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Miers and Roberts

1 The End of Slavery in Africa

Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers

The Main Issues

Slavery in Africa sometimes ended suddenly, causing widespread disruption, and sometimes petered out with apparently minimal repercussions. Some scholars, therefore, see its demise as precipitating a crisis, while others view it as a "nonevent." But whether it involved the dramatic mass departure of the labor force, the gradual loss of small numbers of individuals, or the redefinition of the terms of dependency by ex-slaves who remained with their former owners, the end of slavery always brought the nature of the economic, political, and social structure sharply into focus. It often pitted slaves against owners and sometimes pitted both against the colonial state in a struggle to control labor—a struggle which took place in the context of a changing political economy and was part of deeper transformations set in train by colonial rule. Thus the chapters which follow throw light on much more than just the transition from slave to "free" labor.

Slavery in Africa was a complex system of labor use, of the exercise of rights in persons, and of exploitation and coercion, tempered by negotiation and accommodation.[1] Its form varied over time and place. Slaves

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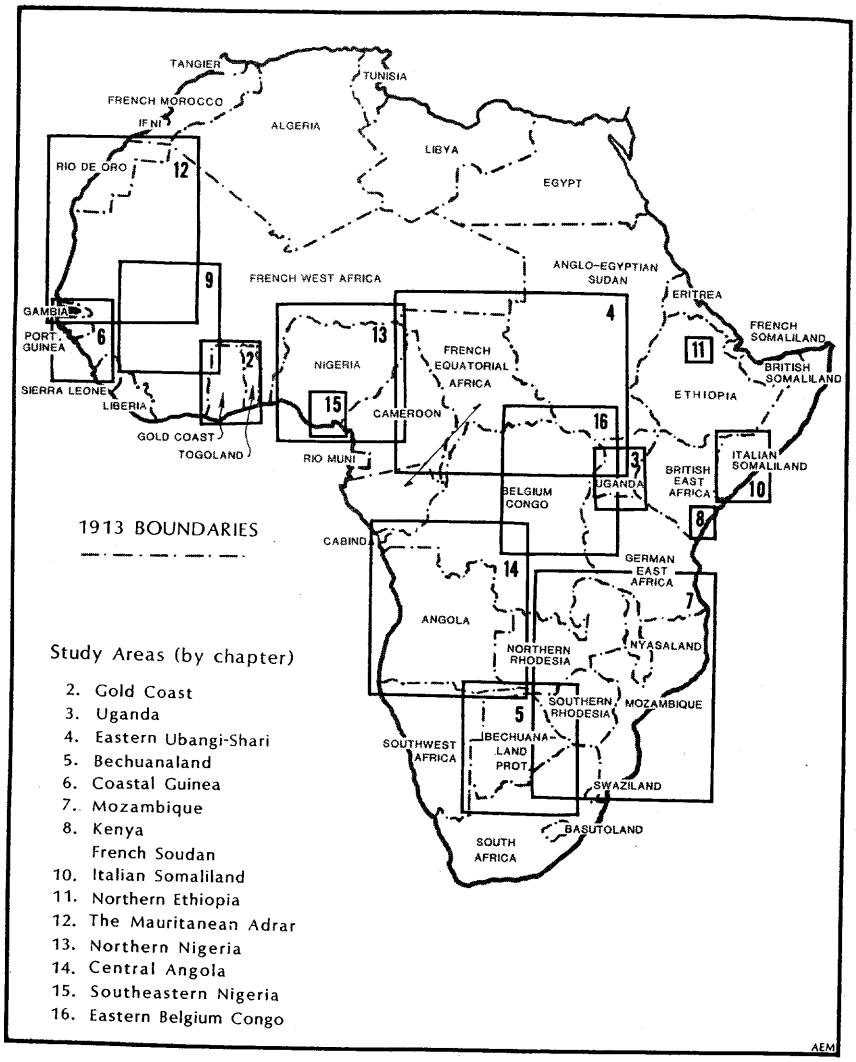

Map 1. Africa in 1913

servitude in Africa see particularly Meillassoux 1975a, 1986; Kopytoff and Miers 1977; Kopytoff 1979; Cooper 1979; Watson 1980: 2ff.; Patterson 1982; Finley 1980: 67ff.; Klein and Lovejoy 1979; Lovejoy 1983; Robertson and Klein 1983; Davis 1984; Law 1985; Willis 1985.

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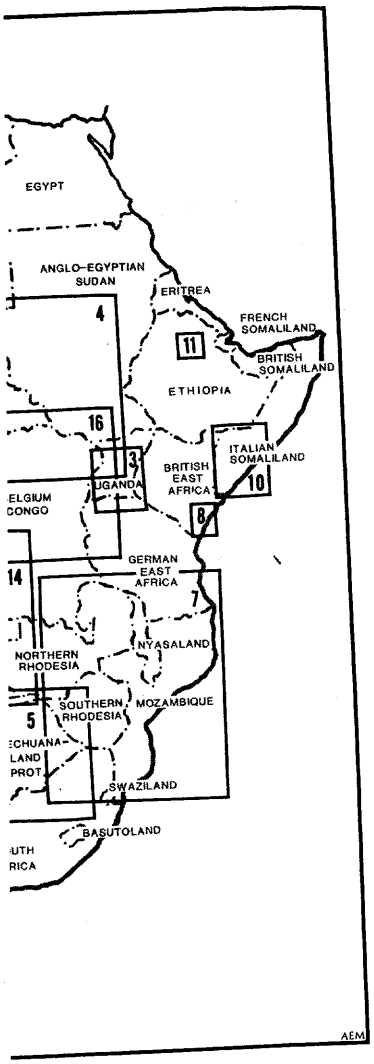

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might be menial field workers, downtrodden servants, cherished concubines, surrogate kin, trusted trading agents, high officials, army commanders, ostracized social groups dedicated to a deity, or a ready pool of candidates for human sacrifice. Owners might be corporate kin groups or individuals of either sex. A minority of individual owners and a majority of first-generation slaves were women, valued for their productive as well as their reproductive capacities, since women did much of the agricultural work in sub-Saharan Africa.[2] Most slaves had families, and some accumulated possessions, even slaves, of their own.[3] Slavery might involve merely small numbers of slaves, living in or near their owners' households, whose daily lives were virtually indistinguishable from those of the free, or it could be a sophisticated system of labor organization in which slaves and owners were divided by social, economic, political, and legal barriers and sometimes lived in separate settlements. Different forms of slavery could coexist in the same society. Moreover, slavery was but one type of dependency or exploitation practiced alongside others in a continuum which included clientage and pawnship. A pawn was a person pledged as collateral for debt (see Lovejoy 1983: 5; for further discussion on pawns, see pages 26, 45–47).

African societies usually framed the social and economic relations of slavery in paternalistic terms: slaves were considered adoptive junior kin, albeit perpetual minors, but at the same time they were dependents from whom a surplus could be extracted. They were also valuable capital assets, sometimes the main ones owned by Africans. They were often valued as political supporters, their loyalty being assured by their total dependence. This paternalistic view of slavery, even when it masked purely economic considerations on the part of their owners, was often shared by the slaves (see, for instance, Baldus 1977: 443–56). In many societies, owners sought to control their slaves by using force, imposing supernatural sanctions, and allowing slaves to change masters (Meillassoux 1975b: 231–32; Klein 1977: 346–50). Where states were relatively strong and masters formed a cohesive group, the coercive elements of slavery were often better developed. In almost all societies, however, the power of masters was limited because escape was possible.

Although members of both large- and small-scale societies acquired

2. On women slaves see Robertson and Klein 1983. On women and work see, for example, Boserup 1970; Oppong 1983. Women often owned slaves or, if they did not own them, they often used and controlled slave labor (Robertson and Klein 1983: 13). The majority of owners, however, were men or kin groups controlled by men.

3. Meillassoux (1983), however, argues that the fertility and even the marriage rate among women slaves were low. On slaves owning slaves see Roberts 1981a: 186–89; Weil 1984: 105–106; Meillassoux 1986: 121, 256.

them, expanding states were often the greatest suppliers and users of slaves. The political formation played a part in the development and maintenance of slave systems and determined their form. As the political economy changed, so slavery, never a static institution, also changed, becoming sometimes harsher and sometimes more "benign" (see, for example, Weil 1984: 107–14; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13). Thus, slaves were bound up in a complex, ever-shifting web of social relations, fashioned by political and economic conditions.

The end of slavery put the whole relationship to the test. The response of newly freed slaves frequently revealed the dichotomy between ideology and harsh reality. Some liberated slaves expressed pent-up animosity through mass departure.[4] Others, however, remained with their owners but redefined their terms of service, while some left only to return to live much as before (see, for example, Romero 1986: 509; Cooper 1980: 69ff.). The end of slavery thus provides an opportunity to examine the reality of slavery in Africa as it existed at a discrete point in time—in most cases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Reconstructing this reality poses some problems. The evidence for the nineteenth century, when slavery was at its height, often comes filtered through the eyes of antislavery or colonial enthusiasts, many of them missionaries or explorers. Most twentieth-century evidence is drawn from the reports of colonial administrators or anthropologists, who saw slavery only in its decline, and from court records, which reflect only those conflicts which could not be privately resolved. Furthermore, scholars doing research in recent years have talked mostly with owners or their descendants, who often idealized the institution. Evidence from slaves is hard to come by, because many persons of slave descent are still unwilling to admit their origins. Certainly, the actions of the newly freed indicate how they felt about slavery, but this evidence has to be carefully weighed in the light of the range of options actually open to them.

Just as slavery covered many different situations, so emancipation inevitably meant different things to different people (Kopytoff and Miers 1977: 26–27, 73–76; Kopytoff, Ch. 17). To some slaves it meant closer integration into the owner's kin group, although complete equality was rarely achieved. To others it meant severing all ties with their owners to the point of actual physical departure. To still others it meant continued dependence but on different terms—terms which were in some cases subtly redefined and in others hammered out as ex-slaves strove, sometimes fiercely, for better conditions and more autonomy while former

4. Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; Klein, Ch. 6; Roberts, Ch. 9; McSheffrey 1983.

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owners tried to preserve their social and economic power. The studies presented here enable us to examine the many variables which determined the reactions of both slaves and owners to legal emancipation, and to consider the various meanings of "freedom" in colonial Africa.

On the eve of the colonial conquests of the late nineteenth century, slavery was taking root in new areas and in some cases was beginning to change qualitatively (see, *inter alia*, Lovejoy 1983: Ch. 6; Weil 1984: 72–114). The end of the transatlantic trade and the decline in the export of slaves to the Muslim world made slaves more cheaply available in Africa just when the demand for African agricultural, hunting, and foraging exports increased the need for labor. This need was often met by the acquisition of slaves. Slavery was such a significant part of the organization of production in some societies that certain scholars have identified them as "slave societies" (Lovejoy 1983: 8–10).[5] The demand for slaves was also generated by such internal factors as the expansion of local markets and the rise of new states over much of the continent. Those struggling for power wanted dependents and loyal followers—a demand frequently filled by slaving. Once areas were conquered, the new elite might put their captives to work as farmers, herdsmen, and craftsmen, often producing for the market. Slave women also produced progeny to swell the numbers of dependents and increase the size of owning groups. States acquired slaves through warfare, and ruling groups were often the main users of slaves, but some kin groups and individuals in small-scale societies, as well as marauding bands of armed traders, acquired sizable numbers of slaves.

Colonial conquest and the establishment of colonial states created the conditions which led to the dramatic decline, if not always the end, of slavery. The colonial rulers undermined it by radically changing the political economy and by antislavery legislation. The eradication of slavery, however, was not a consistently pursued priority for any of the colonial powers. In fact it was a severe test of their expressed ideologies. Although all of them subscribed to antislavery ideology, they usually found it against their immediate interests to emancipate the slaves. The chapters that follow illustrate the different expedients administrators and missionaries adopted as they walked a tightrope, balancing metropolitan ideology and demands against African realities and both against their efforts to gain

5. For slave societies see Finley 1968: 310–11. Recent scholars have described such societies as having had a "slave mode of production." In a slave mode of production slaves were the main producers in vital sectors of the economy, and because they did not reproduce themselves in sufficient quantity a constant flow of new slaves was needed to maintain the social and economic base (Lovejoy 1983: 269–73). For a critique of this view and a reappraisal see Cooper 1979.

control of labor themselves. The study of the end of slavery, therefore, brings us a step closer to an understanding of the realities as well as the mythology of colonial rule.

The chapters in this volume also contribute to our understanding of slavery and abolition as worldwide phenomena. Some common patterns emerge both in the way slavery ended and in the forms of labor control which succeeded it. If, however, this book answers some questions about the end of slavery, it also raises many more, showing where there are gaps in our knowledge and highlighting debates on evidence, interpretation, and methodology, which can be resolved only by further research.

Origins of the Modern Concept of Abolition

Abolition—the declaration by the government that slavery was no longer legal—was not an indigenous African concept. Emancipation was possible in some societies, but it was selective manumission at the discretion of the owners, and it reinforced rather than undermined slavery by manifesting their power over their slaves. Slaves could gain freedom in various ways. Some were allowed to ransom themselves, perhaps with another slave; others were freed by their masters after years of faithful service. Sometimes the descendants of slaves were simply assimilated over several generations until they were in fact indistinguishable from the freeborn—a process described as intergenerational mobility (Kopytoff and Miers 1977: 18–40). This was fastest in societies which allowed unions between slave and free.[6] In many societies total equality with the free was simply not possible. Thus freed slaves in some Muslim societies became hereditary, autonomous clients (see examples in McDougall, Ch. 12; Cassanelli, Ch. 10), and in many non-Muslim societies slave origins were remembered when it came to questions of marriage, inheritance, and rituals (Meillassoux 1986: 307–9). In societies where selective emancipation was theoretically possible, nothing could give an ex-slave the same status as the person who was born into a local kin group (see, for instance, Ohadike, Ch. 15; Heywood, Ch. 14).

Second-generation slaves in many African societies were not normally sold and were thus in theory somewhat more secure than first-generation or "trade" slaves. But in times of crisis, when even some of the free were sold, slaves would probably have been the first to go. Most African slave-owning groups did not have the power to keep large numbers of slaves

6. Such unions were usually between a free man and a slave concubine. Their offspring, although often considered free, were likely to be discriminated against when it came to questions of property, religion, and political rights.

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in permanent and complete subordination, which helps account for this intergenerational difference in treatment (Cooper 1979: 118–19). Neither manumission nor intergenerational mobility, however, ended slavery, since newly acquired slaves maintained slave relations of production and dependency.

Full-scale abolition was a western European idea born of the conflicts generated in the eighteenth century by the expansion of capitalism and the profound ideological changes which accompanied it. Abolitionist movements emerged in several countries, but the first successful sustained movement among the European powers that were to partition Africa took root in Britain, where it drew its inspiration from new philosophical, economic, and religious ideas.[7] Slavery came to be regarded by philosophers as incompatible with the rights of man, by economists as incompatible with the needs of the emerging capitalist economy, and by religious activists as a sin.[8] As slavery came to be increasingly seen as morally unacceptable and retrogressive, so its converse, the capitalist, free wage-labor system, came to be considered both morally right and an essential component of human progress.[9] The long campaign against the slave trade and slavery, regarded by the British public as a humanitarian crusade, thus gave capitalism one of its main underpinnings—a fact which cannot be overemphasized. The first great success in this campaign came in 1807, when the slave trade was outlawed to British subjects on grounds of high moral principle as well as national economic interest (Anstey 1975: 403ff.; Drescher 1982; Temperley 1985: 86–107).[10]

Thereafter, Britain embarked on a long struggle to persuade other commercial and maritime nations to outlaw the traffic and prevent this lucrative trade from passing into the hands of rivals and providing them with a source of labor she had denied to her own colonies.[11]

7. Among the colonial powers, Denmark, which had colonies in the Caribbean and forts in Africa until the latter were sold to the British in 1850, passed a law outlawing the traffic in 1792 but with effect only from 1803. This was to allow for planters in the Danish West Indies to stock up slaves and for the development of plantations on the Guinea coast. In any event the law was not enforced in Africa (Nørregård 1966: 172–76).

8. For a discussion of the inconsistencies in abolitionist views see Eltis 1982: 196ff.

9. Eltis 1982; Temperley 1977: 106ff.; Davis 1984: Ch. 6; Davis 1987; Haskell 1985. At the other end of the spectrum, the near autonomy of the subsistence farmer was seen as barbarous and incapable of generating progress and prosperity.

10. The extent to which the abolitionist success was determined by humanitarian feelings, by national interest, or by the new ideology of the expanding capitalist system has been the subject of much academic debate, which need not detain us here. For completely opposing views see Coupland 1964 and Williams 1944. For more sophisticated discussions see Davis 1966; Anstey 1975; Craton 1974; Drescher 1977; Bolt and Drescher 1980; Eltis and Walvin 1981; Temperley 1981, 1985; Engerman and Eltis 1980.

11. The abolitionist arguments proved mistaken. Slavery was compatible with capital-

Forms of Abolition before the Partition of Africa

The British "Caribbean Model"

In Britain a long political struggle resulted in the outlawing of slavery in 1833 in Canada, in the British Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and South African colonies, but not in India and other eastern possessions. Slaveholding by actual British subjects also became illegal everywhere except in the eastern dependencies. The blow was softened in the colonies by the payment of compensation to slave-owners and by a transitional period during which ex-slaves remained with them as apprentices.[12] Laws were also passed maintaining former owners' rights to land and preventing former slaves from gaining political power or combining to express grievances. Moreover, penalties for vagrancy and nonfulfilment of contracts, eviction laws, and regressive tax policies were enacted to discourage ex-slaves from leaving their former owners (see, for example, Craton 1974: 293ff.; Foner 1983: 39–73; Packwood 1975: 185).

Despite these efforts, freed slaves often avoided selling their labor power. Where possible they became artisans, smallholders, and subsistence farmers, and women and children withdrew from the work force. Production declined in many areas and planters resorted to other forms of coerced labor. Indians, Chinese, and for awhile African recaptives were imported as indentured labor.[13] These were ostensibly free people who had voluntarily signed contracts and were to be repatriated at the end of their term of service.[14] But this system, often denounced as a new form of slavery, provided employers with a cheap, coercible, and disciplined labor force.

Most British abolitionists had not set out to break up the plantations or the hierarchical organization of the colonies and were unprepared for the labor crisis and fall in production which followed the end of slavery in some Caribbean colonies (Engerman 1982: 195–205; Engerman 1985: 225–36; Green 1985: 183–96; Eltis 1982: 201–2). They had expected freed slaves to respond more positively to market forces and sell their labor power

ism and slave labor continued to yield large quantities of low-cost commodities outside the British empire after the British abolished slavery and the slave trade in their territories (Genovese 1965; Fogel and Engerman 1974; Scott 1985).

12. The apprenticeship system was not mandatory and was not applied, for instance, in Antigua or Bermuda (Craton 1974: 281; Packwood 1975: 183–84; Green 1976: 264–67). Where there was an oversupply of labor and the laws for the control of freed slaves were considered adequate, slaves became completely free immediately.

13. Recaptives were slaves released from slave ships, in most cases by the British navy and taken to Freetown, the Seychelles, and sometimes handed over to missionaries on the East African coast and elsewhere.

14. Green 1976: 276ff.; Tinker 1974: Ch. 3, 1984; Rodney 1981: 32–35; Schuler 1980: 11–29; Cumpston 1953: 78–83.

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and agricultural output.[15] The withdrawal of many from the work force combined with quickening racism, supported by contemporary pseudo-scientific theories, and led to the beliefs that Africans were lazy, child-like, and incapable of responding to market incentives and that they had to be led out of barbarism by Europeans (Curtin 1964: 363ff.). Enthusiasm for complete abolition waned in Britain in the face of the responses to freedom of both former slaves and owners.

In the British Cape Colony in South Africa the reactions of slave-owners, who were mainly Afrikaners, also provided a salutary lesson. They had bitterly opposed the emancipation act, and it became one of the grievances which led many of them to leave the colony in the Great Trek, although slave labor was soon replaced by African squatters, tenants, and cheap black labor.[16]

In the tiny British West African colonies, forts, and settlements,[17] which maintained a precarious existence only by adapting to African conditions, administrators convinced their superiors in London that any attempt to interfere with African slaveholding would lead to widespread resistance and drive away the trade upon which they depended for revenue (Newbury 1965, 1: 294–98; Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2; McSheffrey 1983: 352–53). Originally, therefore, the laws were enforced only against Europeans, who were made to free their slaves without compensation. But the legal advisors to the British Crown ruled that laws must apply to everyone in the colonies, which were considered actual British soil. To minimize their impact, however, the colonies were henceforth kept as small as possible, and surrounding areas were designated as merely under British "protection." In a protectorate "native customs" could be allowed to continue, except for the more brutal ones, and full British administration did not have to be implemented. Therefore, by the mid-nineteenth century, slavery, although outlawed in theory in Britain's West African colonies, was often "winked at" in practice even decades after abolition (Miers 1975: 157–60). In protectorates, on the other hand, it was not even under attack.

Slaves often made a mockery of these legal niceties when runaways

15. The decline was also attributable to the ending of the preferential market in Britain for West Indian sugar by 1854 (see, *inter alia*, Craton 1974: 306ff.).

16. G. W. Eybers, Ed., *Select constitutional documents illustrating South African history 1795–1910* (New York, 1918), p. 143, 1969 edition, letter from Piet Retief. Feeling was particularly bitter because the compensation for slaves freed was not only low but had to be claimed in London. This was easier for British Caribbean owners than for South African owners, who had to use agents who charged for their services (Davenport 1977: 33ff.; Wilson and Thompson 1969: 297ff.).

17. These consisted of a small colony in Sierra Leone, a fort on the Gambia, and small settlements on the Gold Coast which finally became colonies only in 1843.

from protectorates and neighboring areas took refuge in British West African possessions. This posed a dilemma for administrators. To harbor such fugitives would have risked alienating their owners—some of whom ruled powerful states such as Asante—and driving away trade, if merchants, afraid of losing their slave porters or agents, were to have taken their custom elsewhere. But returning them might have provoked a storm of protest among British humanitarians. Officials, therefore, resorted to pragmatic policies, sometimes liberating fugitives, particularly in cases of extreme cruelty, and sometimes returning them, especially if they belonged to Britain's African allies (see, for example, Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2).

The British "Indian Model"

The abolition act of 1833 had specifically omitted India, Ceylon, and St. Helena, and it was not applied in the Far Eastern dependencies. In India, the East India Company government, which knew little of the real condition of slaves in its vast territories and in some areas was heavily dependent on the owning class for its administrators, resisted emancipation until the British government, spurred on by the humanitarians, forced it to act in 1843 (Temperley 1972: 93ff.; Hjejle 1966: 96–98; Chattopadhyay 1977: 170ff.). The company found an ingenious solution. Slave-dealing was forbidden and slavery was simply declared to have no legal status in British India.[18] Most slaves, however, were not informed of their freedom, let alone encouraged to leave their owners, but if they did so, they could not be recovered through legal action or by force. No compensation was paid to owners and no consistent attempt was made to provide slaves who left with land or alternative employment. Without legal sanction or new recruits it was believed that slavery would simply die out. Not until 1862 did it become an offence to own slaves.

This Indian model of abolition was designed to end slavery gradually so that slaves would not be suddenly deprived of their livelihood and masters would have time to protect their interests by offering slaves better terms. Meanwhile neither public order nor the economy was jeopardized. In practice, however, many destitute slaves, facing eviction, were forced to borrow from their masters and fell into hereditary debt bondage.[19]

18. The law applied only to areas under direct British rule and not to Indian states under British protection.

19. Hjejle's (1966) study emphasizes that slavery in India was by no means uniform and that the impact of the act of 1843 varied considerably in different localities. She also stresses how little the British actually knew about either slavery or the working of the act. It should be noted that debt bondage remains a problem in India today, but its victims include persons of free as well as slave descent.

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If this model did little for the slaves, for the British it offered a cheap and easy solution. It quickly came to be accepted and justified as the least disruptive method of ending slavery among non-European peoples in the expanding British empire. Since the form of slavery practiced in India was believed to be free of the cruelties of Western slavery (Temperley 1972: 93ff.; Hjejle 1966: 93–96; Chattopadhyay 1977: 221–54)—hence "benevolent"—and since little was known about the working of the law at the grass-roots level, this form of emancipation was acceptable to the humanitarians, and it became the model for abolition in British Africa, where slavery was also considered "benign."

Thus in 1874, when the British annexed the Gold Coast, their first sizable protectorate in West Africa, the Colonial Office, acting reluctantly under humanitarian pressure, applied this model. They were assured by Sir Bartle Frere, former governor of Bombay, that in India it had caused "no disturbance of labour relations—where the slaves were content they went on serving . . . there was no excitement and no occasion for compensation" (Dumett 1981: 209).[20] The governor of the Gold Coast issued an ordinance forbidding any court, British or African, to recognize slavery and declaring that all children born after a certain date would be free. Some rulers protested, but there was little open resistance and trade was not affected (Dumett 1981: 210; Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2; McSheffrey 1983).[21] In the years that followed, British officials were to become firmly convinced that this was the ideal form of emancipation (Cooper 1980: 41; Lugard 1893: 1: 182–83).

French and Portuguese Forms of Abolition

By the time of the partition of Africa all the Western powers had outlawed the slave trade, and all but Brazil, which followed suit in 1888, had abolished slavery. They were driven by a whole range of motives, in which humanitarianism was only one strand. Only the policies of France and Portugal—the major colonial powers in Africa before partition, besides Britain—need concern us here. In neither country did the antislavery movement command the widespread public support it had in Britain. The strong religious fervor that fuelled the British movement

20. Sir Bartle Frere was just back from his famous journey to Zanzibar, as a result of which the sultan was forced to outlaw both the sale of slaves on Zanzibar and Pemba and all export of slaves from his territories. While there, Frere worked closely with Sir John Kirk, whom Frederick Lugard (see pages 23, 26, fn. 27) considered to be the greatest authority on slavery in Africa (Lugard 1893, 1: 182). The views of Lugard were much influenced by Kirk and probably Frere.

21. McSheffrey, (1983: 358ff.), however, believes many slaves did desert their owners. For further discussion see pages 30–31.

was lacking. Both countries were predominantly Roman Catholic, and the pope did not condemn even the slave trade until 1839 (Maxwell 1975: 73–74).

French philosophers had been amongst those who laid the groundwork for the intellectual and moral attack on slavery, and France was the first country to outlaw it throughout its territories in 1794, during the French Revolution. However, this was not in response to any public pressure but because the slaves had rebelled in Martinique and St. Domingue (Seeber 1971: 162–72; Davis 1975: 137–48; Daget 1980: 67). In fact, slavery and the slave trade were reinstated under Napoleon in 1802 to restore order and rebuild the colonial empire. Thus, the first French experiment with emancipation had been short lived or, as in Mauritius, had provoked a planter rebellion and never been enforced (Nwulia 1981: 35). By the time of the restoration of the monarchy in 1815, abolition was associated with the revolution and with the British victors in the recent wars which had robbed France of much of her empire. Most French abolitionists belonged to the small Protestant minority and were isolated into tiny intellectual circles without support from the Catholic masses (Drescher 1980: 44; Daget 1971: 42–58; Daget 1980: 64–77).

France, under British pressure, outlawed the slave trade in 1818. Although she posted an antislavery squadron off the West African coast and signed various short-lived treaties with Britain, she took only sporadic action against the traffic (Daget 1971: 15–58; Bouche 1968: 56; Miers 1975: 15–23). When the revolution of 1848 swept radicals into power, they again abolished slavery in French colonies. Since at that time the French regarded all French possessions as actual French soil, the slaves of French citizens and residents of St. Louis and Gorée, in modern Senegal, were actually freed. But when neighboring peoples refused to come and trade, administrators tried to minimize the effects of the laws. Like the British, they dealt selectively with fugitive slaves, in practice freeing those of their enemies and returning those of their allies. In the 1870s and 1880s they even disannexed some of their conquered territories, turning them into protectorates to avoid having to free the slaves of their African inhabitants (Klein 1986; Barry 1985: 276ff.; Renault 1972: 11–14). Moreover, they allowed slave children to continue to be imported into their colonies and turned a blind eye when Frenchmen outside the colonies held slaves (Klein 1986). In the French Caribbean and Indian Ocean colonies, French planters faced, like their British counterparts, a labor shortage after emancipation, and resorted to importing African slaves from west-central Africa and Mozambique under the guise of "free contract labor," or *libres engagés* (Renault 1976: 60–93). This barely concealed slave traffic from Mozambique to the Indian Ocean islands was still active in the 1880s.

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The abolition movement in Portugal was even weaker than in France, being limited to a small group of liberals without popular or Church support. The export of slaves from Portuguese territories was outlawed in 1836, but the decree was ignored. The export traffic continued openly into the 1840s and then illicitly, supplying Brazil until 1853 and Cuba to the late 1860s. After this slaves were still exported, but under the guise of contract labor, to the Portuguese islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as to the French Indian Ocean islands.[22] In 1854 a reformist government began to dismantle slavery, believing this was necessary for the economic regeneration of the moribund Portuguese colonies. Owners were not compensated, and slaves were simply declared to be their unpaid apprentices. Complete freedom was scheduled for 1878, and this was confirmed by the abolition law of 1875. Portugal, however, could not enforce this legislation except in coastal towns. But even there slaves continued to be imported, bought, and sold under the guise of contract labor. Former slaves were illegally forced to prolong their contracts and subjected to strict vagrancy laws (Heywood, Ch. 14; Clarence-Smith 1979: 35ff.; Clarence-Smith 1985: 23ff.). On the *prazos* of the Zambezi, which resembled African polities more than colonial states (Isaacman 1972: 156–63), the laws were meaningless. Not only did Portuguese settlers continue to acquire slaves, but officials connived at the contract-labor traffic (Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7; Duffy 1967: 178ff.). Although the Portuguese had theoretically outlawed slavery in their territories in 1878, in practice both the slave trade and slavery continued on a large scale.

The Antislavery Movement and the Partition of Africa

By the late 1860s Britain had persuaded all the major European and American maritime and commercial powers, except France, to sign treaties outlawing the slave trade and establishing mutual rights to search each others' shipping (Miers 1975: Ch. 1). Britain also had treaties against the traffic with a number of coastal African and Asian polities (ibid.: 2). These distinguished between "domestic" (non-European) slavery, which was not under attack, and the export slave trade, which Britain wished to stamp out. The closure of the markets had virtually ended the export of slaves across the Atlantic, but it continued on a small scale under the guise of contract labor to the French Antilles and Indian Ocean islands, as well as to the Portuguese offshore islands. The traffic to the Muslim

22. Duffy 1967: Ch. 6–7; Renault 1976: 60ff.; Vail and White 1980: 14ff.; Heywood, Ch. 14; Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7.

world, particularly from northeastern and East Africa, also continued as did slaving in Africa itself.

Attention was forcefully drawn to the slave trade in eastern Africa in the 1860s by the British missionary explorer David Livingstone, who revitalized the ideological foundations of emancipation by advocating the salvation and regeneration of Africa through the promotion of legitimate commerce, Christianity, and (European) civilization. His revelations of an active and devastating slave traffic in eastern Africa, supplying Portuguese and French colonies and the Muslim world, led Britain to sign new treaties with Zanzibar, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire which reduced the export slave traffic to the Muslim world to a small smuggling traffic by the 1880s (ibid., 75–116). Livingstone's appeals also led to increased missionary penetration of eastern Africa. Missions, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, had originally come to the African coast to work with recaptives. Now several Protestant mission societies established missions in the interior. Hard on their heels came the Catholic White Fathers founded by Cardinal Lavigerie. Their work was hampered by wars and raids, the hostility of slavers, and the dilemma posed by fugitive slaves, since harboring them alienated their owners and returning them was against missionary principles (Hanna 1956: Ch. 1; Oliver 1952: 14, Chs. 2–3; Renault 1971, 1: 155ff.). The problems of the White Fathers moved Lavigerie to launch in 1888, with papal blessing, a Roman Catholic antislavery "crusade" (Renault 1971, 2: 73ff.). Preaching fiery sermons, he called on Europe to send out young Christians to fight the scourge and to found antislavery societies to support them. He appealed to all denominations, but he brought firmly into the antislavery movement the Catholics of France, Portugal, and Spain, the latter of which acquired several small and widely dispersed African colonies in the course of the nineteenth century,[23] and the Catholics of the new participants in the scramble for Africa—Italy, Germany, and Belgium, whose king, Leopold II, was building a personal empire in the Congo.

This late nineteenth-century antislavery commitment by both Catholics and Protestants provided the colonial powers with a moral justification for the conquest of Africa, which they used to rally public support. The clearest expression of this was the Brussels Conference of 1889–1890, which resulted in the first far-reaching international agreement against the African slave trade on land and sea—the Brussels Act of 1890. This bound the signatories, who included all the colonial powers, to suppress

23. Spain had abolished slavery in its Rio Muni possession in 1859, long before abolishing it in Puerto Rico or Cuba, in order to induce slaves to flee to Fernando Po from Príncipe and to please the British (Sundiata, forthcoming; Clarence-Smith, pers. comm.).

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slave-raiding and -trading, and to succor and repatriate fugitive and freed slaves. Although the colonial powers were, henceforth, committed to action against slaving, they were not bound to end slavery. Their experiences in the Caribbean and elsewhere had made even the British aware of the dangers of wholesale emancipation and wary of any definite commitment to end African slavery (Miers 1975: 206ff.). The Brussels Act also cloaked the entire conquest of Africa in a humanitarian guise by presenting European rule and capitalist enterprise, including the employment of freed slaves, as antislavery measures. Thus, the ideology of the antislavery movement became part and parcel of the European mission to civilize Africa. Henceforth the colonial powers could not tolerate open slave-raiding or -trading or allow slave-owners to recapture fugitives without risking protests from fellow signatories of the act or an outcry from the European public, alerted to the slavery issue by the cardinal's crusade and the Brussels Conference.

But this ideological and legal commitment to ending the slave trade and, eventually, slavery was in practice usually subordinated to the pragmatic agenda of colonial administrators, who, even if they wished to take decisive action, found their hands tied by the very real weakness of the colonial state.

The Role of the Colonial States in Ending Slavery

The chapters in this collection reveal the ambivalence of colonial administrators towards slavery, especially during the formative phases of colonial rule, when they were understaffed and underfunded and needed alliances with indigenous elites, whose social and political power and wealth were often tied to the possession of slaves. Slaves were frequently the largest capital investment Africans had, and some administrators were reluctant to interfere with African customs they hardly understood and with forms of property they felt bound to respect in principle. They feared that wholesale abolition would provoke resistance, disrupt the economy, and saddle the colonial government with destitute slaves for whom they would have to provide. Not surprisingly, therefore, they often disregarded metropolitan directives. Sometimes they justified this by arguing that determined action would cause political and economic disruption; in other cases they reported that slavery was not a significant problem or even that it did not exist in their territories (see, for example, Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5).

Nevertheless, colonial rule eventually led to the end of slavery in most of Africa. This was the result of, first, the structural changes in the political economy which affected slave-capture and -holding; second, of the

antislavery policies of colonial governments; and third, of changes in regional and international commodity markets, and in local economic and demographic conditions, which affected the demand for labor and determined the options open to freed slaves. All these factors are closely interwoven, and each reinforced the other so that it is not possible to discuss them separately.

Colonial Conquest and Changes in the Political Economy

Colonial conquest and pacification ended the wars which had generated the majority of African slaves. Slaves could still be obtained by kidnapping, judicial sanction, and voluntary enslavement, but their numbers were much reduced. The decline of warfare—and enslavement through capture—precipitated a radical readjustment. For rulers and elites, whose wealth and power had largely depended on the capture and use of slaves as labor, as a form of capital accumulation, as articles of patronage to reward faithful officials and soldiers, and as goods for payment of tribute or for trade, this sometimes amounted to a crisis. It also caused a crisis of authority for some chiefs and lineage heads by undermining their ability to accumulate followers and dependents; and it undercut the activities of those merchants and freebooters who had both traded heavily in slaves and had also used them as agents, porters, and laborers.

Although a number of African states survived conquest and were reconstituted under various forms of "indirect rule," and those elements of the elite who were willing to submit were able to remain intact, colonial rule undercut some of the major reasons for maintaining slaves. Political power now depended, not on large armies, loyal officials, and numbers of dependents, but on the support of the colonial government. While a ruler with many followers might carry more influence with the colonial administration, and an individual with many slaves could still exert considerable power locally, in the new political economy slaves were no longer a direct source of formal political power or prestige. Moreover, they could no longer be used, as in the past, to fight or as tribute payments.

People, however, continued to be in high demand as labor and as dependents. Opportunities for the commercial use of labor expanded during the colonial period, particularly as conquest gave rise to new groups of nonproducers including colonial soldiers and the residents of expanding commercial centers, who turned to local markets for goods and services. The degree to which owners managed to continue to benefit from the labor of their former slaves or to replace them with other dependents or even with free workers depended, as will be shown, on a whole range of changes in the political economy. In many cases owners were able to avert a crisis caused by the drastic reduction in the supply of slaves, be-

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cause the long delay between conquest and the end of slavery enabled them to find other means of maintaining their wealth and power. The cause of this delay was that colonial states were fragile entities caught between, on one hand, metropolitan pressures to become self-supporting and produce goods for export as soon as possible, and, on the other, the need to conciliate and control the various social groups under their rule. In this dilemma they tackled separately each component of slavery: its reproduction by raids or birth; the sale of slaves; the use of slaves for bridewealth payments, for tribute, gifts, or other transfers; and finally, the possession of slaves. The aim of many colonial administrators was to cause minimal social, political, and economic disruption.

Colonial Antislavery Policies: Slave-Raiding and -Trading

In the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth centuries, the European colonial states, the Amharic Empire of Ethiopia, and the Americo-Liberian state pursued military conquest and pacification. The European powers often justified their military expeditions in terms of ending slave-raiding. This was in fact their first antislavery objective, because raids created disorders and population dislocation, which ran counter to their long-term plans for economic development. But even raiding had to be tolerated until the colonial powers were strong enough to defeat the raiders, and there were unadministered areas which it continued unabated for years.[24] Early colonial efforts were sometimes limited to directing raids away from administered territories. Thus in 1904 the French agreement with Dar al-Kuti merely bound the ruler not to raid to the southeast. Only in 1908 was he forbidden to raid "without French approval" (Cordell, Ch. 4). Slave raids in the Ethiopian borderlands continued into the 1930s, conducted by government officials and explained as "tax collecting" (Garretson 1986: 205–6; Hickey 1984: Ch. 2; Miers, forthcoming).

Far from ending the demand for slave labor, some colonial states became for awhile primary recruiters. Slaves were "freed" and then conscripted into both the Belgian and French forces and the Portuguese police (Echenberg 1986: 312ff.; Roberts, Ch. 9; Northrup, Ch. 16; Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7). Colonial armies relied heavily on African allies, who were often allowed to keep captives, particularly women (Bouche 1968; see, for example, 80ff.; Twaddle, Ch. 3). Similarly, Ethiopian soldiers acquired large numbers of slaves during their conquests (see,

24. See, *inter alia*, Cordell, Ch. 4; Heywood, Ch. 14; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; McDougall, Ch. 12; Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7; Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2; Clarence-Smith 1979: 64, 69; Maier 1985.

inter alia, McCann, Ch. 11). Colonial rule created a growing demand for labor for porterage, for building infrastructure, and for producing food for the burgeoning administrative centers. In some areas officials bought or freed slaves to work or farm for the administration.[25] Catholic missions also initially bought slaves to form a nucleus of converts and to use as labor (Cordell, Ch. 4; Northrup, Ch. 16; Klein 1986; Renault 1971, 1: 172ff.). Sometimes colonial administrators simply demanded labor from local chiefs, who supplied it by reducing their neighbors to slaves or by buying slaves (Northrup, Ch. 16; Heywood, Ch. 14). Cooperative African chiefs sometimes arrested slave caravans in the expectation that they would be allowed to keep the captives they "freed" (Klein 1986). In sum, the ever-growing demand for labor engendered by the economic development accompanying colonial rule was often met by the slave trade as long as there remained sources of supply.[26]

Despite the colonial antislavery rhetoric, officials moved very gradually against the slave traffic for fear of provoking owners denied a primary form of accumulating power and wealth and of disrupting the fragile peace and the gradually expanding production and commerce. All the colonial powers eventually passed laws against slave-dealing, but it was often years before they enforced them. Thus, the French did not mention slave-trading in their treaties with the slaving state of Dar al-Kuti until 1908 (Cordell, Ch. 4), and they did not interfere with the operations of the "grands nomades" of Mauritania even in the 1930s (McDougall, Ch. 12). In most treaties the Portuguese did not forbid the traffic with the Ovimbundu, who were conquered between 1900 and 1910, but who continued to deal in slaves to supply labor for the Portuguese sector of the economy for many years (Heywood, Ch. 14). The Germans passed laws against slave-trading but took no action in northern Togoland until after 1900 (Maier 1985), and in remote areas of Tanganyika slave markets still existed in 1903 (Iliffe 1979: 131). In Cameroon, the Germans outlawed trading in 1895 but did not enforce the laws until after 1901 (Austen 1977: 326–27). The British began really vigorous prosecutions in the Gold Coast only in 1911 (Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2). Slave-dealing, particularly in women, was rife in the Uele District of the Belgian Congo in 1910 (Northrup, Ch. 16). The Italians outlawed it in Somaliland only in 1903–1904 (Cassanelli, Ch. 10). Sometimes officials interpreted the laws selectively to allow some forms of trafficking but not others. Thus

25. Cassanelli, Ch. 10; Cordell, Ch. 4; Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7; Klein, Ch. 6; Northrup, Ch. 16; Roberts, Ch. 9; Bouche 1968: Ch. 9.

26. Clarence-Smith 1979: 69; Klein 1977: 338–52; Brooks 1975: 53–54; Swindell 1980: 100–101; Heywood, Ch. 14; Northrup, Ch. 16; Roberts, Ch. 9.

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in the Mauritanian Adrar up to 1918, the French tolerated internal slave-dealing but not the export of slaves (McDougall, Ch. 12).

By the First World War, however, open raiding and large-scale dealing had ceased in colonial Africa, and it tapered off in Ethiopia in the 1920s. In Liberia, where indigenous peoples were enslaved by Americo-Liberian colonists and exported to the Spanish island of Fernando Po under the guise of contract labor, the traffic caused a scandal as late as 1930 (Sundiata 1980: 11–32; Sundiata, forthcoming). Cases mainly involving the kidnapping of small children, transfers disguised as adoption or early marriage, persisted but on an ever-decreasing scale right through and even after the colonial period (Ohadike, Ch. 15; Miers 1975: 296ff.; Klein and Roberts 1987). A small export traffic to the Middle East continued even after the Second World War. The victims were kidnapped, tricked by offers of good jobs, or imported under the guise of pilgrims to Mecca (Greenidge 1958: 52; Miers 1975: 295–96; Miers, research notes).

Colonial Antislavery Policies: The Suppression of Slavery

The colonial states were also slow to tackle slavery itself, and then action was often dictated by local events or by metropolitan or international pressure. Administrators defended inaction by arguing that African slavery was "benign" and that if attacked only at the level of reproduction—by ending new enslavement—it would die "a natural death" without injustice to the owners, whose property and customs would be respected, or to the slaves, who were mainly happy with their lot and who, if suddenly released, would have no means of support and might become a burden on the administration or turn to crime and prostitution. Officials may also have had less incentive to attack slavery because a high proportion of slaves were women (see pages 38–40, 52 for a discussion of women slaves and emancipation). In addition, they were anxious to recruit male rather than female labor for the colonial economy, and they were unwilling to undermine male control over women in general (Robertson 1983: 229–30; Lovett 1986), even to the point of actually reimposing such control in areas where it had been broken down during the social and political changes immediately preceding colonial rule (for example, see Wright 1983: 248).

Because of their efforts to soft-pedal and avoid emancipation, the colonial rulers allowed the initiative to pass to the slaves in some cases and provoked the very change in the relations of production that officials most feared—mass departures.

The most dramatic instances of this occurred in parts of French West Africa, when, after a decade of ambiguous policies, the French issued a judicial code in 1903 which did not recognize the legal status of slavery

and in 1905 outlawed new enslavement and slave-trading (in effect following the British Indian model of abolition). When slaves in the French Soudan and Guinea realized that owners could no longer force them to stay, thousands either refused to work or simply left (Klein, Ch. 6; Roberts, Ch. 9). This doubtless contributed to the extreme caution of the French elsewhere. Thus in Ubangi-Shari, when they finally conquered the local rulers, they ignored the laws and often returned runaways in the hope of sustaining the little existing economic activity and preventing further emigration from their already depopulated territory (Cordell, Ch. 4). Similarly, in parts of Mauritania, where the French had specifically promised to respect the "customs, values, property and religion" of the nomads as a condition of their submission, the laws were not enforced (McDougall, Ch. 12).

Like the French in the Soudan, the Italians on the Benadir coast also lost the initiative to the slaves. The Benadir Company acquired rights to the Somali coast from the sultan of Zanzibar in 1892, and was ostensibly bound to apply the decrees outlawing the slave trade and slavery which the British had forced on the sultan in the 1870s (Cassanelli, Ch. 10; Miers 1975: 93). In the coastal towns, which were all it controlled, the company bought the freedom of some slaves but discouraged them from leaving their masters, made them pay their masters for board and lodging, and returned runaways. As late as 1903, the governor claimed to know nothing of the sultan's decrees. Only because public attention was focussed by crusading journalists on Italian complicity with slave dealers did the government outlaw the slave trade in 1903–1904 and declare free all slaves born after 1890. The result was a stream of departures to areas beyond Italian control. By the time these were conquered in 1908, many slaves had found refuge in Muslim settlements or autonomous villages, thereby evading Italian efforts to force them into the capitalist sector (Cassanelli 1987; Cassanelli, Ch. 10).

The range of abolition policies was perhaps nowhere greater than in British territories. Although British officials applied the Indian model of abolition most consistently, actual policies varied greatly. In Kenya alone there were three variants. In the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, where owners were Arab-Swahili Muslims and most slaves worked on clove plantations, the legal status of slavery was abolished in 1897. But owners retained their rights to land and were paid compensation. To prevent ex-slaves from withdrawing their labor and endangering the economy, the abolition decree made them liable to tax, corvée labor, and draconian vagrancy laws. Those who wished to leave had to go to court, where they were pressured into remaining on the plantations as contract labor (Cooper 1980: 72ff.). A decade later when abolition was attempted in the strip

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of the Kenya coast leased from the sultan of Zanzibar, slavery was in full decline. The Zanzibar experience had shown that ex-slaves would not freely sell their labor, and officials decided that the coastal plantation economy was not likely to revive. The British recognized the owners' titles to land, but they were paid minimal compensation for the loss of their slaves, and freed slaves were not pressured into accepting contracts. To avoid interference in domestic affairs, concubines were excluded from the abolition decrees both on the islands and on the coast. Not until 1909 were all slaves, including concubines, declared free throughout the sultan's dominions (Cooper 1980: 39ff., 173ff.). In Kenya beyond the coastal strip, where owners were not Muslim, where societies were small in scale, and where there was no important commodity production for export, the legal status of slavery was abolished without compensation.

Similar variations in policy emerged in Nigeria. In the north, Frederick Lugard became the first British governor in 1901 and established a system of indirect rule through traditional authorities.[27] He ended the legal status of slavery, prohibited new enslavement, and declared free all children born after 1 April 1901. Since he believed that slaves did not appreciate freedom unless they worked for it, he directed the emancipation process in the Muslim states through an existing Islamic institution known as *murgu*, by which owners allowed slaves to work on their own in return for regular payment of an agreed sum. Under Lugard, slaves could enter into murgu arrangements to buy their redemption (Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13). Because Lugard made it difficult for slaves who simply left their owners without permission to get land or jobs elsewhere, murgu arrangements engineered an orderly transition out of slavery and placed part of the cost of manumission squarely on the shoulders of the slaves (Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; Lennihan 1982: 116–24).

On the other side of the coin, Lugard's successors followed tax policies which encouraged owners to break up large slaveholdings whose output was taxed, in favor of tax-free murgu and tenancy payments. This, together with favorable land tenure policies, led to the emergence of smallholders, among them ex-slaves, producing for local and export markets. This process was encouraged by the need to pay their own taxes in cash and by the commodity-production boom generated by the ar-

27. Lugard's views on slavery are discussed in Lugard 1893, 1: 168–212. He had gained experience in East and Central Africa. He had not only fought slave-traders in the Nyasa region but had served in Buganda. He had also negotiated the freedom of the slaves who had taken refuge in British missions on the Kenya coast including the one at Rabai; and he had been involved in arranging for slaves in the fugitive slave settlements at Fuladoyo and Makongeni to redeem themselves. He later served on two of the League of Nations slavery committees.

rival of the railway in 1912 (Hogendorn 1978: 92–113). The British, however, were not fully able to enforce their gradualist policies, because many slaves in Northern Nigeria took the initiative themselves and simply fled (M. Smith 1981: 67–68). Their numbers included concubines, whom the British regarded as similar to wives, but who indicated their own feelings by leaving (Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13).

In Southern Nigeria British officials moved faster than in the north. In 1901 they proclaimed all slaves free and all transactions in people illegal. But then their courage failed, and to conciliate owners and avoid dislocating trade, they forbade the now "freed" slaves from leaving the "canoe houses," which were the basic economic and social units in the Niger Delta area.[28] They also allowed owners to procure children as apprentices, and imposed vagrancy laws to discourage ex-slaves from running away. The system remained in force until the eve of the First World War, when the flogging of a boy who left his "house" without permission, caused an outcry among humanitarians in Britain (Ohadike, Ch. 15; Miers 1975: 301–2).

International Pressure to End Slavery

The chapters that follow make it clear that criticism by the European press, the educated public, and national and international organizations affected the timing of abolition. Thus, the British in the Gold Coast and East Africa were pressured by the humanitarian lobby to end the legal status of slavery (Cooper 1980: 34–46; Dumett 1981: 204–10; Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2). The French ended it in West Africa under metropolitan pressure (Klein 1986). Denunciation in the Portuguese press and British protests caused the new Portuguese Republic to outlaw slavery for the second time in 1910 (Heywood, Ch. 14). Similar revelations led the Italians to outlaw it in Somaliland in 1903–1904, and the scandals attendant on the demise of King Leopold's regime moved the Belgians to outlaw it in the Congo in 1910 (Northrup, Ch. 16).

During the First World War the Brussels Act of 1890 lapsed and in 1919 it was abrogated. But in the 1920s, slaving on the Ethiopian borders and a revival of the export traffic across the Red Sea to Arabia caused a storm in Britain which led to the appointment of the Temporary Slavery Commission by the League of Nations. This resulted in the Slavery Convention of 1926, which bound signatories to "progressively" suppress slavery itself in all its forms. Slavery was loosely defined as the condition of a person over whom "all or any of the rights of ownership" were exer-

28. Not only was the legislation contradictory but it was also extended to areas where there were no "houses" (Ohadike, Ch. 15; Anene 1966: 305–8).

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The league inquiries and the convention had some impact. For instance, they caused the British Colonial Office to insist in 1927 that the legal status of slavery be abolished in Sierra Leone, where, until the previous year, administrators had helped recover runaway slaves (Grace 1975: 234ff.); and they led to a belated announcement that Basarwa in the Bangwato Reserve were free to leave their masters, although the legal status of slavery was not ended in Bechuanaland until 1936 (Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5). Fear of league inquiries also resulted in more stringent measures against the slave trade in Ethiopia (McCann, Ch. 11; Miers, forthcoming). Conversely, the Italians, hoping to win international support and approval, abolished slavery when they conquered Ethiopia in 1936. In Liberia a league inquiry led to the suppression of the contract-labor traffic to Spanish Fernando Po (Sundiata 1980: 51–79; Sundiata, forthcoming). International attention generated by these league inquiries and the establishment of a permanent league antislavery committee in the 1930s, thus led to legal changes and caused colonial governments to examine their policies. Greater awareness of international antislavery pressure, however, often did little to better the material condition of freed slaves (Miers 1986).

The Impact of Changes in Regional and International Markets

Legal abolition ended state support for slavery but it was only one factor in the complex process of emancipation. Changes in the material and social well-being of ex-slaves, while they took place in the context of colonialism and were sometimes the result of conscious steps taken by administrators, were usually determined by economic factors. Thus, changes in regional and world markets affected the demand for labor quite apart from colonial policies. For instance, Igbo slaveholdings became less viable because of a drop in palm-oil prices caused by the world depressions in the late nineteenth century (Ohadike, Ch. 15). The depressions of the early 1920s and the 1930s had similar effects on some areas. There were also times of accelerated production like those stimulated by the rubber and peanut booms of the early colonial period, and there were serious dislocations of the economy during both world wars. Temporary disruptions were also caused by natural calamities such as the drought in Central Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Heywood, Ch. 14; Dias 1981; Miller 1982: 17–22) and the epizootic which hit livestock from Ethiopia to Bechuanaland in the late nineteenth century (see, *inter alia*, Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5). There were also areas

where indigenous production was dislocated by colonial policies, as for example on the Kenya and Benadir coasts and parts of Nyasaland (Cooper 1980: Ch. 5; Cassanelli, Ch. 10; Lovett 1986).

In many areas, however, colonial pacification brought an expansion in commodity production for local and export markets. This increased the demand for agricultural labor and for miners. It stimulated service industries, providing an ever-growing need for porters, canoemen, camel drivers, and trading agents (Coquery-Vidrovitch and Lovejoy 1985: 12ff.), as well as for construction workers to build urban, administrative, and mining centers and the roads and railways linking them to the coast.

These economic changes affected slavery in several important ways. In the early years of colonial rule, the demand for ever more labor was often filled by the enslavement of new peoples. Some were captured, some kidnapped, some purchased, and some, as the result of famine caused by droughts or epizootics, were driven to become the slaves or pawns of those who could feed them. This early economic expansion also provided new incentives to owners to invest in slaves even as the supply declined. When the Benguela railway reached the Angolan highlands, the Ovimbundu began growing cash crops for which they acquired numbers of slaves (Heywood, Ch. 14). As the supply of new slaves declined, however, owners often tried to exploit more fully the slaves they had. In the French Soudan, anxious to supply the colonial commodity market in Bamako, they increased the length of the working day and lowered slave rations (Roberts, Ch. 9). Similar steps were taken by Somali owners (Cassanelli, Ch. 10). Such actions soured relations, provoked resistance, and finally led to massive slave departures. On the other hand, the great demand for labor and the expansion of regional economies, made their departure easier by providing opportunities for former slaves to establish themselves on their own (see pages 33–38). Dynamic regional economies, however, were unevenly distributed over Africa, and these opportunities for freed slaves depended on their proximity to areas of growth.

Changes in the economy also influenced colonial policies because administrators worried about upsetting the delicate balance of control and coercion just when local commodity production was beginning to increase. All of them wanted a disciplined, hard-working labor force to produce goods for export and to be available for public works on demand, as well as a small number of urban wage laborers with varying degrees of skill. But there were great differences of opinion as to how to achieve it. Thus, in Nigeria, while Lugard wanted to keep ex-slaves working on their ex-owners' plantations, his successor, Girouard, wanted large slaveholdings to be broken up and ex-slaves and other farmers to become

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smallholders producing for the market on their own (Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; Lennihan 1982: 121–32). The French governor, William Ponty, began by opposing swift emancipation in the Soudan because he considered slavery the backbone of the economy, but by 1908 he had decided that freeing slaves was economically desirable in order to create a mobile labor force for development along capitalist lines (Klein 1983; Roberts, Ch. 9). A similar but much slower evolution of colonial policy took place in Sierra Leone. There most earlier governors feared the disruptive effects of abolition and believed that the prosperity of the country depended on retaining slavery, but after the First World War emancipation came increasingly to be considered necessary for the economic advancement of the protectorate (Grace 1975: 220ff.). The Portuguese allowed slavery to continue unchecked for many years because it supported the capitalist sector, but eventually replaced it with forms of forced labor (see pages 42–47).

In general it may be said that in the early days of colonial rule it suited the colonial states to maintain slavery. Few of them were, in any case, powerful enough to take determined steps to eradicate it. But, when their power was consolidated and their fears of provoking the owners and disrupting the economy waned, some administrations took conscious steps to hasten its demise. Others merely looked on while slaves freed themselves. In areas where colonial power remained weak, as in the remoter parts of Mauritania, officials turned a blind eye and allowed slavery to continue. Thus the gap which often existed between the legal status of slaves and their actual material and social position reflects the complexities of the social, political, and economic changes taking place in colonial Africa.

The Transition from Slavery to Freedom: A Historiographic Debate

Scholars disagree as to whether the transition from slavery to freedom caused widespread disruption or whether it had little impact on major African social and economic institutions. Before this question can begin to be resolved, the impact of the end of slavery must be considered on several levels. First, there is its impact on the performance of the economy as a whole—the main concern of the colonial administrations. Second, there is its impact on African social structures. And finally, there is its impact on individual slaves and owners. Another subject of disagreement concerns the freed slaves' perceptions of freedom. Did it mean complete personal autonomy or the establishment of new and more acceptable relations of dependence in new communities? Did it mean a return

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ı, dealing with cases in the Mandara

ı Miers and Kopytoff 1977: particularly Holsoe:
; A. N. Klein 1981: Ch. 6; Oroge 1985.

Mountains, where such brides changed hands frequently, regarded these transfers as tantamount to slaving, but the parties to the transactions maintained they were betrothals in accordance with their customs (Miers 1975: 298). Similar cases occurred elsewhere (Morton 1972: 412–13; Uchendu 1977: 126; Grace 1977: 422). Humanitarians, antislavery societies, and the growing French women's movement attacked pawning and forced marriages, and pressured colonial administrators to deal with these issues. Some responded by establishing rates of interest and counting the work of the pawn towards the extinction of both the debt and the interest (Klein and Roberts 1987). Most officials, however, did little about it.

All too little is known about pawning, but the studies that exist show that it reemerged in force, for instance, in the French territories during the Great Depression (Klein and Roberts 1987), continued in the Gold Coast into the 1930s (Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2), and supported the colonial economy in Angola in the 1940s (Heywood, Ch. 14). In Southern Nigeria, where the British outlawed successively the pawning of children, the marrying of girls under 13, and finally in 1938 all pledging of labor as interest on loans, prosecutions for pawning continued as late as 1949, and there were still "faint echoes" of it in 1975 (Ohadike, Ch. 15; Oroge 1985: 99). It is clear that pawning provided former owners and other creditors—including former slaves and Portuguese businessmen (Heywood, Ch. 14)—with opportunities to assert or reassert their control directly over certain forms of labor, particularly that of women and children.

Some of our contributors mention the greater availability of wage labor by the middle decades of this century. Thus Dumett and Johnson (Ch. 2) point to the increased use of migrant labor from the north in the Gold Coast, replacing both slaves and pawns in the indigenous economy, and Twaddle (Ch. 3) mentions the arrival of migrants from Ruanda-Urundi in Buganda during the 1920s to produce cash crops for Ganda employers. Nevertheless, a sizable labor force totally divorced from the means of production had not emerged in sub-Saharan Africa by the time the colonial period ended. The long persistence of forced labor for the capitalist sector and of unfree labor in the indigenous economy reflects the fact that capitalist penetration had neither divorced producers from the means of production nor marginalized their subsistence production sufficiently to generate a sizable proletariat.

Conclusion

The end of slavery in Africa provides a lens through which to examine the social experiences of the early colonial period in ways that studies

of resistance, collaboration, colonial policy, and labor history have so far been unable to do.

The end of slavery and the establishment of new economic and social systems clearly emerge as long and complex processes, which up to now have been little understood because of the relative paucity of information. We have tried to remedy this by providing case studies specifically focussed on this subject, by pointing out major areas of academic disagreement, by suggesting new lines of approach, and by demarcating important areas for further research.

Our case studies show that all the colonial states were forced by metropolitan and international pressures to subscribe to antislavery ideology, which was part of the ideological justification for the European conquest of Africa and, indeed, of capitalism itself. Antislavery ideology had been popularized at a time when little was known about African (or indeed any non-Western) slavery, and was based on the premise that slavery was everywhere the highly oppressive system practiced by Europeans in the New World and in certain other colonies.[36] As the colonial rulers came to know more about African slavery during the nineteenth century, their image of it came to be based on another misconception—that it was a mild form of servitude.[37] Even abolitionists in Britain, the most active exponents of antislavery ideology, generally accepted the proposition that African slavery was usually benign, and they were initially willing to see the attack on slavery concentrated on the elimination of its cruelest features—the enslavement, buying and selling of slaves, and, in a few societies, their use as human sacrifice. Slavery itself could be tolerated until such time as it could be eliminated without causing political resistance and social and economic dislocation; or until it withered away through natural attrition as new enslavement ended.

This view of a benign African slavery was used to justify the very gradual approach to emancipation in colonial Africa. Gradualism was dictated by the military weakness of the colonial states, fearful of provoking the resistance of elites, of causing a decline in agricultural production, and of upsetting African social structures; for slavery was embedded in webs of personal dependency and property relationships about which the colonial administrators knew little. They soon realized that their aim—the economic exploitation of Africa—did not require mass liberation of slaves. Some believed that abolition would lead to a decline

36. American slavery took many forms, but what matters is the image in the public mind of the time.

37. We know that African slavery ranged from mild to harsh, but what matters is what officials and the public believed.

in production and even cause hard of the Caribbean.[38] The result, as proach to the problem by colonial a metropolitan and international der desire not to cause social upheaval government of Ethiopia performed need to conciliate international opir port of local elites.

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Therefore, while we may say t rather than the Caribbean model merely tells us that slavery ceased this meant to the slave, we have to enforced, how they were combine termined whether and on what whether the taxation system disc and whether colonial policies eve ences between slaves and freeborn economy. Vitally important to th tion era was how the legal syster was not recognized by British cou in Muslim courts or "native courts masters in their executive rather mined the price for the ransoming to control personal mobility, whi leaving.[39]

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38. This view was endorsed by Africa Ch. 5).

39. Miers 1975: 302–3; Chanock 198 Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; Miers

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in production and even cause hardship to the slaves, as it had in parts of the Caribbean.[38] The result, as we have seen, was a pragmatic approach to the problem by colonial administrations, juggling intermittent metropolitan and international demands to end slavery against their own desire not to cause social upheavals, which they could not control. The government of Ethiopia performed a similar balancing act between the need to conciliate international opinion and the necessity to retain the support of local elites.

Although all the European colonial states tackled slavery slowly, their policies varied widely even in different territories of the same colonial power. Individual administrators also interpreted, bent, and even disregarded their own laws as they deemed necessary. Moreover, colonial policies changed over time, as administrators came to understand the African scene better or pursued short-term goals of their own (see, for example, Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5). Thus, although all the colonial states, as well as Ethiopia and Liberia, eventually passed laws against slavery, former slaves could not assert their "freedom" unless the laws were combined with economic policies and changes.

Therefore, while we may say that Britain applied the Indian model rather than the Caribbean model for abolition in the Gold Coast, this merely tells us that slavery ceased to exist as a legal status. To know what this meant to the slave, we have to know how the antislavery policies were enforced, how they were combined with land tenure policies (which determined whether and on what terms ex-slaves had access to land), whether the taxation system discriminated against large slaveholdings, and whether colonial policies eventually eliminated the material differences between slaves and freeborn by forcing them all into the wage-labor economy. Vitally important to the reconstruction of the postemancipation era was how the legal system worked. It mattered little if slavery was not recognized by British courts, if claims over slaves were dealt with in Muslim courts or "native courts," if officials returned fugitives to their masters in their executive rather than judicial capacity, if they determined the price for the ransoming of slaves, or if chiefs were given powers to control personal mobility, which could be used to prevent slaves from leaving.[39]

It was in the protection of freed slaves that the colonial states, as well as Ethiopia, failed most obviously. At the outset they usually protected

38. This view was endorsed by African owners (see, for example, Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5).

39. Miers 1975: 302–3; Chanock 1985: Ch. 9; Wright 1983: 261ff.; Grace 1975: 250; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13; Miers and Crowder, Ch. 5.

the rights of owners over those of slaves, and in some areas, notably parts of Mauritania, slavery continued throughout the colonial period. This was particularly true in the case of women, because their work was not only highly labor intensive but increasingly vital to the domestic economy as more and more men went into the wage-labor force (McDougall, pers. comm.; Robertson 1983: 223). But colonial policies were only one factor in the end of slavery.

The historiographical debate as to whether or not the transition from slavery to freedom was highly disruptive or was one of the "quieter social revolutions" is not resolved in this volume, but our case studies bring us a step nearer to an understanding of the issues involved and suggest possible approaches for future research. Our contributors show that, in some areas, many thousands of slaves left their owners, sometimes suddenly and sometimes over a period of time. They also make clear that, at the level of economic performance and the maintenance of public order, the predictions of administrators that abolition would lead to massive economic and social disruption and political resistance were not realized. They show that in some cases slave-owners found other labor, or they and their families performed the work previously done by slaves. In other cases freed slaves, who broke all ties with their former owners, simply established themselves as autonomous farmers, often in neighboring areas, and continued to produce as before, but on their own account.

Attempts to quantify the proportion of former slaves who left are hampered by lack of precise census data. Demographic research now in progress will doubtless throw more light on this. But we would suggest that a fruitful line of inquiry to help us understand the full ramifications of the end of slavery would be to focus on the new arrangements made by those who stayed. Some of our contributors see these readjustments as part of ongoing struggles, often localized and subtle, which completely changed the relationships between slaves and owners. From this they deduce that, whether ex-slaves stayed or left, the transition was not smooth and led to the emergence of completely different relations of production and dependency (see, for example, Roberts, Ch. 9). Others see the transition as relatively smooth, other than in exceptional cases, and believe that emancipation did not undermine the dominant position of the slaveholding elites (see, for instance, Dumett and Johnson, Ch. 2).

This leads us to a consideration of the meaning of freedom to Africans. Here too there is no consensus. Kopytoff (Ch. 17) argues that freedom in the Western sense—the severance of all ties of dependence—was meaningless in many sub-Saharan African societies. Instead freedom was to remain a dependent but on one's own terms, to establish new relations

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of dependency elsewhere, or, in the best of worlds, to establish a new group with dependents of one's own. For Kopytoff the end of slavery was a moment of disequilibrium when the most marginal slaves departed, causing some complex readjustments but not undermining the principles of community organization and reproduction. His interpretation of the evidence of emancipation in Africa reaffirms his view that Africans considered the security of dependency necessary and desirable, and that the safest course for ex-slaves was simply to remain with their former owners and renegotiate terms. These new terms might have merely bound ex-slaves to salute their former owners in public or to cook for them at festivals (Klein 1986; Clark 1983: 78–79), but it kept them within the protective network of the owning group. Other contributors, however, including Roberts (Ch. 9), Klein (Ch. 6), Hogendorn and Lovejoy (Ch. 13), believe that many former slaves sought freedom by completely separating themselves from their former masters.

Our efforts to explore the consequences of the end of slavery have been bedevilled by lack of data, compounded by the faulty perceptions of administrators, who only slowly penetrated below the surface of African societies as they began to deal with disputes about control over people often arising out of claims to slaves (see, for example, McDougall, Ch. 12; Chanock 1985: Ch. 9; Robertson 1983). A further difficulty is that scholars working on widely different societies have a tendency to argue from the particular to the general. But many colonial possessions, like Nigeria and the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, were composed of heterogeneous and complex societies, where the end of slavery took many different forms. We suggest that the main lesson of this volume is that we need to treat all evidence with skepticism, and resist the temptation to try to generalize from the few examples we now have.

In order to reach the next stage in this ongoing debate we must qualify and refine the terms we use to understand the complex phenomena of social, economic, political, and ideological readjustment. We must recognize the wide range of variables which determined the reactions and responses of both slaves and owners.

At present we know all too little about the new terms of dependency negotiated by ex-slaves who remained in the households or communities of their former owners and how these arrangements changed over time. We need to know more about the sharecropping and tenancy arrangements, as well as how ex-slaves fitted into changing power structures, how emancipation changed strategies for social reproduction and how it influenced ritual life. We need to know, especially where large numbers of slaves left their masters, how they survived and established them-

selves in new areas. We need to know how the fate of freed women differed from that of freed men.[40] We need to find out the extent to which, for those ex-slaves who remained, full assimilation was easier for women. In some societies ex-slave women could lose the stigma of slavery by marriage to freeborn men (Ohadike, Ch. 15); in others they also felt the need to repay their purchase price (Wright 1983); in still others such marriages were not possible. During the colonial period the labor burden on many women increased as more men were drawn into wage labor, and we need to know whether or not the burden was greatest on women of slave descent and how perceptions of and about women changed. Among the Tonga in Nyasaland, for instance, Margot Lovett found that freeborn women began to consider themselves to be the equivalent of slaves, because the departure of men as migrant wage labor not only increased their work load but changed male attitudes towards their wives, whom they came to regard, like slaves, as economic investments (Lovett 1986).

Among the questions for further research is the degree to which emancipation led to a levelling process and its impact on class formation. Thus in Lasta, former slaves became part of a growing rural proletariat composed also of the freeborn poor (McCann, Ch. 11). Similarly among the Ovimbundu, Portuguese policies impoverished ex-owners and ex-slaves (Heywood, Ch. 14), and the distinction between them also narrowed among the Igbo (Ohadike, Ch. 15), the Maraka (Roberts, Ch. 9), and the Tubakayes (Klein, Ch. 6). From the Lagos hinterland to the Somali coast, we have examples of former owners ruined by the loss of their slaves. In other cases, particularly where indirect rule was practiced, owners such as the Hausa-Fulani elites, the nobles of Mauritania, the chiefs of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, and the Tswana rulers retained their political influence and social and economic dominance. Moreover, where servile groups were ethnically identifiable, like the Basarwa or Bakgalagadi in Bechuanaland, upward mobility was difficult. In many societies marriages between persons of free and slave descent are rare.

Slave origin does not necessarily imply economic or political deprivation in Africa today. Some descendants of Igbo slaves are now more affluent than the children of the freeborn (Ohadike, Ch. 15). They prospered, like the descendants of those slaves and ex-slaves who went to Christian missions in Kenya, because they had early access to Western education and skilled employment. Similarly, the Chikunda, who joined the Portu-

40. Some of our contributors see the end of slavery as having had a levelling effect on women by decreasing the disabilities of female slaves (Ohadike, Ch. 15; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, Ch. 13). Others believe that they suffered more than freeborn women, because slave men were the ones driven into wage labor first (McDougall, pers. comm.).

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We need to know about the imp mation and marriage strategies, affected the general change in co erty which accompanied colonial slavery declined in the aftermath period of colonial rule, which bro and in the structure of the econ brought the ideological challeng place of the individual in society to isolate the results of the end of of European rule. Thus we must and renegotiations which took p households, kin groups, and comm daughters, wives, concubines, ac dents also seek to redefine the nat units? Did the end of slavery and as Pollet and Winter found amo household relations, encourage h relationships of work and reprodu as the result of the new economic men by the economic expansion end of slavery? We need to consi and capitalist ideologies of privat only led to increasing commercia fected the way marriage partner roles towards each other and cha rights to dispose of it.[41] We need of slaves was merely the tip of c colonial rule itself.

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guese forces and administration, prospered under colonial rule (Isaacman and Rosenthal, Ch. 7). The most striking success story in this volume is that of Hammody, a Mauritanian client, who became not simply the owner of slaves, but a creditor of nobles (McDougall, Ch. 12). In parts of Africa today slave origins are no barrier to the holding of high office, although elsewhere the hint of such descent is enough to ruin the chances of a candidate. Slave origins are still particularly important in matters of inheritance, marriage, control over children, and in issues of ritual and qualifications for religious office.

We need to know about the impact of emancipation on household formation and marriage strategies, and how the loss of slaves as property affected the general change in concepts of property and rights to property which accompanied colonial rule. One of the great problems is that slavery declined in the aftermath of military conquest and during the period of colonial rule, which brought changes in the political economy and in the structure of the economy. Conquest and colonial rule also brought the ideological challenges of Western ideas of the rights and place of the individual in society and of Christianity. The difficulty is to isolate the results of the end of slavery from the more general results of European rule. Thus we must ask whether the wider readjustments and renegotiations which took place at this time did not affect entire households, kin groups, and communities—slave and free. Did sons and daughters, wives, concubines, adopted relatives, and all other dependents also seek to redefine the nature of their participation in these social units? Did the end of slavery and the implantation of colonialism lead, as Pollet and Winter found among the Soninke, to the breakdown of household relations, encourage household fission, and bring about new relationships of work and reproduction? Or did such changes take place as the result of the new economic opportunities presented to junior kinsmen by the economic expansion of colonial rule independently of the end of slavery? We need to consider how far the spread of Christianity and capitalist ideologies of private property and individual freedom not only led to increasing commercialization of land and labor, but also affected the way marriage partners and lineage members perceived their roles towards each other and changed their conception of property and rights to dispose of it.[41] We need to consider how far the emancipation of slaves was merely the tip of complex social processes set in train by colonial rule itself.

We also need to sort out the results of the end of slavery from the de-

41. Hay 1982; Chanock 1985: Ch. 9; Mann 1982, 1985: Ch. 6; Hopkins 1980; Lance 1985.

velopment of the other forms of labor, some of which coexisted with slavery before the colonial period but greatly increased in scope under colonialism. Wage labor and slave labor coexisted for many years, and slaves were often the first wage laborers. Indentured labor was often simply a disguised form of slave labor, and migrant labor over the long run often became a form of indentured labor. Wage labor, instead of freeing the worker, often created new dependencies and was often more exploitative than slavery. Although our contributors have begun to provide information on this, more research is surely needed.

To put the end of slavery into its complete context, fuller use of certain types of historical sources should prove particularly valuable. Our contributors show the importance of well-used records such as mission archives, tax records, and, of course, oral sources. Among a variety of relatively untapped sources, one of the most revealing has been court records. These may provide the most detail on the actual social experience and conflict, since they capture real-life events, but they deal mainly with cases too intractable to be solved without recourse to the courts. The hundreds of thousands of private negotiations between parties which were settled without litigation went unrecorded. Court records are, nevertheless, extraordinarily revealing as to the issues which concerned Africans, and they also show how colonial officials reacted to the thousands of cases which reached them, and often tested to the limit their power to comprehend African attitudes (see, for example, Chanock 1985: Ch. 9; Wright 1983).[42]

The End of Slavery in Comparative Perspective and as an International Issue

A comparison between the end of slavery in Africa and in other areas of the world is beyond the scope of this volume, but it is an important subject for future research. Abolition in Africa was part of the same worldwide set of changes in the organization of production that emanated from the spread of the world capitalist economy. In all slaveholding societies, emancipation brought complex changes in the economic and social order and in the dominant ideologies of power and control. In relatively few areas did the end of slavery initiate abrupt changes in production. In most cases, however, it led to changes in how land and labor were controlled (Bolland 1981). From the standpoint of former

42. Legal records have been used in Africa for studies of property transactions (Cooper 1980), for women's history (Hay and Wright 1982; Mann 1982; Wright 1983; Robertson 1983), and for studies of law and the political and economic history of colonialism (Chanock 1985; Christelow 1985a), but they have only rarely been effectively used for the study of changing labor relationships.

slaves, the "progression toward free 1985: 273).

At present we know a great de cultures, fertility, and demograp abolition in the United States, in than we do about other areas of t dle East; and we still have many u comparisons, however, may be d emancipation in Africa and in th for future research.

In both regions slavery took a dividual slaves were used in ma privileged and held positions Although slaves in the Americas tion contexts, ranging from inde most important use for slaves wa tation slavery was relatively rare common on the offshore islands, on plantations was overall comp among them epidemiological, de to be explored.

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44. For examples, see Cooper 1977: 1 Sundiata, forthcoming; Duffy 1969.

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slaves, the "progression toward freedom was circuitous and uneven" (Mintz 1985: 273).

At present we know a great deal more about slavery, including slave cultures, fertility, and demography, and about the form and results of abolition in the United States, in Brazil, and in parts of the Caribbean than we do about other areas of the world, including Asia and the Middle East; and we still have many unanswered questions about Africa. Some comparisons, however, may be drawn at this point between slavery and emancipation in Africa and in the Americas in order to point out areas for future research.

In both regions slavery took a number of forms in the sense that individual slaves were used in many different tasks and some were more privileged and held positions of greater responsibility than others. Although slaves in the Americas worked in a whole series of nonplantation contexts, ranging from independent artisans to factory workers, the most important use for slaves was as plantation labor. In contrast, plantation slavery was relatively rare on the African mainland. It was more common on the offshore islands,[43] but the proportion of slaves working on plantations was overall comparatively small.[44] The reasons for this—among them epidemiological, demographic, and agronomic—have still to be explored.

African slaveholdings were in general also smaller, and the differentiation in terms of life style between slaves and owners was usually slighter than in the New World, in spite of the fact that many American slaves lived and worked side by side with their owners and some African slaves lived in villages apart from the free. Discipline was usually less rigorous, and social mobility, at least between generations, was also higher. Manumission was more frequent in Africa, where few societies had the power to keep large numbers of people in permanent subordination. Furthermore, in Africa a few slaves held positions of power and influence. In both Africa and the Americas slaves were valued for their productive capacity and as prestige items. However, in the Americas, slaves were not valued as the kin group resource they were in Africa, nor for direct use as currency, or for payment of tribute or judicial compensation. Nor were large numbers of dependents central to political power.

Both in Africa and the Americas masters were forced to free their slaves by government action. In the case of the United States and Cuba, emancipation was the result of bitter civil war. In Haiti it followed a slave sei-

43. These include Zanzibar, Pemba, São Tomé, Príncipe, and Fernando Po.

44. For examples, see Cooper 1977: 1–20; Lovejoy 1979, 1983: 8ff.; Roberts 1980: 173–76; Sundiata, forthcoming; Duffy 1969.

zure of power. In some cases, such as Brazil, it was the result of international pressures and a growing conviction that slavery was an anachronism in the modern world (Conrad 1972: 70ff.). In most of Africa it was the result of colonial conquest. Everywhere, present evidence shows that owners initially resisted emancipation and sought to retain the social and political power necessary to keep control over their ex-slaves. There are, however, instances where they were willing to let slaves go in response to changing economic conditions.

The degree to which freed slaves had viable alternatives to remaining with their former owners or working for other members of the owning elites is an area for comparative research. In the Americas most postemancipation conflicts centered around planters' efforts to maintain the viability of the plantation as a unit of production. In cases such as Barbados and the smaller sugar islands, the plantation survived because freed slaves had no alternatives, whereas in British Guyana and certain other Caribbean islands, they soon found other forms of livelihood and plantations had to import indentured labor. Planters in the southern United States tried to resuscitate the plantation as a system of production following the Civil War, but former slaves struggled fiercely for autonomy. Few, however, could get access to land of their own, and eventually they were forced into sharecropping and tenancy arrangements. In the process, however, they made planters abandon the gang labor of the plantations (Woodman 1977; Ransom and Sutch 1977: 67–73, 87–99; Wiener 1978: 3–73; Foner 1983: 84–93). In the African plantations, slave-owners also tried to keep control over the labor of their former slaves, but not necessarily to maintain the plantation as a production unit. As long as their property rights were protected, as in Zanzibar, former masters used squatters and tenants to satisfy their demand for labor. Where there were no plantations, former owners offered many inducements, including integrating former slaves more fully into webs of kinship and dependency in order to keep them from leaving.

Whether or not former slaves stayed with their owners was usually determined by their ability to find alternative livelihoods and equal security. Access to land (or to cattle for herders) was a crucial factor, and this was determined not simply by the ratio of useable land to labor, but also by the willingness of freed slaves to respect existing property rights and by the ability of the former owners and the state to uphold them. In a few instances these rights were not maintained. Thus in Haiti, former slaves turned the plantations into smallholdings. In the rice country of coastal South Carolina, some freed slaves took over plantations and others seized the land, at least temporarily (Foner 1983). Former-slave squatters seized abandoned plantations and Crown land in Jamaica. In

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Zanzibar, ex-slaves became squatters on the clove plantations (Cooper 1980: 121ff.). In northeastern Brazil, on the other hand, owners began freeing slaves before formal abolition, secure in the knowledge that they could not acquire land and had little alternative to becoming paid agricultural labor (Martins and Filho 1984). In general freed slaves seem to have preferred working their own land or self-employment, which allowed them to control their own work rhythms, to wage labor or tenancy arrangements.

Control over access to economic resources was thus obviously central to the postemancipation labor systems in both the New World and Africa. Almost everywhere in the Americas, the property rights of former masters and their political dominance were successfully upheld. The exceptions were Haiti, where ex-slaves gained and retained political power, and the southern United States during the brief period of Radical Reconstruction, when former slaves were able to vote and hold political office and formed an important part of local militias. Former owners and other whites, however, waged fierce struggles to regain control over the state in order to shape the freed into obedient workers. They ultimately prevailed throughout most of the South, and once in power, they eroded the freed slaves' political and economic power through contract and vagrancy laws, voter qualifications, and restrictions on their economic activities. In the Americas most former slaves remained in the lower classes, as tenants, sharecroppers, or subsistence farmers, or as low-paid wage labor, although some managed to establish themselves as craftsmen and prosperous smallholders. Their access to education and their social mobility varied considerably with their location, but was generally limited everywhere.

In most of Africa the picture was somewhat different. Except in settler colonies, land was relatively plentiful, and the power of former owners and even of the colonial state, which often tried to protect their interests, was rarely sufficient to prevent freed slaves from simply moving to areas where land was available and where they were welcomed. Some chose or were forced to become squatters, sharecroppers, or tenants; others joined religious communities. In areas of scarce economic resources, such as the Mauritanian desert and the scrub lands of Bechuanaland, some remained under the domination of their former owners right through the colonial period. But many ex-slaves, mostly male, became autonomous producers, successfully joining or forming new communities or remaining with or near their former owners, suffering social and, sometimes, economic discrimination. In British settler colonies and parts of the Portuguese colonies, where massive alienation of land and regressive tax policies drove large numbers of Africans into wage labor, former slaves

were sometimes the first to go, but the freeborn were also eventually affected. Thus, because of the peculiar circumstances of colonial rule, the end of slavery perhaps had a greater levelling effect in Africa than in the New World. Certainly slave origins, although remembered and still important in the domestic sphere and sometimes in religious and political matters, have only in some areas been a barrier to gaining elite status in modern Africa. Often this is because freed slaves were the first to acquire Western education and become skilled labor. In this connection one of the subjects ripe for comparative study is the role of Christian churches and missions in working among freed slaves.

An area which has been barely explored is the relationship of the forms of abolition, the timing of abolition, and the experiences of former slaves to changes in the international economy. In the British Caribbean, abolition took place in the era of British industrial hegemony. In the United States it occurred in a period of economic crisis, following the midcentury decline in world prices, and at a time when the United States and other European nations were beginning to challenge British industrial dominance. Postemancipation adjustments to the end of slavery were certainly influenced by the world economy. In discussing the nature of economic adjustments to the end of slavery, Klein and Engerman note that where the demand for plantation crops remained constant or increased there was a corresponding effort to maintain the plantation system or to maintain the production of export crops in the face of emancipation by shifting to other forms of labor, including sharecropping, indentured labor, and the import of free immigrant labor. Thus changes in the world supply and demand for plantation crops such as sugar cane, coffee, and cotton had an impact on the labor strategies of postemancipation societies in the United States, the Caribbean, Brazil, and Cuba (Klein and Engerman 1985: 259–68).

Africa was conquered at a time of growing concern over current and future supplies of raw materials for Western industries, and administrators frequently expressed fears that emancipation would disrupt production. Clearly abolition needs to be seen in the context of the international economy, and the processes of social change in postemancipation Africa need to be examined critically and carefully with this in mind (Cooper 1981: 26–48).

Another area which requires examination is the changing international ideological climate – the development of what might be called an international public opinion – which increasingly condemned slavery as a form of labor organization. The condemning of slavery by the League of Nations, the negotiation of the Slavery Convention of 1926, and the formation of the International Labor Organization and its attempts to extend

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It is clear that much research remains to be done before we can attempt a general discussion of the reasons for and effects of the abolition of slavery as a global phenomenon. This volume aims to add some comparative material which will enhance our understanding of this whole issue. If students of African emancipation have anything to teach students of emancipation elsewhere, it is to be aware of the full range of contexts in which slaves were used and how these influenced the experience of emancipation. They should also be aware of the range of strategies — political, legal, economic and social — employed by both former owners and former slaves to protect their interests. The chapters which follow explore in more detail many of the topics and issues we have raised in relation to Africa in this introduction.

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