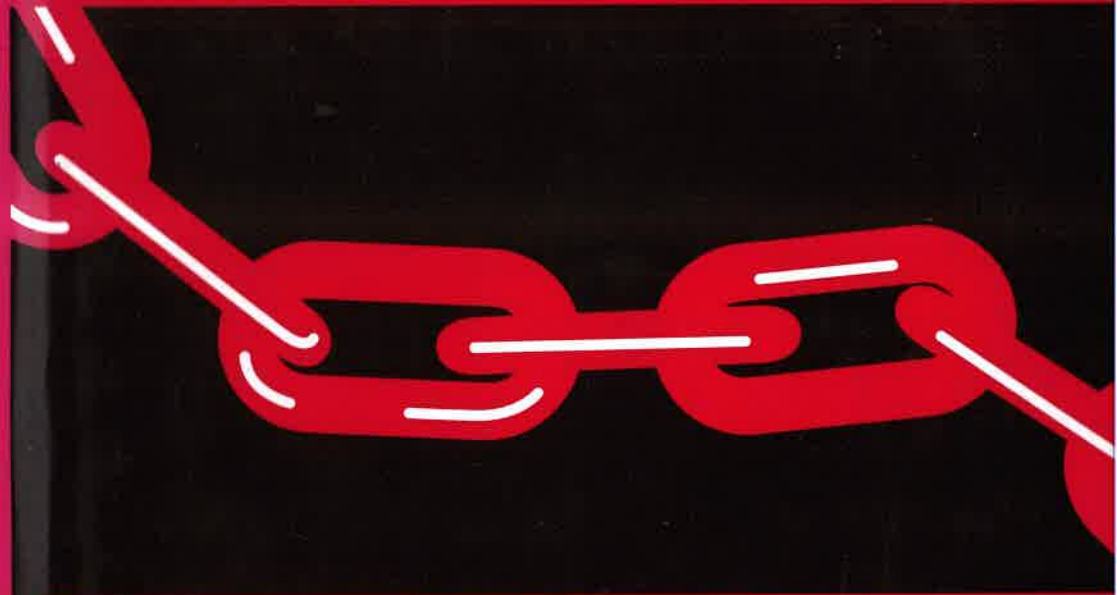


SLAVE SYSTEMS

ANCIENT AND MODERN

DAL LAGO AND KATSARI

SLAVE SYSTEMS



EDITED BY
ENRICO DAL LAGO
AND CONSTANTINA KATSARI

This is a ground-breaking edited collection charting the rise and fall of forms of unfree labour in the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, employing the methodology of comparative history. The eleven chapters in the book deal with conceptual issues and different approaches to historical comparison, and include specific case-studies ranging from the ancient forms of slavery of classical Greece and of the Roman Empire to the modern examples of slavery that characterized the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States. The results demonstrate both how much the modern world has inherited from the ancient in regard to the ideology and practice of slavery, and also how many of the issues and problems related to the latter seem to have been fundamentally comparable across time and space.

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CHAPTER I

The study of ancient and modern slave systems: setting an agenda for comparison

Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari

Historical studies of slavery are, by definition, both global and comparative. Slavery, in fact, is an institution whose practice has covered most of the documented history of the world and has spread across many different countries and regions around the globe. Thus, very few societies have remained historically untouched by it, while, at different times and in different degrees, most have seen a more or less strong presence of slaves employed for a variety of different purposes within them. Throughout history and in many societies, masters have utilized their slaves for tasks as diverse as working on landed estates or even on industrial complexes, or, more commonly, serving in households and other domestic settings, and, more rarely, for specific military or religious purposes.

The chapters gathered in this collection represent the variety of experiences associated with slavery, while they focus particularly on the scholarly study of its influence on the economy and society of those cultures that made extensive use of it. Though the dimensions of the scholarly study of slavery, much as slavery itself, are truly global in their breadth – and the authors of each chapter are aware of this – the declared scope of the present book is to focus on the comparative analysis of two specific regions of the world where slavery flourished at different times: the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. What justifies the choice of these two particular areas is the fact that, in the course of their history, both regions saw the rise, heyday, and eventual end of self-contained, self-sustaining, highly developed and profitable systems of slavery, or 'slave systems'.

Historians and historical sociologists have commonly used the term 'system' to describe a complex set of factors that allowed the economy and society of a particular historical culture to operate. Depending on the time and place, a 'system' would be defined by the existence of specific sets of relationships between different economic operators – such as elites, labourers, or merchants – and between them and different types of institutions – such as the state, the king or emperor, the banks, etc. The 'system'

operated in such a way that the particular types of social relationship that characterized it mirrored the economic relationships, which in turn defined its very structure. The organic integration among its different parts, which created an economic mechanism that was both self-contained and self-sustaining, allowed a specific 'system' to operate efficiently. The well-defined economic mechanism aimed at dealing with the effective production, distribution, and consumption of goods within a specific social scene or across societies and states. Despite the fact that the term 'system' has been connected with the economy, we should not forget that such socio-economic systems have also a cultural dimension that plays a definite role in their formation.

A much studied case is that of the feudal system, first described by Marc Bloch for medieval western Europe and then by Witold Kula for early modern eastern Europe.¹ In its simplest definition, the term 'feudal system' refers both to the social ties that bound a nobility to perform military duties for a king in exchange for grants given in land, and also the particular type of labour arrangements that bound the serfs to their lords on the latter's landed estates. More recently, scholars have used the term 'system' also to indicate particular types of organic sets of economic and social relationships that have historically encompassed large areas of the world, with different countries and regions included within them. Arguably, the most famous example is in Immanuel Wallerstein's 'world-system' analysis, at the heart of which is the process of historical formation, from the sixteenth century on, of the particular economic relationships that characterized the different components of a capitalist system spread over the entire globe and centred upon western Europe.² In Wallerstein's view, these economic relationships arose together with strong social inequalities associated with them and also in relation to different types of labour – among them slavery – that characterized the different areas within the system.

The expression 'slave system' refers to the scholarship cited above in that it describes a self-contained, self-sustaining set of organic relationships, both at the economic and at the social level. In this case, though, at the heart of this set of relationships was the institution of slavery, whose influence pervaded nearly every aspect of at least some of the cultures that were integrant parts of the few historically known 'slave systems' – especially the ones flourishing in the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. Much like feudalism defined the feudal system, therefore, slavery

¹ See Bloch 1975 (1932); and Kula 1976 (1962). ² See Wallerstein 1974–89.

defined a 'slave system' by providing the foundation of an economy in which (a) elite wealth and slave ownership were two notions inextricably connected to each other, (b) a large part of the trade revolved around buying and selling slaves, (c) a high percentage of the workers were enslaved labourers, and/or (d) states and other types of institutions relied on the profits made with slavery for their prosperity. Also, within a 'slave system', the social hierarchy mirrored the economic one based on slave ownership, while slavery influenced relationships equally within the family and in society at large in some particular cultures.³

By using the term 'slave system', we intend to refer explicitly to the pervasiveness of the institution of slavery – an institution based on the 'slave mode of production' and system of labour – in the economy and society of those regions, countries, and states that were interconnected parts of a unified market area. In some respects, then, the concept of 'slave system' relies on the definition of 'slave society', first advanced by Moses Finley and then utilized also by Keith Hopkins and Ira Berlin.⁴ According to this definition, unlike in a 'society with slaves', in a 'slave society' slavery was at the heart of the economic and social life of a particular culture and it influenced it in such a way to create a large class of slaveholders, who effectively held a great deal of power and exercised it over the non-slaveholding population. Significantly, according to both Finley and Hopkins, genuine 'slave societies' were historically only a few⁵ and, among them, the best-known cases are classical Athens and imperial Rome in the ancient Mediterranean and the nineteenth-century United States and Brazil in the modern Atlantic. Both the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic represent two major 'slave systems', which, in turn, include areas representing specific socio-economic 'subsystems'. Such 'subsystems' were, for example, the Athenian or the Brazilian ones. The wider 'slave systems' of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic consisted ultimately of a collection of different cultures interrelated in an organic way, as a result of the influence of slavery on their economy and society. Eventually, these systems provided the opportunity for the development of genuine 'slave societies' at the centre of their trade networks.

If one decided to study 'slave systems' such as those of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic within the framework of a

³ The classic study of 'slave systems' in antiquity is Westermann 1955.

⁴ See Finley 1998; Hopkins 1978; and Berlin 1998.

⁵ Notice also that Orlando Patterson supports a view opposite from Hopkins; see Chapter 2 note 5 in this volume.

chronological sequence of phenomena on a global scale, undoubtedly the methodological approach of world historical analysis would be the most appropriate. World history, intended as a discipline that studies the global past of human societies, is consistently on the rise nowadays. Scholars who have chosen this approach have either attempted exceptionally broad ranging surveys or, more interestingly, they have focused on finding common patterns of historical development among societies located in particular areas of the world. Among the latter types of studies, the most acclaimed have treated patterns of historical spread and influence of either a particular economic feature, such as trade, or else of a particular socio-political institution, such as Islam.⁶ Yet, while slavery *per se* could easily be researched as either of the two, the study of 'slave systems' would require, because of its nature, a more specific type of world historical approach.

Recently, historians and historical sociologists have become increasingly aware of the importance of seas and oceans for the study of world history, focusing, above all, on the unifying influences that the latter have exercised in economic and social terms on the cultures that have flourished around them.⁷ In particular, scholarship on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic has steadily increased in size, thus acknowledging the importance of these regions as historically integrated socio-economic areas within a global context. Specifically, recent studies such as Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* and John Elliott's *Empires of the Atlantic* not only followed the established historiographic tradition by considering the two seas as unifying entities but they opened new paths by providing invaluable suggestions for researchers of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic within the context of world history.⁸ Moreover, important suggestions in this sense have come also from the few studies that belong to the recent field of research of 'historical globalization'.⁹

To be sure, the suggestions coming from the studies mentioned above would prove particularly useful, if one wished to proceed to identify patterns of historical development by employing a comparative method, when researching on two specific 'slave systems' such as the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. In this case, the methodological approach would focus specifically on sustained and combined analysis of

⁶ On the state of the art of world history, see Hodgson and Burke III 1993.

⁷ See Wigen 2006; Horden and Purcell 2006; Games 2006; and Matsuda 2006.

⁸ See Horden and Purcell 2000; and Elliott 2006. The few studies on the Mediterranean, including Harris 2005, refer invariably to Braudel 1975 (1949). On the ever-growing scholarship on the 'Atlantic world', see Armitage and Braddick 2002.

⁹ See Hopkins 2002.

the two 'slave systems', so to identify important similarities and differences between them and to understand their meaning in comparative historical perspective. Ever since March Bloch published his pioneering article on the comparative history of European societies in 1928, comparative historians have debated on the correct approach and aim of historical comparisons.¹⁰ In the end, it is fair to say that most of them have agreed on the fact that, broadly speaking, the features he had originally outlined – a certain similarity between the facts observed and certain differences between their contexts – are still the indispensable requirements for a comparative study of the type that, according to Peter Kolchin, employs a 'rigorous' approach to historical comparison.¹¹

There are, of course, other ways of doing historical comparison, and several of the studies that employ them would probably fall under another category described by Kolchin as employing a 'soft' approach to historical comparison, for the reason that, rather than developing into full-blown comparative analyses, they either simply hint at the possibility of doing this or provide brief comparative treatments of significant themes they treat.¹² Most likely, though, the majority of comparative studies would fall somewhere in between these two extremes of 'rigorous' and 'soft' approaches to historical comparisons. The chapters collected in this book are a proof of the validity of different comparative approaches to the history of the 'slave systems' of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, and these approaches cover the entire spectrum contained within the two definitions of 'rigorous' and 'soft' comparisons. At the same time, the essays also provide a critically informed approach to comparative history that does not refrain from identifying the latter's limitations in regard to the study of particular historical problems.

When researching 'slave systems', whether from a global or a comparative historical perspective, one should first acknowledge the importance of studies written by a number of scholars who have analysed slavery in all its different aspects. Particularly significant, for the purpose of the present book, are those studies that have attempted to treat the development of slavery as an institution through subsequent historical periods and also those that have provided treatments encompassing all the varieties of slavery that have characterized different historical societies. Among the former types of studies, the most significant are those written by David

¹⁰ See Bloch 1928; see also Skocpol and Somers 1980.

¹¹ See Kolchin 2003a: 4. On the debate over comparative history, see Cohen and O'Connor 2004.

¹² See Kolchin 2003a.

Brion Davis, who has provided – in his trilogy *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolutions*, and *Slavery and Human Progress* – the most comprehensive treatment of the history of slavery as both a social institution and a cultural feature of the western world from antiquity to the nineteenth century.¹³ Davis' is, in many ways, a model of world historical analysis with invaluable suggestions for the study of 'slave systems', for it shows, through the development of the institution of slavery, the similarities and differences in the types of contexts in which it operated at different historical times in the West. Among those studies that have, instead, provided a broad treatment of slavery covering different parts of the world in different historical periods, the most acclaimed has been Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, a model study of both world history and comparative history at the same time.¹⁴ On one hand, in fact, it is fair to say that Patterson's book is the one study that has succeeded more than any other to show the importance and pervasiveness of slavery as a global institution in the entire history of the world. On the other hand, the suggestions for comparative studies of 'slave systems' are also innumerable in Patterson's work, since at its heart lies comparison on a grand scale between all the known slaveholding historical societies; the author's purpose to arrive at a working definition of the most likely constant characteristics of slavery and of its variants has been amply fulfilled.

Inspired by Davis' and Patterson's works, scholars of slavery have gathered in impressive collaborative projects that, for the first time, have attempted to catalogue and detail the varieties of experiences related to slavery and the issues attached to it across historical eras and places. From these efforts, encyclopaedias, chronologies, and guides to both the actual phenomenon of world slavery and the massive and intricate scholarship attached to it have recently arisen.¹⁵ At the same time, a monumental attempt by Joseph C. Miller to systematically keep track of and divide into categories the ever-increasing number of scholarly studies on world slavery has produced a comprehensive bibliography, recently updated as a supplement of the journal *Slavery & Abolition*, which represents the state of the art of scholarship in the field.¹⁶ Furthermore, the projected edited multi-volume *World History of Slavery* by Cambridge University Press

¹³ Davis 1966, 1975, 1984. See also Davis 2006. ¹⁴ Patterson 1982.

¹⁵ See Rodriguez 1997; Finkelman and Miller 1998; Drescher and Engerman 1998; and Rodriguez 1999.

¹⁶ See Miller 1999b; and Thurston and Miller 2005.

promises to encompass all areas of the world and to span from antiquity to the present.

Parallel to broad studies of slavery in world and comparative historical context, another type of research has produced more specific comparative studies, aiming at providing a combined analysis of one or two particular slave societies. The archetype of these studies is Frank Tannenbaum's 1946 book *Slave and Citizen*, which compared the institution of slavery in the United States and Latin America. This book subsequently led to the publication of a number of specific comparative studies – such as the ones by Herbert Klein and Carl Degler – between the slave society of the American South and those of Latin American countries such as Cuba and Brazil.¹⁷ This tradition of comparative historical studies is the one that most appropriately fits Peter Kolchin's idea of 'rigorous' approach to comparative history. This type of comparison, while for a long time restricted to studies on the slave societies of the New World, has recently broadened its scope and included the comparative research between the nineteenth-century American South and contemporary African and European societies characterized by different degrees of unfree labour.¹⁸ From this particular type of scholarship have come particularly valuable suggestions for a 'rigorous' comparative historical approach to the study of 'slave systems', especially from the methodological point of view.

Aside from the few studies that belong to this tradition of scholarship, for the most part comparative research on slavery has employed in different terms and degrees a 'soft' approach to historical comparison. This is especially true in regard to comparison between ancient and modern types of slavery, about which there is no specific and sustained comparative study to date, even though a number of ancient and modern historians have hinted at the possibility. Among ancient historians (aside from the already mentioned Moses Finley and Keith Hopkins) Keith Bradley, Walter Scheidel, Stephen Hodkinson, Brent Shaw, Alan Watson, and Geoffrey de Ste Croix have also provided a number of interesting comparative points with the modern world – and particularly often with the ante-bellum American South – in their treatments of different aspects of ancient slavery. Thomas Wiedemann, specifically, attempted with the foundation of the Institute for the Study of Slavery at the University of Nottingham the promotion of the comparative study of slavery through a series of edited volumes that would have included studies of individual slave societies across time and space. Sadly,

¹⁷ Tannenbaum 1946. See also Klein 1967; and Degler 1971.

¹⁸ See Fredrickson 1981; Kolchin 1987; Bowman 1993; and Dal Lago 2005.

his untimely death prevented him from seeing the completion of this project.¹⁹

Among modern historians, instead, the most effective at providing comparative treatments referring to aspects of ancient slavery have been specifically, besides David Brion Davis and Orlando Patterson, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese and Michael O' Brien, who have also investigated the effects of the legacy of ancient slavery on the society and intellectual culture of slave societies in the New World, and specifically of the American South.²⁰ Aside from these individual efforts, some ancient and modern historians have also participated in collaborative enterprises of collective volumes either on the history of slavery or on the history of both slavery and serfdom, providing juxtaposed treatments of ancient and modern topics. Even though not explicitly comparative, these collections of papers have hinted at important parallels and connections not only between different types of slavery but also between different systems of unfree labour.²¹

On the basis of the suggestions coming from all the works we have mentioned above and from the methodological developments that we have previously discussed, we wish to start with the publication of the present book a project of diachronic comparative study of 'slave systems', focusing specifically on the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. In regards to the comparative approach, our preference goes to the 'rigorous' method described by Kolchin; however, as the chapters in the book show, we recognize the validity of all the studies that have hinted at possible comparisons between the ancient and modern worlds and we refer to them for the justification of our project. The general objective of our comparative project is the analysis of the 'slave systems' that flourished in the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic in their wholeness. Several of the chapters in this book look at the systems from a rather general point of view, placing them firmly in the context of world history and relating them to the scholarship on both world slavery and comparative slavery. At the same time, we think that the specific focus of particular comparative studies needs to address themes of combined analysis between two or more particular 'slave societies' – whether these are the ante-bellum

¹⁹ See Bradley 1987, 1994; Hodkinson 2003: 245–85; Chapter 4 in this volume; Shaw 1998a; Watson 1987, 1989; Ste Croix 1983; and Wiedemann and Gardner 2002.

²⁰ See Davis 2006; Patterson 1982; Fox-Genovese and Genovese 2005; and O'Brien 2004.

²¹ See especially Bush 1996a; Engerman 1999; and Brown and Morgan 2006.

American South and the Roman empire, or colonial Brazil and ancient Greece, etc. – as some of the chapters in this book do.

Ultimately, the unifying theme behind all the chapters, whether explicitly or implicitly comparative and whether relying on a world history or comparative history approach, is the fact that they are all based on a 'diachronic' view of the ancient and modern past. By this, we mean a view that looks as much at comparisons as at connections between the ancient and the modern worlds, depending on the methodological approach taken by the author of the chapter. In particular, unlike most sustained comparative studies, which focus on 'synchronic' comparisons between specific features of two or more contemporary societies, the examples of 'rigorous' method present in this book have a clear 'diachronic' thrust, which allows them to compare and contrast ancient and modern 'slave systems' as independent units of research and identify both common and different features across time and space. The ultimate aim of this enterprise is to start to identify the defining features, both at the methodological level and in terms of application, of a model for the 'diachronic' comparative study of 'slave systems' – one specifically focusing on the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic – that might be helpful to other studies of the same type in the future.

The best way to start an actual 'diachronic' comparative study of 'slave systems' is to discuss the methodological issues specifically related to it. Part I in the present book – entitled 'Slavery, slave systems, world history, and comparative history' – is, therefore, dedicated to presenting the research methods of ancient and modern slavery, with a particular focus on the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. Referring back to the general points we made previously on world history and comparative history and on world slavery and comparative slavery, this part includes – besides our own methodological introduction – two chapters that represent two radically different approaches regarding the study of 'slave systems'. The first chapter, in fact, upholds the validity of historical comparison to the point of even setting up an agenda for future research on comparative slavery, while the second chapter questions the very validity of the definition of 'slavery' – and thus the possibility of comparing different types of slavery – preferring, instead, to focus on the analysis of 'slaving' in world history.

The two chapters are representatives of the ongoing debate between, on one hand, comparative historians and historical sociologists, and, on the other hand, world historians and historians of globalization over the pre-eminence given either to the study of slavery as a collection of experiences

that took place at specific times and in specific places or to the study of slavery as an overall dynamic process. The difference between the two approaches is of paramount importance for the study of ancient and modern 'slave systems'. In one case, 'slave systems' can be taken and studied as relatively fixed and somewhat self-contained units of analysis – thus leading to insightful findings on the meaning of similarities and differences between them – while, in the other case, they are 'deconstructed' and stripped of their 'systemic' aspects, so to emphasize the dynamic components of the process of 'slaving' that has generated them; a process which is the actual object of the analysis. Thus, depending on which approach one takes – whether it focuses on actually comparing ancient and modern 'slave systems' or on analysing the development of the process of 'slaving' from the ancient to the modern worlds – he/she will ask different questions, will find different results, equally valid, and will have to rely on different sets of scholarship altogether.²²

In his chapter, Orlando Patterson argues that historical comparison between ancient and pre-modern societies, both 'slaveholding societies'²³ and 'slave societies', is the only empirical method that allows scholars to reconstruct how slavery worked in the ancient world, given the notorious scarcity of data available.²⁴ In order to demonstrate his methodology, his own specific comparative study focuses on the understanding of the relationship between sexual division of labour and slavery in pre-modern societies. At the same time, he identifies broad themes of comparative analysis, such as the identification of the distinctive features of slavery as a 'relation of domination', the explanation of the reasons of its rooting in 'slaveholding societies' – and, more specifically, of its pervasiveness in genuine 'slave societies' – and the analysis of the consequences of the centuries-long reliance on slavery for human, specifically western, culture. In doing this, Patterson sets a preliminary agenda filled with crucial suggestions for the comparative study of ancient and modern 'slave systems', while identifying, at the same time, specific reasons for the need of such a comparative project.

²² Important works that have influenced the development of comparative methodology of 'slave systems' are especially Davis 1966; Patterson 1982; Finley 1998; Hopkins 1978; Nieboer 1971 (1910); and Engerman and Genovese 1975. Important works that have influenced the development of world historical methodology on 'slaving' are especially Miller 1999a; Phillips 1985; Curtin 1990; Lovejoy 2000; and Blackburn 1997.

²³ This definition is akin to Finley's and Hopkins' 'societies with slaves'.

²⁴ See Chapter 2 in this volume.

Patterson, then, proceeds to provide an initial answer to his preliminary question by setting up a statistical analysis of the 186 types of societies classified by anthropologist George P. Murdock.²⁵ The results of Patterson's analysis show, first of all, that, in societies with extensive farming, polygyny is strongly associated with female participation in the 'dominant mode of subsistence'; yet, while in such societies there is a causal link between the interaction of polygyny and warfare on one hand and slavery on the other – and between bridewealth, or bride price, and slavery – in societies with intensive farming – there is no evidence of a direct association between female participation and slavery; rather, we encounter a negative relationship between the two. Patterson concludes that, 'in the long run then, increased slavery would eventually lead to growing numbers of men in the labour force, even if the initial effect was to increase the number of women, hence the negative association we observe between slavery and female participation'.²⁶ Then, in an enlightening case-study in historical comparison, Patterson turns his attention to the 'slave societies' of Dark Age Greece. He proves the validity of the comparative method by finding crucial similarities between the early Greek societies and some of the pre-modern 'agro-pastoral slave systems' (all of them objects of his statistical analysis), taking into consideration both the strong link between slavery and warfare and the status and labour tasks of male and female slaves.

If Patterson's chapter is a model of comparative historical analysis, Joseph C. Miller's chapter presents an altogether different approach, concerned, instead, with the large issues of continuity and change in world history. Thus, in his chapter, Miller constructs a world history with a particular focus on the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, in which the dynamic process of 'slaving' – rather than the static concept of 'slavery' – provides the element of continuity, seen from the point of view of both the enslavers and the enslaved, while change relates to the differences in modes and strategies employed in different historical epochs. Placing at the heart of his analysis the fundamental questions of how and why some people resorted to slaving from time to time and from place to place throughout human history, Miller proceeds to sketch out elements of a 'global history of slaving'. His initial aim is to provide a basic definition of 'slaving' as 'a strategy focused specifically on mobilizing directly controlled *human* resources'.²⁷ Such a strategy was employed by opportunistic individuals who enslaved outsiders for personal ends, thus

²⁵ See Murdock and Provost 1973a and 1973b. ²⁶ See Chapter 2 in this volume.

²⁷ See Chapter 3 in this volume.

challenging the prevailing ethos of the community. For Miller, then, the entire world history of 'slaving' unfolded as a series of such challenges brought to the prevailing community ethos by different categories of enslavers at different times and in different places.

Thus, in the ancient Mediterranean, mercantile interests provided the enslaving with the means to challenge the prevailing aristocratic ethos, while, later on, 'generals in Rome's sweeping military campaigns on the frontiers ... used their captives to displace previous and less market-oriented landowners'.²⁸ Miller, then, provides a crucial comparative point by claiming that 'Old World practices of slavery were essentially female, private and broadly incorporative and assimilative within the strongly hierarchical, patriarchal, households within which the great majority of the enslaved lived'; in contrast, the particular type of economic expansion that characterized the modern Atlantic from the fifteenth century onwards took place in entirely novel contexts, in which 'slaving' was a highly commercialized activity and much more strictly regulated in legal terms.²⁹ Tracing the origins of these developments to the medieval Mediterranean, Miller shows how they eventually ended up affecting the native populations of both Africa and the Americas and benefiting the Iberian, Dutch, French, and English colonies in the New World.

Miller concludes with a plea for 'historicizing slaving', a type of analysis that 'allows us to describe processes of commercialization unique to the Atlantic in language developed from analysis of earlier processes' such as the ones that occurred in the ancient Mediterranean.³⁰ In doing this, he sets the tone for a type of historical comparison that integrates the dimension of historical change within it – thus, leaving us with the suggestion, in the context of the study of ancient and modern 'slave systems', to take into account the dynamic characteristics of the phenomenon of slavery in world history. And to be sure, in an ideal study of ancient and modern 'slave systems', the type of comparative historical analysis represented by Orlando Patterson's chapter – an analysis which takes equally into account ancient sources and modern ethnographic data – could be combined with the type of world historical analysis represented by Joseph C. Miller's chapter – an analysis in which comparison between ancient and modern must be developed within a historical framework emphasizing both

²⁸ See Chapter 3 in this volume.

²⁹ In his claim, Miller is joined by scholars such as David Brion Davis, Immanuel Wallerstein, Eric Wolf, Robin Blackburn, Philip Curtin and others, who have argued about the 'novel' character of modern Atlantic slavery.

³⁰ See Chapter 3 in this volume.

continuity and change. Ultimately, the integration of these two methods, we believe, could yield insights into the nature of ancient and modern 'slavery' and 'slaving' that would not be possible to grasp otherwise, especially if we think about all the elements of the complexity of the task at hand.

An essential part of the study of both slavery and 'slave systems' is economics, especially since the very notion of 'system' has a strong economic dimension. In order to study the 'slave systems' that flourished specifically in the ancient Mediterranean and modern Atlantic in comparative perspective, one must first focus on the identification of their economic features, whether from a more structural or more dynamic point of view. In this sense, the three chapters of Part II on 'Economics and technology of ancient and modern slave systems' not only provide an accurate picture of scholarly research on these features but also complement each other in treating different economic components and in providing both ancient and modern perspectives. In fact, while the first chapter in the section consists in a genuine comparative effort at answering the fundamental question of the economic conditions conducive to the rise of slave systems in the ancient and modern worlds, the remaining two chapters focus on specific aspects of the economy of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic – one treating the relationship between slavery and ancient technology in the Greek and the Roman worlds and the other focusing on both early nineteenth-century and contemporary perceptions of the economics of plantation slavery in the Americas.

Each of these three chapters in its own way deals, ultimately, with two crucial issues that scholars of ancient and modern slavery have addressed when focusing on economics: whether, in 'slave systems', slavery – though pervasive at all levels – was particularly associated with one or more specific economic activities, and whether, either as a result of this association or regardless of it, the economic system at the heart of genuine 'slave societies' was particularly profitable. Regarding the first point, there is no doubt that a superficial comparison would lead someone to believe that the slave systems of the ancient Mediterranean and of the modern Atlantic differed enormously, given the fact that, while slaves in the Greco-Roman world were employed in an enormous variety of economic activities, slaves in the Caribbean and in the American mainland supplied, first and foremost, forced labour in plantation agriculture. Yet, this would be an oversimplification of a sort, since a more accurate comparative study would show that large numbers of slaves were employed in agriculture in both ancient and

modern 'slave societies'. On the other hand, while we might well discover that in the ancient Mediterranean slavery and pre-industrial technological production were not irreconcilable, by the same token in different areas of the modern Atlantic there were a number of agricultural activities in which slavery was associated with what was, at least, incipient industrial production.³¹

Ultimately, this shift in scholarly perspective reflects also on our notions on the overall profitability of ancient and modern 'slave systems'. On these issues, both ancient and modern historians have argued for decades on either side of a divide that has opposed supporters of either a 'pre-modern' view, or a more 'modern' view of the economic functioning of slavery.³² It is hard to see that conciliation among these two opposite views will happen any time soon, simply because the premises from which they build their assumptions and according to which they treat their evidence are fundamentally different. Yet, it is at least possible to say that, on the basis of ever mounting evidence in favour of a combination of both 'pre-modern' and 'modern' features in both ancient and modern 'slave systems', supporters of the two views are likely to increasingly soften their now still rigid stance.³³

In his chapter, Walter Scheidel applies the comparative method as a heuristic tool to the combined study of ancient and modern 'slave systems', setting as his primary goal that of understanding the nature of the constitutive elements of slavery and 'slave societies' in economic terms. In particular, Scheidel seeks to answer the question of 'why would individuals who relied primarily or exclusively on the labour of others choose to employ slaves for a particular type of activity'.³⁴ In order to achieve his aim, he first criticizes Stefano Fenoaltea's model, according to which 'effort-intensive activities' were harsh and closely supervised, while 'care-intensive activities' were 'benign and unsupervised', eventually leading to

³¹ Key studies on the whole economy of the ancient Mediterranean include Finley 1973; and Scheidel and Von Reden 2002. On the Roman empire, see Rostovtzeff 1957; and Garnsey and Saller 1987. For the modern Atlantic, see Eltis *et al.* 2004; and Berlin and Morgan 1993. On the United States, see Fogel and Engerman 1974; Smith 1998; and, with specific reference to manufacturing, Carlton and Coclanis 2003; and Delfino and Gillespie 2005.

³² For the ancient world, studies emphasizing 'pre-modern' aspects have been headed by Finley 1973. Among the studies by 'modernists', see Rostovtzeff 1957; and Mattingly and Salmon 2001. For the modern world, important studies supporting the 'backwardness' of the American South include Genovese 1965 and Wright 1978. Important studies supporting the modern, 'capitalist', view include Fogel and Engerman 1974; and Oakes 1982.

³³ Studies on modern slavery that have argued for a combination of 'pre-modern' and modern features in the economy of the American South include Smith 1998; Young 1999; and Follert 2005.

³⁴ See Chapter 4 in this volume.

manumission.³⁵ This model, as indicated by Scheidel, only explains the omnipresence of slavery in domestic service, animal husbandry, manufacturing, and commerce in the ancient Mediterranean, all activities highly rewarded, but cannot explain the function of the 'slave systems' of the modern Atlantic. Scheidel, then, goes on to construct his own, composite model, relying partly on Christopher Hanes' research on the incidence of 'turnover costs' – meaning costs related to workers' replacement – on slave economies and on the type of labour markets, 'thin' or 'thick', on which they relied. He also partly relies on James Watson's classification of open 'slave systems' – with full assimilation of ex-slaves into society – and closed 'slave systems' – with social confinement of ex-slaves even after manumission.³⁶

Through his own model, Scheidel shows that 'socio-cultural conventions and expectations' also played a major part in influencing the link between slavery and either effort-intensive or care-intensive activities, in both ancient and modern times. Scheidel, then, ties his findings to a discussion on the factors conducive to the rise of 'slave systems', the most important of which being shortage of labour and access to slaves, and, secondarily, demand for slave-produced goods and accumulation of capital. In a particularly insightful comparative analysis, Scheidel not only shows that, in different modes and degrees, these factors were present both in the slave systems of classical Greece and Republican Rome and in the modern New World 'slave systems', but also that an equally important factor to take into account was the increase in 'commitments among the free population that conflict[ed] with economic activities'³⁷ – as happened, for example, in both ancient Rome and fifteenth-century Portugal. Ultimately, though, according to Scheidel, the combination of all these factors could end in the formation of 'slave systems' of either of two types: "peripheral" systems with favourable land/labour ratios, and "core" systems in which a combination of high commitment levels, capital inflows, and overseas expansion raises demand for labour³⁸ – a further, important suggestion to keep in mind in building our own model for the comparative study of 'slave systems'.

Tying in with Walter Scheidel's discussion on the type of economic activities most likely to be connected with slavery and 'slave systems', Tracey Rihll's chapter focuses on the relationship between slavery and technology in the Greco-Roman world, but with plenty of possible

³⁵ See Fenoaltea 1984: 635–68. ³⁶ See Hanes 1996: 307–29; and Watson 1980.

³⁷ See Chapter 4 in this volume. ³⁸ See Chapter 4 in this volume.

comparative points with modern pre-industrial societies. To begin with, Rihll argues that, while it is true that in the ancient Mediterranean there were plenty of slaves involved in high skill occupations, it is also true that in ancient manufacturing it was fairly difficult to gather a permanent staff of free workers, primarily because of the prejudice attached by free men to a permanent employment of that type. Hence, they constantly used skilled slaves in manufacturing activities in both Greece and Rome; slaves who, because of a number of factors, ended up living in a semi-free status (sometimes even leading to manumission), not unlike skilled slaves in the few industries of the ante-bellum American South. As in the ante-bellum American South, in antiquity also this status was a major incentive for slaves who wished to be employed.³⁹ In general, skilled slaves employed in manufacturing were either trained *in loco* by the artisan himself or bought already in possession of specific skills, in which case their value was, naturally, much higher.

This, then, raises the issue of capital investment, also because, theoretically, technological innovation⁴⁰ in manufacturing was so expensive that only the wealthy and kings could undertake it. Against this conventional wisdom, though, Rihll argues that most technological innovations in antiquity occurred in ordinary workshops with little expenditure 'of materials or cash either in their development or in their adoption'.⁴¹ These innovations, similarly to the modern ones, tended to save capital, rather than labour – or neither, in the case of the famous 'automata'. And yet, there were also cases of labour-saving devices, such as the mechanical flour mills, whose adoption was possibly encouraged by mass production of bread for the population of ancient cities. Nevertheless, risk was always involved in technological innovation, and, even in the case of success by the inventors, the degree of improvement of ancient mechanization over manual labour was often fairly small. Still, the connection of manufacturing production, and thus technology, with slavery – despite the high costs of skilled slaves – has certainly not been properly analysed in all its implications. In particular, Rihll alerts us to the fact that 'slavery forced people with diverse technical skills and education across linguistic and cultural boundaries' and thus 'was perhaps the main agent of technology transfer and innovation' in the ancient Mediterranean⁴² – a point that, incidentally, could be equally made

³⁹ On skilled slaves in ante-bellum southern manufacturing, see Dew 1994.

⁴⁰ Technological innovation in antiquity seems to have been a common phenomenon according to recent archaeological evidence. For more information see also Green 2000: 29–59.

⁴¹ See Chapter 5 in this volume. ⁴² See Chapter 5 in this volume.

regarding technological diffusion among the 'slave societies' of the modern Atlantic.

Providing an ideal counterpart to Rihll's treatment of technology and slavery in antiquity, Michael Zeuske's chapter looks at reception and 'transfer' of economic and technological issues among the slaveholding elites of the Caribbean in the early nineteenth century.⁴³ Zeuske takes the lead from works written by Alexander von Humboldt and by Cuban economic reformer Francisco de Arango y Parreño to claim that the crisis slavery went through in the modern Atlantic at the beginning of the nineteenth century – mainly due to the successful slave revolution in Haiti and the temporary fall in sugar prices – prompted the slaveholding and intellectual elites of the Americas to modify and improve the economic systems of the 'slave societies' that they headed. In doing this, they provided an early example of political and anthropological comparison, while, at the same time, their efforts showed a high degree of connection and common conceptual development. Hence, the methodological question of whether we should study slavery in the New World in comparative perspective or as *histoire croisée* – the term, used in French historiography, referring to an analysis focused on historical connections and ideological 'transfers'.⁴⁴ Though Zeuske tends to lean toward the latter in his judgment, in his chapter he manages to integrate both approaches, in the process providing an important model for a comparative and interlinked study of 'slave systems'.

Early nineteenth-century Cuba – where Humboldt and Arango met – was at the centre of debates among planters and intellectuals about technological improvement and modernization of the 'slave systems'. While residing in Cuba, Humboldt became aware of these debates and elaborated a comparison between the slave economies of the Americas, in which he took into account different issues, among them sugar production and race relations, and arrived at Arango's conclusion that, without changing their practice of slavery with radical reforms, the Cuban elite faced the threat of a slave revolution as in Haiti. Humboldt's comparative treatment of the sugar economies – and especially of issues such as 'the internal organization of the plantations, the techniques utilized to process sugar, and in general the yields of the soil and the sugarcane' – highlights the degree of interlinking and conceptual transfer between the slaveholding elites of the Americas.⁴⁵ Eventually, these debates and 'transfers' led to a renewed strength of the slave

⁴³ See Chapter 6 in this volume.

⁴⁴ On *histoire croisée*, see Werner and Zimmermann 2003: 7–36.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 6 in this volume.

economies of both the Caribbean and the American mainland. In both, the planter elites combined information from England's scientific practice of agriculture with a shrewd knowledge and exploitation of the new market opportunities in the world economy to reaffirm their power on the 'slave system' of the modern Atlantic for several decades, despite the demise of empires and the threats of slave revolutions and also of possible emancipations.

In the end, much like in the ancient Mediterranean, in the modern Atlantic also 'slavery functioned as an agent of transfer of an economic culture' and, where there were the right conditions, also of technological innovation.⁴⁶ In the process, it changed the economics of 'slave systems' in both cases, as elites established a dialogue between each other over improvement and modernization of the agricultural and manufacturing production and in connection with parallel developments in the market economy. At the same time, slavery's role as a connecting agent also resulted in an ever increasing awareness by the slaves of the existence of millions of their brethren toiling in different agricultural and manufacturing regions and in the spread of knowledge among them of the attempted revolts against the system. Thus, in a study that seeks to compare ancient and modern 'slave systems', slavery has to be taken not only as the social and economic foundation of them, but also as the very structural factor that, due to its pervasiveness, provided the chance to both slaveholding elites and slaves to establish and maintain communication with their peers, although in different ways and degrees.

Focus on the broad economic features of 'slave systems' can be useful especially at the very beginning of a large project of comparison between the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. However, when one moves from this initial stage to a more specific type of comparison – thus, between specific 'slave societies' – he/she needs to identify particular themes around which to construct a sub-project of a more particular nature. One such theme is the object of Part III, which focuses specifically on ideologies and practices of slave management in the Greco-Roman world and in the Americas. Also in this case, the two chapters that form it represent two different methodological approaches to the comparison of ancient and modern 'slave systems'; both valid, though for different reasons. One of the chapters is a case-study in the vein of 'rigorous' approach to historical comparison advocated by Peter Kolchin and applied to ancient and modern theories of slave management; the other chapter,

⁴⁶ See Chapter 6 in this volume.

instead, looks at the same theme showing the extent to which there were connections between the ancient and modern worlds and, thus, it is closer to the idea of *histoire croisée* – though a diachronic version of it.

To be sure, a narrow assessment of these two methods of historical investigation could see them as mutually exclusive, especially because historians tend to ask very different questions by employing them, and, ultimately, this is the main reason why they rely on completely different types of scholarship. As we have noted above, the 'rigorous' method of historical comparison is well established among historians of modern slavery, who have constructed a number of 'synchronic' comparisons between 'slave societies';⁴⁷ it is, though, utterly under-represented in scholarship on ancient slavery, where broad sweeping studies on the slavery experience in antiquity or more specific studies on aspects of either Greek or Roman slavery, but never in comparative perspective, continue to dominate the field.⁴⁸ One of the consequences of this is that 'rigorous' historical comparison, in 'diachronic' mode, between ancient and modern 'slave societies', or between aspects of ancient and modern 'slave systems', is virtually unknown.⁴⁹ The reason for this is tightly linked to the sort of questions customarily asked in 'rigorous' comparative studies; difficult questions to answer, given the difference of the available sources and the continuous focus primarily on similarities and differences. The attempt to make sense of complex issues such as the slaveholding elites' ideologies, the practices of management, the treatment of the slave labour force, the slaves' life and culture, the aims and objectives of slave rebellions, and other themes could present additional difficulties.

An altogether different type of study is, instead, the attempt to find actual connections between the ancient and modern worlds, with a particular focus on the practices of slavery. This type of study is, in fact, part of a well-established and very large body of scholarship on the influence of ancient Mediterranean cultures on the modern western mind; that is, the way the 'classical tradition' influenced numerous aspects of western civilization and formed new fields of research, such as philosophy, politics, religion, law, to cite but a few, particularly from the Renaissance onwards.⁵⁰ In nearly every enterprise they embarked upon, the very same

⁴⁷ See Tannenbaum 1946; Klein 1967; and Degler 1971. See also Foner and Genovese 1969; Hall 1971; Mullin 1992; McDonald 1993; Drescher 1999; and Marquese 2004.

⁴⁸ See Finley 1998; Hopkins 1978; Garnsey 1996; and Wiedemann 1981 – the latter a sourcebook. For more specific studies, see, instead, Garlan 1988; Bradley 1987, 1994; and Kirschenbaum 1987.

⁴⁹ The exception is Patterson 1982.

⁵⁰ For examples, see Pocock 1975; Skinner 1978; and Rahe 1992.

merchant and intellectual elites who played such a large role in the creation of the modern Atlantic world kept the accomplishments of their ancestors in the ancient Mediterranean as their models, they read and often followed what they had written, and in many cases they strove to achieve what they had achieved.⁵¹ It is no wonder, then, that, in the practice of slavery also, the models of classical antiquity loomed high in the cultural background of the educated planter elites of the Americas; thus, the investigation of this influence is a particularly promising effort that has the potential of shedding much light on issues not usually investigated in a 'rigorous' type of historical comparison between ancient and modern 'slave systems'.⁵²

Relying on both Kolchin's 'rigorous' approach and Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers' method of 'contrast of contexts',⁵³ in their chapter, Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari attempt an experimental study of two particular 'slave societies' of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic – the Roman world and the ante-bellum American South – in 'diachronic' comparative perspective.⁵⁴ Aware of the enormous difference in available evidence between the two case-studies, they focus on a specific theme for which it is possible to treat comparatively two particular sets of sources: the ideal model of slave management. Not surprisingly, this is a theme widely discussed by both ancient Roman and ante-bellum southern agronomists and agricultural reformers, who both saw it as a key to enhancing the productivity of the landed estates on which slaves formed the bulk of the labour force. In their chapter, Dal Lago and Katsari treat different aspects of slave management, keeping a firm focus, though, on the model of master-slave relationship and treatment of the workforce that agricultural reformers in both cases thought possible to achieve following certain sets of rules. Remarkably, comparison shows that there were several similarities regarding the advice on the treatment of slaves in the works of both the ancient Roman and the ante-bellum southern agronomists; yet, there were also specific differences, mainly because of the different types of Roman and American slavery and agricultural systems.

Similarities related particularly to the importance of the slaves' well-being in the ideal model of slave management; a feature that may suggest, among other things, a comparable concern by Roman and American masters for their capital investments. Other similarities show in the employment of comparable systems of punishment and rewards as a

⁵¹ On the United States, see Gunmere 1963; Reinhold 1984; and Richard 1994.

⁵² See Davis 1966, 2006; O'Brien 2004; and Fox-Genovese and Genovese 2005.

⁵³ See Kolchin 2003a; and Skocpol and Somers 1980. ⁵⁴ See Chapter 7 in this volume.

means to reinforce the masters' grip over their workforce – though, in this case, the specific types of rewards and punishments differed strongly between the two case-studies. Ultimately, for Dal Lago and Katsari, these similarities point to the existence of a comparable paternalistic ideal in the model of slave management – one tightly linked, in both cases, to the way relationships within the master's family were structured around the *pater familias*.⁵⁵ Yet, while for American masters 'it is very likely that paternalistic attitudes were related to a capitalist concern for the maximization of production', the same cannot be said for Roman masters.⁵⁶ Also, the difference between the racial exploitation of African-American slaves and the absence of racial issues in Roman slavery is of critical importance not only in the context of ideals of slave management, but also for the overall comparative study of 'slave systems' in the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic.⁵⁷

Though dealing with very similar issues related to slave management and to the master-slave relationship in the ancient and modern worlds, with their chapter, Rafael de Bivar Marquese and Fabio Joly construct an altogether different type of study, at the heart of which, rather than historical comparison, is the influence of classical authors on modern practices of slavery.⁵⁸ Their focus is on colonial Brazil, where, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a group of Jesuit authors relied heavily on the classical tradition in order to uphold the validity of an idea of society that had at its centre the patriarchal Christian master, from whose authority subject categories such as children, women, and slaves were supposed to be utterly dependent. As they did so, these Jesuit authors utilized excerpts from both Greek economists on household management and Roman agronomists on slavery and agriculture, thus providing an ideological justification for the rule of the Christian *pater familias* and master over his subjects that ideally linked in a sort of historical continuum the 'slave systems' of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. By the early eighteenth century, in fact, slavery was firmly rooted in the socio-economic structure of Portuguese Brazil and inextricably linked with the gigantic expansion of sugar production that had taken place in a number of European colonies located in the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ On paternalism in the ante-bellum American South, see Smith 1998; and Genovese 1974. On ancient Rome, about which the concept is hardly used, the best match is possibly Saller 1982.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 7 in this volume.

⁵⁷ On the difference made between ancient and modern types of slavery, see Patterson 1982; and Davis 2006.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 8 in this volume.

⁵⁹ On sugar-based slavery in the Atlantic, see Curtin 1990; Blackburn 1997; Mintz 1985; and Schwartz 1985.

In their chapter, Marquese and Joly show that, even though the Society of Jesus had long owned slave-based sugar plantations, the Jesuit authors of the eighteenth-century treaties sought specifically to address the increasingly unmanageable problem of slave revolts, by 'showing the faults committed by Luso-Brazilian masters in the control of their slaves'; significantly all faults related to having 'moved away from the precepts of Catholic morality'.⁶⁰ Thus, in their treaties, these Jesuit authors utilized excerpts from both Biblical and ancient Greek writings to uphold the idea of reciprocal duties in the master-slave relationship as a model for patriarchal relationships within the household, or else they utilized ideas and information from ancient Roman agronomists to address issues such as the proper exercise of power and distribution of rewards and punishments to the slaves on sugar plantations and, in general, the proper treatment of slaves by their masters. Ultimately, for Marquese and Joly, despite the great differences between ancient and modern slavery, the reliance of eighteenth-century Jesuit authors on Greek and Roman writings found its justification in the existence of several elements of continuity – such as the legal codes and also the very sources of the patriarchal, household-centred, ideology of the master classes of the New World – between the 'slave systems' of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, elements that, however, soon became at odds with the increasingly commercial character of Atlantic slavery from the eighteenth century onwards.

Whether one agrees or not with the fact that the 'commercialization of slavery' that took place at some point in the early modern period (different authors place it either in the sixteenth, the seventeenth, or in the eighteenth centuries) constituted a sharp break with a tradition that stretched back all the way to the classical past, there is no doubt that, until then, the elements of continuity with the ancient Mediterranean identified by Marquese and Joly had played an important part in the story of the making of the 'slave system' of the modern Atlantic. Thus, even if one embarks on an exercise of 'rigorous' historical comparison between specific features of particular ancient and modern 'slave societies' – as Dal Lago and Katsari have done – he/she cannot ignore the fact that, at the very least as a powerful background to the modern practices of slavery, stood an awareness by articulated masters and intellectuals of walking in the footsteps of individuals who had trodden that path before, or at least some of it, and who had left important clues on how to negotiate it for those who came after them. Yet, to us, awareness of this crucial connection, whether explicit

⁶⁰ See Chapter 8 in this volume.

or not, can only further enrich the appreciation and understanding of the enormous complexities of a proper comparative study of ancient and modern 'slave systems', while it also stands as an important reminder of the need of collaboration between experts of both antiquity and the modern world – as the examples of the two chapters in this section testify – for a more effective approach to such a project.

One of the most important issues to take into account in a comparative study of ancient and modern 'slave systems' is whether they were 'open' or 'closed' with regard to the social mobility of the slaves.⁶¹ This is, in fact, a crucial issue, since the difference in rates of manumission and in the subsequent assimilation of ex-slaves into the society implies the existence of a much wider set of differences between the economic and social systems and the types of slavery, on which they relied. In this respect, the difference between the 'slave systems' of the ancient Mediterranean and of the modern Atlantic was truly remarkable, since in the former manumission was certainly a great deal more frequent than in the latter, while – even though variations from case to case do exist – there is no doubt that social assimilation was much easier for ex-slaves in classical antiquity than in the New World. In other words, in an ideal scale going from 'open' to 'closed', the 'slave societies' of the ancient Mediterranean would be closer to the 'open' end of the scale, while the 'slave societies' of the modern Atlantic would be closer to the other end of the scale.⁶²

There are several explanations for this and one of the most important has to do with race. The absence of racial discrimination in the ancient world, doubtless, was a major factor that facilitated social fluidity to such an extent that ex-slaves (*liberti*) could reach some of the higher positions in ancient Roman society; on the other hand, the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the modern world led to a constant prejudice against individuals of African descent, which they bore as a stigma even after being freed.⁶³ Yet, manumission is only part of the story of the different ways of 'exiting slave systems' – the subject of Part IV. The two chapters in this section complement each other in addressing a host of other types of 'exits', aside from manumission. In fact, the first chapter is a broad comparative study, which attempts a classification of the different ways of achieving freedom that slaves had at their disposal – whether with the help of the master or by themselves – in a number of ancient and modern societies. The second

⁶¹ These terms are in Watson 1980.

⁶² On some of these issues in relation to manumission, see Patterson 1982; Phillips 1985, and 1996.

⁶³ On some of these issues, see Watson 1987.

chapter, by contrast, confines its analysis firmly within the modern period, as it ought to, given the fact that its focus is on the variety of processes that led to the emancipation of entire slave populations in the Americas.

In fact, emancipation on a mass scale was a wholly modern phenomenon; no such thing ever happened in the ancient world. And again, even though there is a number of reasons for this striking difference – and one that we need to keep constantly in mind in our comparative project on ‘slave systems’ of the ancient Mediterranean and modern Atlantic – it is not difficult to see that some of the necessary preconditions, among them the increasing democratization of public opinion and the making of a radical abolitionist movement, simply never had a chance to occur in the ancient world. By the same token, it would be even more unlikely to imagine an enforced emancipation of all the slaves of one of the most productive ‘slave societies’ in the ancient world resulting from a major war fought over slavery and won by a declared antislavery government – as, however, happened only in the case of the American Civil War, even in modern times.⁶⁴

In his chapter, Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau shows how both manumission and emancipation are part of a typology of ways of ‘exiting slave systems’, which he sets up in order to identify the reasons for their occurrence and to investigate their actual effects on different ‘slave societies’, both ancient and modern. Relying heavily on the work of Claude Meillassoux on Africa⁶⁵ and citing examples spanning from the Greco-Roman world to colonial and ante-bellum America, Pétré-Grenouilleau begins his typology analysing ‘systemic exits’ from slavery – acts that led to the masters’ liberation of slaves, without affecting negatively the nature of the system, but rather strengthening it. He discusses Meillassoux’s distinction, in relation to Africa, between two terms often used as synonyms: ‘enfranchisement’, as a systemic exit authorized [by the master] and/or with the master’s *consent*, which could bring a complete obliteration of the past enslaved status of the individual, even though it rarely did, and ‘manumission’, as a similar ‘systemic exit’, which might have had a more restrictive meaning.⁶⁶ Pétré-Grenouilleau, then, focuses on the different types of actions brought by the slaves against ancient and modern ‘slave systems’, with particular attention to the ante-bellum American South and ancient Rome. He argues, thus, that ‘passive’ slave resistance – based on minor acts of

⁶⁴ Several scholars have pointed out the significance of the uniqueness of the American path to emancipation in the modern world. See above all, Kolchin 2003a; Frechling 1994; and Foner 1983.

⁶⁵ See Claude Meillassoux 1991. ⁶⁶ See Chapter 9 in this volume.

interruption of day-to-day labour activities – could just be as devastating as ‘active’, or violent, resistance, simply by harming the productivity of the system.

Unlike the numerous acts of resistance, which never actually gained slaves an exit from the system, the less-frequent slave rebellions focused precisely on this target and, whether in the ancient or the modern worlds, their occurrence seems ‘to have corresponded to the moments either following the establishment of a “slave system” or its quick expansion’, or to those times in which a system seemed to be threatened.⁶⁷ Although they all failed but one (the one in Haiti) slave revolts usually led to changes in the ‘slave system’ – such as a hardening or a diffusion of tensions – though not necessarily in ‘anti-systemic’ ways. The same goes also for the ‘maroon’ communities of fugitive slaves, who, after exiting the system, did not fundamentally threaten it by living outside it. Finally, Pétré-Grenouilleau looks first at the processes of ‘natural exits’ from ‘slave systems’, with the decline and disappearance of slavery, which – he argues – was rarely definitive and often led to different forms of ‘unfreedom’, and then at the processes of ‘enforced exits’, which – as a result of the spread of abolitionism, from the eighteenth century onwards – constituted a novelty in world history and led, ultimately, to state-based enforcements of slave emancipation, whether originating from inside or outside the systems.

Picking up where Pétré-Grenouilleau’s chapter finishes, Stanley Engerman’s chapter focuses on the different paths followed by ‘slave societies’ across the Americas toward emancipation. Treating emancipation as an economic issue leading to legal action, Engerman shows how only in very few cases – at times of crisis of the ‘slave systems’ – it resulted from agreement among slaveowners; in such cases, emancipation was both un-legislated and uncompensated, and thus entirely voluntary. One such scenario could have very well developed in the United States in the aftermath of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the reinvigoration of the slave system brought by the expansion of cotton production prevented this from happening.⁶⁸ As it happened, in most cases, ‘emancipations occurred as a result of ... laws passed against the wishes of slaveowners ... economic debates and arguments between slaveowners and others’.⁶⁹ The debates revolved around the two main questions of whether emancipation should be

⁶⁷ See Chapter 9 in this volume.

⁶⁸ On this particular point, see both Kolchin 2003b; and Berlin 2004.

⁶⁹ See Chapter 10 in this volume.

immediate or gradual and whether there should be any compensation either for the slaveowners or for the slaves. Here, emancipation schemes differed widely and all types of arrangements were implemented across the Americas, but only in two cases – the United States and Haiti – was emancipation both immediate and uncompensated, as a result of war and revolution, respectively.

As Engerman shows, in most cases, the main issue addressed in the debates over emancipation was its cost for the slaveowners, given that slaves were considered a legitimate form of property. As a consequence, gradual schemes involving transitional periods of unpaid labour or 'apprenticeship', before the achievement of full freedom, proved to be particularly popular, especially when accompanied by ideas about the need to 'educate' the slaves to the habits of freedom. Nearly all these schemes, thus, provided some form of compensation for the slaveowners, either in the form of additional labour provided by the slaves or by postponing the date of emancipation as far as to another generation – as in the case of Brazil's 'free womb' law. Not surprisingly, 'in no case of slave emancipation, immediate or gradual, were the slaves offered any compensation'.⁷⁰ Particularly important were also the labour arrangements in the period of transition from slavery to freedom. Depending on the conditions of their access to the land, the ex-slaves could either end up working for landowners under some type of rent scheme, or buy land and start their own agricultural business. Ultimately, though, the void left by the absence of slave labour had to be filled somehow, and this was done by replacing it either with indentured labour or with white labour.

The long-term perspective on types of 'exits' from the 'slave systems' employed by Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, spanning the entire course of the centuries-long history of slavery, highlights how much of a break from accepted tradition, customs, and habits were the emancipation schemes described by Stanley Engerman, however conservative they might seem to us today. The dimensions of this break appear in all their magnitude when one pauses to think about the fact that, even as the abolitionist movement rose to the fore in Britain and America, slaves continued to be considered by the overwhelming majority of public opinion as little more than the legal property of the slaveowners. Thus, in investigating 'slave systems' – especially those of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic – we need to keep constantly in mind that forced emancipation of slavery, whether compensated or uncompensated, was one of the main novel

factors that sharply distinguished antiquity from the modern world by leading to the end of modern slavery in a way that would have been impossible in the ancient world.

The above discussion on the modern features of emancipation leads us to the last section in the present volume: Part V, on 'Slavery and unfree labour, ancient and modern'. Emancipation was a phenomenon that, in the modern world, affected not only slavery, but also serfdom in ways that constituted sharp breaks with the past, as several recent studies have pointed out; one needs only to think about the almost contemporaneous decrees releasing Russian serfs in 1861 and American slaves in 1863 to realize it.⁷¹ This consideration has important bearings on a comparative study of ancient and modern 'slave systems'. In fact, just as one, in doing such a study, has to keep constantly in mind the distinguishing characteristics of slavery as a socio-economic institution, or of 'slaving' as a process, for that matter, he/she needs also to be aware of the fact that, at the most basic level, slavery was but the most extreme of a whole range of systems of 'unfree labour', among which was also serfdom. Awareness of this larger context in which to place the comparative studies of 'slave systems' not only helps to identify the peculiarities of slavery in comparison with other types of 'unfree labour', but also helps to provide a more accurate picture of the past, both ancient and modern.

If we focus specifically – as we have done so far – on the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, there is no doubt that other forms of 'unfree labour' played important roles in both, vis-à-vis the correct functioning of the economy, if not also the profitability of the entire system. This was certainly the case of several regions in the ancient Mediterranean, where, during the Roman period, slavery was one of several types of labour, both free and unfree, associated with agricultural activities.⁷² This was also the case in several regions of the modern Atlantic, where, until the nineteenth century, different forms of free and coerced agricultural labour coexisted, mostly outside the regions with the highest slave populations.⁷³ Recognizing the importance of these broader contexts, scholars have started analysing historical forms of labour, as if they were placed in a sort of continuum going from slavery to freedom, looking at connections between them and between the different societies that employed them and, in the process, setting the guidelines for an ideal

⁷⁰ See Chapter 10 in this volume.

⁷¹ See Kolchin 1990: 351–67.

⁷² See especially Garnsey and Saller 1987; and Foxhall 1990: 97–114.

⁷³ See especially Wolf 1982; and Stern 1988: 829–72.

comparative analysis that should as much include 'slave systems' as 'serf systems', and so on.⁷⁴

Stephen Hodkinson's final chapter is very much a representative of this recent trend of scholarship that places slavery in a broader context and looks at connections and comparison between different historical forms of 'unfree labour'. His focus is on ancient Sparta in comparative perspective and, in particular, on the insights that comparison with other systems of 'unfree labour' might offer to the understanding of the relationship between the Spartiate masters and the helots in relation to the agrarian economy. As Hodkinson shows, helotage is a particularly significant case-study precisely because helots have been variously, and erroneously, classified as the equivalent of either modern slaves or modern serfs, lacking a more accurate description of their actual servile status. While comparison based on these broad classifications is hardly useful in this case, Hodkinson argues that more specific types of comparison, focusing on particular themes – as in the case of Paul Cartledge's article on 'rebels and *sambos*' in ancient Greece⁷⁵ – are far more productive and, in this vein, he seeks to enlighten specifically 'the social relations of production between Spartiates and helots, especially the degree of Spartiate direction of helot farming, and the implications for the helots' experience of servitude'.⁷⁶

Relying on the methodological treatment provided by Skocpol and Somers and on specific comparisons with American slavery, Russian serfdom, and pre-colonial African slavery, Hodkinson proceeds to address issues such as the degree of helot control by the Spartiates, the relation of the farming population to the land, and in general the pattern of formation of the Spartan agrarian economy. He points out that comparison with the three agrarian systems of unfree labour he has chosen shows that 'the extent of the masters' or landowners' intervention to control the location and disposition of their dependent labour force is often related to the degree to which they themselves were responsible for forming the fundamental elements of the agrarian economy';⁷⁷ this seems, to a certain extent, to have been the case also in Lakonia. Hodkinson draws important insights on the character of the Spartiate masters' residence in or at a distance from the landed estates and on the effects that either had on the helot population and on the strength of local helot communities, when seen in comparison specifically with the master–bondsmen relationship in

the ante-bellum American South and Tsarist Russia. He concludes with a plea to engage in other specific comparative studies between other aspects of helotage and modern types of 'unfree labour' and with a consideration of how – as Orlando Patterson also remarks in his chapter – we may be able to fill part of the void left by the lack of available evidence for the ancient world through the comparative method.

Stephen Hodkinson's plea and, even more, his comparative study of systems of 'unfree labour' in ancient Sparta and in three other societies provide a fitting conclusion for a comparative study of ancient and modern 'slave systems' for different reasons. First of all, his study proves the validity of the comparative method, when applied to specific themes, while, at the same time, it highlights crucial elements of continuity and change between the ancient and modern worlds – both themes that the authors of the other chapters have treated at length. Moreover, Hodkinson's study succeeds in contextualizing the study of 'slave systems' in the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic, by showing, through a specific comparison between four particular societies, the connection and interdependence between slavery and other forms of 'unfree labour'. We can say, then, that, ultimately, this is the road to follow in future comparative studies of the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic not just as 'slave systems', but as complex economies and societies including within themselves – in different forms and degrees and within different regions – different 'systems of labour', free and unfree.⁷⁸ Thus, a future study that might go beyond the suggestions of our own project on 'slave systems' would be one that fruitfully compares, in similar vein, 'systems of labour: ancient and modern'.

⁷⁸ For valuable suggestions in this sense, see Davis 2000; and Kolchin 2000.

⁷⁴ See Wallerstein 1974–89; Bush 1996a; Engerman 1999; and Bush 2002.

⁷⁵ Cartledge 1985; see also Genovese 1979, the work that inspired Cartledge.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 11 in this volume. ⁷⁷ See Chapter 11 in this volume.