

ABSTRACT

“Slavery in the British West Indies: A Study of the Intellectual Roots, from the late Classical Period to A.D. 1850.”

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This paper/thesis sets out to address the question of “why” in slavery. Why did slavery exist? And why was it felt by some societies, or groups within them, to be a necessity?

A lot has been written on the economics of slavery. Less so on the intellectual ideas behind the structuring of slavery across cultures in the Old and New World. This is where my study comes in.

My focus is on the intellectual roots which shaped modern slavery in the British West Indies between about AD 1500 and 1830. This obviously takes me back to the history of slavery in Antiquity (Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt) especially in the Late Classical Period (Graeco-Roman) from about 400/300 BC to AD 600. Slavery as an institution was known then. From circa 640 to 1500 AD it engulfed other cultures: the Islamic Old World, China, India, Japan, Africa as well as Meso-America in the New World.

Hence, I found it necessary to examine the literature available on slavery in these cultures. Given the problems of language, I was only able to make use of

such data as are available in English for the slavery experience especially in Muslim cultures, China, India and Japan.

By adopting this comparative, cross-cultural approach, it is my hope that I have come close to an understanding of both the intellectual roots of slavery in the region of my focus and worldwide, as well as of the multi-faceted features of slavery.

KEY WORDS: Slavery
Etymology
Intellectual Roots
Ideologies
Alienation
Cultural Other
Race
Colour
Honour
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Violence
Property
Dehumanization
Social Control
Permanency