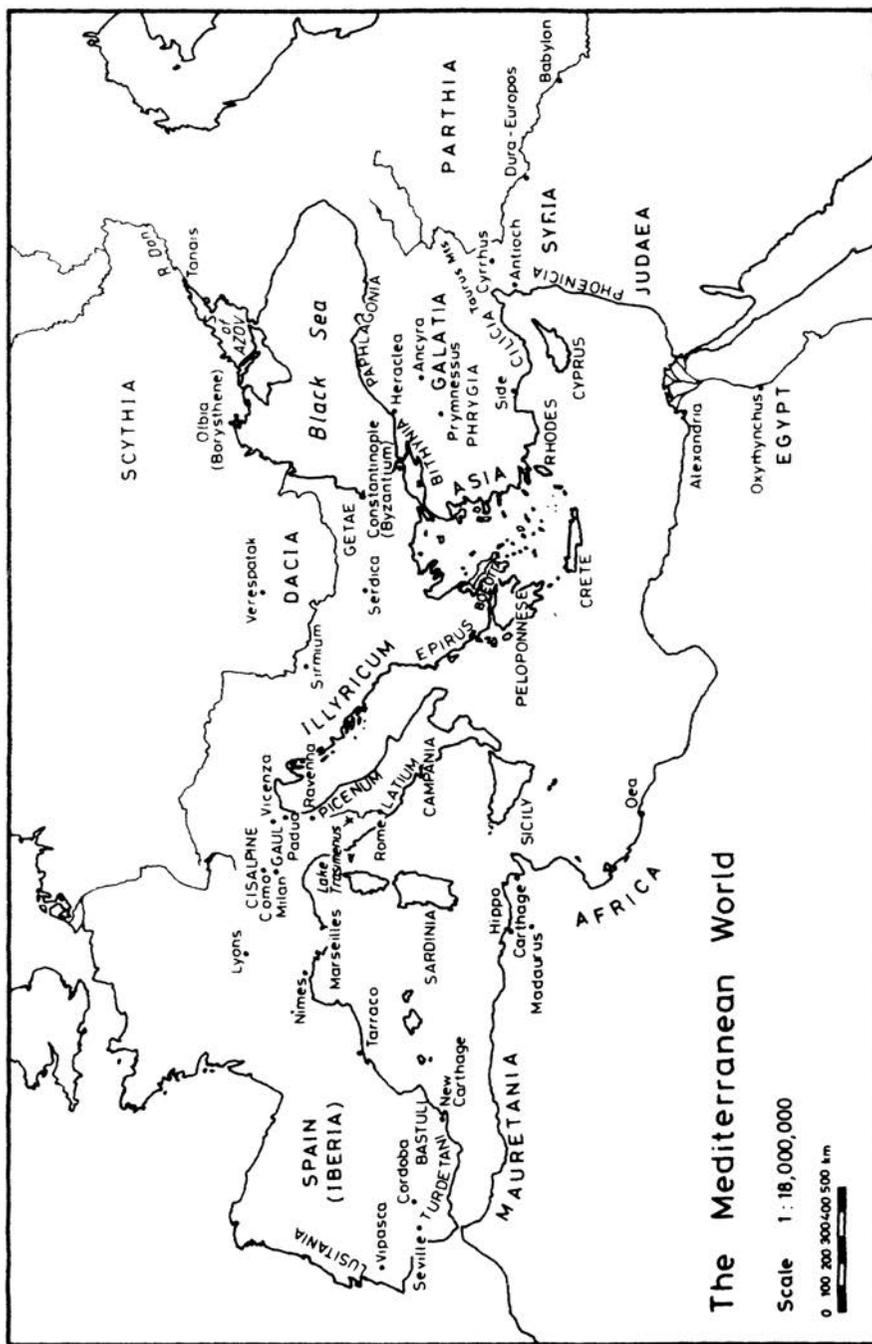
*aureus*=25 *denarii*; from time of Caesar, 1/40 lb (8.19 gr)

*solidus* from the time of Constantine, 1/72 lb (4.55 gr)

The *modius* is equivalent to 8.74 litres (approx. 2 gallons or 6.5 kg wheat).

The *iugerum* is equivalent to 0.25 hectares (2,523.3m<sup>2</sup>, 5/8 acres).





## The Mediterranean World

Scale 1 : 18,000,000



# INTRODUCTORY OUTLINE

Societies which formally recognise the differences between their powerful and their weaker members have a variety of institutions which try to regulate and control the ways in which the good things in life are abstracted from the latter and allocated to the former to consume or in turn redistribute as they please: forced labour, indentures, apprenticeship, rent, taxes, gifts, the ‘free’ market—not to mention the relationships between husband and wife and parents and children. Slavery is an accepted institution in many (but by no means all) preindustrial societies, and may fulfil a wide variety of different social and economic roles. But wherever it occurs, it is conceived of as being at the extreme end of this spectrum of unequal relationships. A slave, like a son, may normally be called a ‘boy’ (*pais, puer*), but he does not have certain, defined obligations balanced by reciprocal rights, as a son or apprentice has, or expects in due course to obtain. Instead his whole person is absolutely under the control of another; he is another’s property, part of the household unit to which his owner belongs (the owner may not be the head of that household, but a wife, son or even another slave).

Enormous emphasis is placed on slavery as the key principle of social organisation in Rome (1) and Greece—by which is primarily meant Athens, not only because much of the literary and epigraphical evidence relates to Attica, but also because that was where intellectuals codified a set of ideas which influenced educated Greek-speakers everywhere. Greek philosophers (2), because of their tendency to organise ideas in terms of pairs of mutually exclusive polar opposites, and Greek (3) and Roman (4–11) legal texts, leave us with the impression that slavery was an essential division of the household (*oikos, domus*), and that other bonds (excepting perhaps those of citizenship and kinship) and forms of dependence and economic exploitation were comparatively insignificant, at least in the classical period. At Rome in particular—because of the extent to which professional jurists felt it necessary to define and demarcate the rights and obligations of each status group—slavery is clearly presented as a state of absolute subjection. The slave has no kin, he cannot assume the rights and obligations of marriage; his very identity is imposed by the owner who gives him his name (12, 13). And conversely Roman law guaranteed the citizen’s status to such an extent (14) that that status

could be forfeited only by legally recognised processes: capture in war, or when a free man sold himself as a slave in order to defraud an unsuspecting buyer (*CTh.* 4, 8.6).

The uniformity of rightlessness ascribed to all slaves by legal codes of course masks the wide range of different social and economic roles slaves played, and the fact that most functions performed by slaves could also be undertaken by persons of free status. This impression that slaves and free men are totally separate components of society is not just due to the polarities of philosophers and definitions of lawyers. What Athens and Rome had in common was the absence of a dependent class of serfs as in other states—including many parts of the Greek world (**80**, 263d). The Laconian Helots are the purest example (**15**): not slaves, since their relationship was not one of personal dependence upon a citizen household, but one of a community with its own internal bonds of kinship being dependent upon a conquering state (in the case of Helots, this relationship was perceived as one of permanent war). Since Greek social philosophers lacked a clear concept of serfdom, they tended to assimilate Helots and similar groups to slaves—as do modern Marxists, keen to demonstrate that ‘slavery’ was the typical method of abstracting surplus wealth in all Greek states.

Because Athens and Rome in the classical period developed very clear notions of the privileged status of citizens, neither society could accept extreme degrees of exploitation of one ‘insider’ by another. In the circumstances of peasant agriculture, smallholders are continually in danger of becoming indebted to their land-lords or to more fortunate or powerful neighbours (**17**, **146**). At Rome, they continued to be liable to forced labour and imprisonment until the debt had been paid (*addictio*); in the course of centuries, the superior power of the landlord naturally tended to force free as well as slave tenants down to the dependent status of late Roman *coloni*. Yet Solon’s attempt to prevent political discontent in Attica (**16**), and the pressure which Roman peasant-soldiers were able to exert upon an elite which needed them to wage war (**18–19**), meant that for particular (and quite separate) reasons neither Athenians nor Romans accepted that a citizen who fell into debt should formally lose his independence to another. Hence the enslaving of outsiders (already attested by our earliest sources, Homer and Hesiod) became much more economically significant than it had earlier been and continued to be in those other areas of the Greek and Roman world which continued to recognise semi-servile statuses. The failure to understand how widespread were forms of dependence outside the household (e.g. landlord and tenant) meant that Greeks and Romans found it simplest to describe semi-servile relationships (including the colonate) as though they corresponded to those of slave (or freed slave) status, since these were the concepts with which they were most familiar (**20–1**).

The division of mankind into the extremes of free and slave also obscures the extent to which slavery can be interpreted as a process rather than a

permanent condition—a temporary phase by which an outsider is allocated a place within a society which has no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him. In some societies in Africa and elsewhere, slavery can be seen as a ‘mode of integration’ through which outsiders pass prior to adoption as full members of existing kin-groups. This model has little applicability to Greece; Athenian slaves, when freed, acquired the status of Metics (resident foreigners) and continued to be subject to a wide range of legal disabilities. They could not buy land, and had to be represented at law by a citizen registered as their official patron (27). Some Greeks asserted that freedmen continued to be ‘natural’ slaves (80, 267b). An Athenian who married such an outsider would come in for much criticism (22). Documents from the Greek world show that on some occasions freedom would be granted on condition of continuing service, so that during the years subsequent to manumission, the freed person’s actual condition was little better than it had been as a slave (23–6). The evidence for Greeks taking it for granted that loyal household slaves would be set free at the owner’s death appears to date only from the Roman period (94, 95).

When a Roman manumitted his slave, he would (if the correct formalities had been observed) attain restricted citizen status (5, 28, 29), extending even to the right to inherit his patron’s estate (47, 92). There is evidence (30, 31) that the feeling that a loyal domestic servant ought automatically to be granted freedom and civic rights after a number of years was so widespread that the ‘model’ of slavery as a process of integration may be useful here. This is borne out by the fact that Roman liberality surprised the Greeks (69), and is not contradicted by the new regulations introduced after the disorder of the Roman civil wars (5, 6, 71). Roman jurists recognised a slave’s right to use his *peculium* to buy himself free from his owner (32). On the other hand the *familia rustica*, those slaves working on agricultural estates (126), received very different treatment and had virtually no opportunities to benefit from this ideal.

The ex-slave continued to be in a special relationship of dependence towards the person who had owned him or her—even when this was her husband (33). Such dependence would entail *obsequium*, deference and obedience similar to that which sons owed their father (34–6); from time to time the State intervened to reassert the inferior status of freedmen and their dependence upon their patrons in the sharpest terms (37). The position of freedmen as dependent members of their patron’s household is symbolised by their right to share the family tomb (39), and the patron’s right to exclude them if they were disloyal (39). But there were also economic obligations, *operae* (40–5), which show that when an owner freed a slave, he retained the right to extract economic advantage from him.

Once they had been formally accepted into Roman society, some freedmen felt the compulsion to reinforce their position by striving harder for success than most of those who were free-born would have felt necessary. Since freedmen were barred from political activity (though their sons were not, and

are frequently found holding municipal office), such success had to come from attaining wealth (this does not imply that freedmen should be seen as an ‘entrepreneurial class’); to bestow respectability, wealth had to come from agriculture (46). There was of course a danger that such success would be perceived as uncanny (47) and cause resentment (48). One substitute for the full social integration which could really only come from landownership was an ostentatious tomb (49). Inscriptions show the extent to which the Roman *domus* could act as a framework for the emotional as well as merely economic support and integration of rightless outsiders (50, 171–5).

Whatever the proportion of slaves who might win their freedom or be transferred to *paramone*-status in Greece, and the degree to which ex-slaves would be integrated into Roman society, this did not alter the universal prejudice felt against slaves by those who were free. The evidence is equally strong for Greece and Rome, at all periods (51–5). One area in which it was felt particularly important to keep free men and slaves separate was warfare (56). Only when the citizen community felt itself desperately threatened would slaves be called upon to fight side by side with their masters (57, 58); and even then the fiction that only free men should be involved in the organised violence of warfare was normally maintained by manumitting the slaves in question first. A warlord who used slaves for fighting—even for such arduous labour as rowing in the fleet—was labelled as no better than a pirate (59–61). This attitude remained to the end of antiquity (62–3). Although the fact that slaves had the same religious needs as free man could not be denied, another respect in which their inferiority could be symbolised was their exclusion from some religious cults particularly associated with citizen status (64).

It was considered by some a paradox that slaves were not distinguished from free men by their dress (65), and the feeling that slave and free ought to be clearly separated led some Romans to question the ease with which freedmen could become totally integrated into the Roman upper class (66). There are many examples of how the barrier between slavery and freedom might be spectacularly breached in practice—as when a fugitive slave was elected to a Roman magistracy before being detected (67); such cases were particularly prone to occur in times of political instability (68), and will have been among the reasons which led Augustus to reassert the distinctions between different status groups and impose tighter regulations upon manumission (5, 6, 69–71).

The fact that within their own household, citizens might depend upon slaves to perform certain essential services, was seen as an affront to the principle that slaves were morally worthless (72–3). In a Greek law court, one way of calling into question evidence given by a slave was to play on the jury’s prejudices (74); and one way of blackening the reputation of a Roman emperor was to accuse him of having used the evidence of slaves to bring about the condemnation of citizens (75). Even where the result was to their advantage,

Romans had ambivalent feelings about relying on slaves against enemies who were citizens (76, 77).

There are only a few indications of how an ex-slave might come to terms with his status and career to balance this universal condemnation of slaves by those ancient writers who belonged to the citizen class (78, 79).

Precisely because slaves as a class were denied any moral worth of their own, they could be seen as things, the possession of which conferred status upon their owners, like other objects of material value. Although Athenaeus' list of recondite information relating to slavery is quite unsystematic (80), it does illustrate that owning slaves was seen primarily as a means of showing off one's wealth, as well as a means of controlling labour. This attitude is universal in all periods of Greek and Roman (and many other) societies (81, 82), and paradoxically leads to criticisms of owning large numbers of slaves in the context of attacks on luxury (83, 84): in the ancient community, luxury—too much conspicuous consumption—defied the principle that all members of a status group ought to be equal.

Of course slavery fulfilled other functions apart from being a demonstration of wealth. It clearly did provide the head of a household with additional economic resources (85–7)—just as he would have a right to profit by the labour of his wife or sons. But perhaps more significantly, it was a mechanism for ensuring that services would be guaranteed to the primary economic unit, the household: a household would not have to rely upon kin, friends or contract labour if it was rich enough to afford slaves to provide services (88) which might only occasionally be needed, but were essential for its proper functioning.

While some suggestions can be made about how slavery fitted into the household economy, it is unprofitable to try to quantify this (80, 89–96). Some unsurprising general trends may be deduced, such as the existence of (some) slave-holdings in the Roman Empire which were much larger than (most) at classical Athens; but such evidence does not permit us to draw conclusions about changes in the proportion of slaves in the total population. The development of an autonomous science of economics in the eighteenth century led to an enormous emphasis on statistics, and to attempts to apply statistical methods to the ancient world (it is no coincidence that the first such undertaking was by David Hume, Adam Smith's associate in the 'Edinburgh Enlightenment'). But where both production and consumption largely occur within the confines of the household, there is only a very limited need for statistical information about the way an economy is functioning as a whole: governments need figures of manpower and taxation resources in order to plan for warfare (the Roman census: 104), and of course accounts have to be kept for each particular household (82). But even if the evidence were sufficient to allow us to deduce global figures for the size and productivity of the slave population at different periods of antiquity, such figures would be much less

illuminating than in a society in which economic activity is regulated by a centralised ‘market’ or by redistribution from a single centre.

Since it was the person, not the labour, of a slave that was bought, attempts to compare the efficiency of slave and free labour on the basis of ancient evidence for prices (97–100) are fruitless. There is insufficient evidence to assess the extent to which prices reflect the greater or lesser availability of slave labour at different periods and in different areas in terms of a ‘free market’ model.

Slavery was universal in Greece and Rome, even if its role cannot be quantified; so it is surprising that we are told so little about slave-traders, except that they were disliked (101, 102). There is some evidence about the ports-of-trade through which slaves entered the Greco-Roman world from outside (103). At all times in antiquity Greek and Roman cities had laws regulating slave sales: the increasing complexity of such regulations does not reflect increasing difficulties in obtaining slaves (104, 105).

As regards the sources of slaves, there is plenty of evidence for the role of piracy, especially during the second century BC, when the political insecurity of the Eastern Mediterranean resulted in the deracination of particularly large numbers of human beings (106, 107). These persons were transferred to Rome, as the centre of wealth (108); Roman writers knew how traumatic the experience of enslavement was (109), and the slave rebellions of 134–70 BC show that household slavery was totally unable to integrate such great numbers of newcomers into Italian and Sicilian society (Chapter 11). Despite the greater security provided by the emperors, illegal kidnapping continued as a source of slaves, even in Italy (110–12). Even more important was capture in warfare—not always to be distinguished from piracy; again, the insecurity of the second century BC greatly increased the number of rightless persons who had somehow to be fitted into the society of their conquerors (113–19). The increase in the number of available slaves was surely a result and not a cause of these wars; although booty was clearly always an incentive to wage war, we are not justified in assuming that Greeks or Romans waged war because they needed slave labour.

Another group of human beings towards whom no one felt any obligations were babies exposed to die by parents who did not want them. If anyone wished to raise such a foundling, he could treat him as a slave (120). Under Roman law, if the child had inherited freedom from its parents, nothing could prejudice that status (121, 123), although in late antiquity the foundling’s right to have his freedom vindicated tended to be circumscribed by the requirement that he pay back the cost of his upkeep over the years (122–3).

The extent to which the slave population was maintained by homeborn slaves rather than continually replenished by imported outsiders is controversial. Certainly home born slaves (*oikogeneis*, *vernae*) were more highly regarded than slaves bought from outside the household; but it does not follow that female slaves were bought primarily as potential mothers (124).

Enslavement to the state as the result of condemnation in a court of law was a major source of forced labour in the Roman Empire, but it should not be treated as chattel slavery in the strict sense (125).

Roman sources recognised a division between ‘urban’ slaves, employed to provide services at the owner’s residence (whether at Rome or elsewhere), and those he kept primarily as a labour force on his ‘rural’ estates (126), but this was a distinction of status as much as of economic function. Slaves cannot be seen as a homogeneous economic class—while the jobs allocated to them tended to be the most unpleasant and dangerous, there were no jobs which slaves performed perforce which might not also be done by freedmen or the free-born, if poverty reduced them to the level of having to seek employment (this was as true of domestic jobs like nursing as of handicrafts or agriculture). Then as now men could be found to undertake the most dangerous and demeaning activities if they were paid enough (for free men as gladiators, see *CTh.* 15, 12.2). So it was not because no other source of domestic or skilled craft labour could be found that Greeks and Romans kept slaves; the words *oiket s* and *famulus* apply to free as well as slave household servants. Rather, the existence of slaves gave the powerful additional opportunities to display their wealth by keeping more dependants, and giving them more specialised functions (127–34). Unproductive jobs could be found to enable an old slave to be displayed to visitors (doorkeepers, 135); and ideally the relationship of personal dependence on the head of the household guaranteed freed slaves their maintenance when they reached old age (136).

Apart from services within the household, slaves and freedmen would be found performing those services perceived as ‘marginal’ in terms of the ancient economy. The status of craftsmen varied in different Greek and Roman societies; everywhere it was considered inferior to that of the producers of ‘natural’ wealth through agriculture. The same applied to trade and financial dealings: the status of these activities was lower in proportion as they were more dangerous and risky, and a high proportion of those involved in them were slaves or freedmen, often working with capital advanced by the head of their household (64, 137, 139). The high proportion of slaves and freedmen attested in industry and commerce does not imply that Greek and Roman chattel slavery expanded in order to provide labour in periods of hypothetical ‘industrialisation’ in seventh and sixth century BC Greece, or second century BC Italy.

As in virtually all societies before the early nineteenth century, agriculture was of far greater importance than industry, commerce and mining combined, and any assessment of the importance of slaves as producers (rather than as symbols of wealth or providers of specialised services) must concentrate on agriculture. Even though the evidence for the use of slaves in agriculture in classical Athens is sparse, it was clearly taken for granted that wealthy farmers would have slaves to assist them (139); philosophers advocated a systematic division of the idea! society into citizen landowners and slave labourers (140).

The massive influx of slaves into Italy in the second century BC greatly strained the traditional patriarchal relationship between master and slave (83); whether or not slaves actually constituted a majority of agricultural workers, they were clearly a major source of labour for the rich (141), and enabled them to own and work *latifundia* (not so much large single estates as conglomerations of adjacent holdings) and go in for large-scale ranching. The danger this constituted to the survival of the peasantry was widely recognised (142, 143). There were some suggestions that slave labour was less productive than free (144); certainly the low level of technology in antiquity and the need for constant direct supervision meant that the use of slave gangs could not result in appreciable economies of scale (145, 146). Roman agricultural handbooks include detailed discussion of slaves as labourers and herdsmen (147–50); the crucial role played by the estate-manager and his wife comes through clearly (149, 151–7).

Greek and Roman communities as well as individuals would use slaves to perform those services considered difficult or inferior (158–61). Because the slave was an outsider not involved in controversies between citizens, he could be entrusted with supervisory functions such as responsibility for the city accounts or weights and measures (162–4). On the other hand the principle of the rapid circulation of office-holding in ancient communities meant that supervision of state slaves was often ineffective (165); in practice such slaves had considerable freedom. At Rome, they might in time be manumitted, like other slaves (166).

In imperial Rome, responsibility for public works was shared between slaves belonging to the state and those belonging to the imperial household, the *domus Caesaris* (167)—one household for which the evidence is relatively detailed. The unique status of the emperor gave his slaves and freedmen a privileged position—such slaves were allowed to marry citizen-women (168), and their status was such that people might enrol themselves in this household voluntarily (169). Evidence from literature and inscriptions throws light on the specialised household and administrative tasks of these slaves and freedmen (170–5). Especially under the Julio-Claudian emperors, individual freedmen held positions of enormous influence and responsibility—the imperial administration was still regarded primarily as the emperor’s private concern, and free Roman citizens were not at first willing to sacrifice their independence by serving in another’s household. It was only after the imperial system had existed for a century that members of the upper classes accepted appointment to permanent administrative posts; by the fourth century, citizens had come to replace slaves throughout the administration, but not of course as domestics and craftsmen. Emperors continued to turn for objective advice to persons in their immediate entourage who as outsiders had no personal links with the citizen group (typically, eunuchs). Not surprisingly, this provoked enormous resentment on the part of the citizen elite (176).

The influence and wealth which some slaves could attain as members of the *domus Caesaris* only underline the total powerlessness normally associated with slave status. A particularly vivid symbol of this was the use of torture to extract evidence from slave witnesses in courts of law, both in Greece (177) and Rome (178); the limitation was that torture could only be applied if the owner had offered the slave as a witness—though at Rome the general rule that a slave (or freedman) could not testify against his master or patron did not apply in cases of treason (75, 179). The lack of concern for the physical integrity of slaves is exemplified by the *SC Silanianum*, requiring the interrogation under torture and execution of all slaves who happened to be present and had offered no help when their owner was murdered (180).

The tension between the slave's total rightlessness in law and the fact that he was a human being meant that there had to be limits to the brutality which society would tolerate in practice—but these rules had to be phrased in such a way as not to challenge the absoluteness of the owner's theoretical rights. It is not clear whether at Athens the killing of a slave by his owner was forbidden by law (181) rather than by religious (182) or social (183) sanction. At any rate an Athenian slave-owner was free to use violence to force his slave to do what he pleased (184). At Rome, the rights of heads of households to punish their slaves, like their sons, as they saw fit, had been absolute in the early republic. The general tendency for these powers to be restricted by legislation applied also to the right to execute children and slaves, which was transferred to ordinary state judges (185–7). A more effective form of protection for a slave was the principle that as a piece of property, anyone who harmed him attacked his owner's rights—even though at Rome (as at Gortyn, 3) damage to a slave cost less than the same damage inflicted upon a free man (188, 189).

Such principles could not effectively protect slaves against their own masters; the typical example of extreme sadism was that of Veditius Pollio and his lampreys (190). It is difficult to assess how widespread or 'normal' such degrading treatment was; slaves certainly had to do unpleasant work in horrifying conditions, but it should be remembered that work in the treadmill (191) or imprisonment in *ergastula* (not referred to by Cato and Varro) were considered punishments. The conditions of slave miners (192) were frequently shared by free workers (87); the *servi poenae* used as miners in the Roman Empire were condemned criminals (125).

There is widespread evidence for the sexual abuse of slaves. The absolute power of owners entailed the right to prevent slaves from entering into family relationships (193); neither Greek nor Roman law normally recognised the unions of slaves as regular marriages before the Christian period. Where Roman imperial legislation gave slaves some protection against prostitution, this was an incidental effect of asserting the rights of former owners to impose binding conditions upon anyone to whom they sold their slaves (194). In late antiquity, Christians were very much preoccupied with the deleterious effects that slavery continued to have on sexual morality (195).

The ill treatment of slaves by their owners should be seen in the context of the general level of brutality and violence in the ancient world. Of course whipping served to symbolise the absoluteness of the owner's power (196); but then in the ancient world (as in other pre-industrial societies, whether or not slavery was widespread) children were quite normally punished by beating (the Latin phrase 'to submit one's hand to the cane', *ferulae subducere manum*, is equivalent to 'going to school'). Perhaps we should see brutality towards slaves less as systematic or intentional than as the effect of outbursts of rage on the part of persons in authority, analogous to violence against wives or children in our own society (197–9).

At all times heads of households must have been tempted to fulfil their responsibilities towards their dependants only if this was in their own interests; the treatment of sick slaves is a case in point (200). The attitude of Cato the Elder (201, 202) is no evidence that owners were particularly inhumane in the second century BC; nor is Claudius' legislation in favour of sick slaves (203, 204) evidence for the theory that Roman emperors systematically attempted to improve the treatment slaves received, under the influence either of powerful *liberti* or of Stoic humanitarianism. The advice on how to make the most of slaves in earlier Greek philosophical handbooks discussing practical ethics (205, 206) may strike us as cynical, but there are no grounds for believing that in the Roman world humanitarian ideals of Jewish (207) or Stoic (208) provenance led to restrictions upon an owner's rights in law.

The extent to which an owner would apply these theoretically absolute powers was of course controlled by social convention and by his own religious or moral feelings. There was also control from below, by the ways slaves themselves reacted to the treatment they received. This is again analogous to the treatment of inferiors by superiors within any family: since it is difficult for society to control such behaviour, the only way dependants can often express their dissatisfaction at the way they are treated is the extreme one of breaking up the family unit—either by murdering the superior, or by physically removing themselves from his authority. Although murder of masters by slaves certainly occurred (209, 180), we should not assume that it was so frequent that all masters went in continuous dread of being killed by their slaves—the permanent state of war between Spartans and Helots was exceptional, and again suggests that Helots should not be seen as slaves. Violent death was widespread and expected in the ancient world as in most societies, but lawyers assumed that men expected it to come at the hands of external enemies or brigands, or the supporters of a powerful rival, and not of slaves, any more than spouses (see *Digest* 39, 6.3).

Another mechanism by means of which inferiors could express their sense of grievance against superiors was sorcery (210); throughout antiquity persons of high as well as low status believed in magic and would use it when they felt powerless to do anything more effective to resist their opponents.

If a slave could not control the ill treatment he received, the only practical solution was to flee. The evidence shows that this was widespread both in Greece (211) and Rome (212), where there are clear regulations for the return of runaways; Christians accepted the obligation to return a slave to his owner (213). A master might offer a reward to retrieve his property (214), and could count on the support of the state, though in practice this might need some prompting (215). When all else failed, masters might use magic to prevent slaves running away (216), or even insure themselves against such occurrences (217). If a slave was thought prone to leaving the household, he would be punished by being branded on the face (218); in late antiquity this practice was replaced for religious reasons by forcing the slave to wear a metal collar so that he would be recognised as a fugitive (219–21).

Society recognised that as the only effective way in which slaves could protest against ill treatment, flight could never be stamped out; it thus had to be regulated. Religion provided a mechanism through which flight could be accepted as legitimate without directly challenging the absoluteness of an owner's power over his property: the decision of a priest (or at Rome a magistrate) as to whether a fugitive's complaints against his master were justified or not, was perceived in terms of accepting the superior power of a god or of the imperial *numen* to which the slave had appealed for help, not as surrender to the wishes of the slave. The slave could not become free simply by running away, but exchanged a new master for the one who had treated him intolerably; this might be the god himself, or (following a compulsory sale) another citizen. I.M.Lewis' *Ecstatic Religion* illustrates the role of religion in regulating conflict between husband and wife in analogous cases in some contemporary societies. Evidence for regulations regarding asylum survives for all periods of Greek and Roman antiquity (222–6).

The dividing line between running away, brigandage and open rebellion is not always clear (see Drimakos of Chios, 80, 265d). Like flight, slave rebellions should be seen as the effect of dissatisfaction against ill treatment by particular masters rather than opposition to the institution of slavery as such. Wherever slaves were properly integrated members of the masters' households, rebellion could not make sense; and the ancient sources show that in fact slave rebellions only occurred precisely where the ideal that slaves were a recognised group within the household ceased to be effective—because as recently enslaved prisoners of war they were still loyal to leaders from the society they came from (227), or because they were physically distant from the control of their owners as the result of their work (228, 233), or because their owners failed to maintain them (234).

Both the general causes and the particular events triggering off the two great slave wars in Sicily (229, 230) and Spartacus' rebellion (231, 232) can be traced to the failure of the recognised ideal that the head of the household was responsible for his dependants to cope with the influx of outsiders into Sicily and Italy in the late Republic. Yet antiquity was unable to develop any more

effective social institution than household slavery for the integration of war-captives who, unlike guest-friends or kin, were rightless and rootless. It may be interesting to speculate whether these revolts would in time have developed new social forms (for example, whether the whole of Sicily might have developed into a unified palace economy directed by the King), but we have no reason to suppose that the insurgents would have abolished slavery. Eunous' prisoners were certainly forced to work in chains. It did not occur to slaves any more than to anyone else in antiquity that social equality might be a viable political programme; whether or not the Stoic ideal of the just king may have influenced Aristonikos' rebellion in Asia Minor in 133–129 BC, this war should not be seen so much as a slave rebellion than as an instance of slaves being promised their freedom in return for fighting on behalf of someone who saw himself as a legitimate ruler threatened by a foreign power (see **57, 58, 63, 243**). There is no evidence that Aristonikos envisaged the permanent abolition of slavery as an institution.

While Stoic philosophy, and later Christianity, cannot be considered to have had any noticeable effect on improving the conditions of slaves, let alone leading to its 'abolition', the attitudes of intellectuals towards slavery did have some interesting consequences. By making the slave/free polarity analogous to that between Greeks and barbarians, philosophers provided the basis for later racial justifications of slavery. Such racialism was quite inappropriate in the circumstances of Rome, where slavery served precisely as a method of integrating outsiders (and hence the Romans had no qualms about enslaving racially kin groups like Italians).

By developing the metaphor of 'moral' slavery to vice, philosophers made real slavery more acceptable by suggesting that it was not important (**235, 236**). The metaphor of 'slavery' to Chance or Fortune (**237, 238**) or the Christian God may have helped the Greco-Roman elite to come to terms with the contradiction between the ideal that a citizen was absolutely independent and the reality of government by autocrats. Although the prejudice that slaves had to be moral inferiors was unassailable, both pagan and Christian writers stressed that persons of slave status could, and had, attained virtue (**239, 240, 243**).

But this in no sense implied criticism of slavery as an institution (**242, 242**). The semi-servile tenancy arrangements which the jurists labelled the 'colonnate' replaced chattel slavery on the farms as the typical form of dependence in late antiquity, and slave-owning was less widespread in the early middle ages than in Rome of the late Republic (although there is continuing evidence for its importance in the households of Byzantine potentates as well as barbarian nobles and western Senators). But although the restraints which social convention had exercised over an owner's power were being replaced by the more identifiable but equally ineffective ones of imperial and ecclesiastical legislation, slavery continued to be accepted as the extreme case of one man's personal dependence upon another.

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