

## What Is a Slave Society?

The practice of slavery has been common across a variety of cultures around the globe and throughout history. Despite the multiplicity of slavery's manifestations, many scholars have used a simple binary to categorize slave-holding groups as either "genuine slave societies" or "societies with slaves." This dichotomy, as originally proposed by ancient historian Moses Finley, assumes that there were just five "genuine slave societies" in all of human history: ancient Greece and Rome, and the colonial Caribbean, Brazil, and the American South. This book interrogates this bedrock of comparative slave studies and tests its worth. Assembling contributions from top specialists, it demonstrates that the catalog of five must be expanded and that the model may need to be replaced with a more flexible system that emphasizes the notion of intensification. The issue is approached as a question, allowing for debate between the seventeen contributors about how best to conceptualize the comparative study of human bondage.

Noel Lenski is Professor of Roman History at Yale University. A recipient of fellowships from the Humboldt and Guggenheim Foundations, he has published extensively on Roman imperial history, including *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD* and *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics*.

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-14489-7 — What Is a Slave Society?  
Edited by Noel Lenski , Catherine Cameron  
Frontmatter  
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# What Is a Slave Society?

*The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective*

*Edited by*

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-14489-7 — What Is a Slave Society?  
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[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107144897](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107144897)

DOI: 10.1017/9781316534908

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-107-14489-7 Hardback

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-14489-7 — What Is a Slave Society?  
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## Acknowledgments

This volume was born from a conference held during September 27–28, 2013, at the University of Colorado, Boulder. The event created a tremendously stimulating atmosphere, in which our fundamental question was examined from multiple global and theoretical perspectives. The results of those discussions have developed into the chapters in this book, some of which arise from the original papers delivered at the conference, others from contributions solicited later. Although some of the original participants were unable to submit a chapter, we wish to thank them for their inspiring discussions and insights. These include Daina Ramey Berry (University of Texas, Austin), Gwyn Campbell (McGill University), Walter Hawthorne (Michigan State University), and Joseph Miller (University of Virginia). David Lewis, who attended the conference without delivering a paper, was surely one of the most helpful interlocutors. His subsequent published work has demonstrated a powerful grasp of the problems this volume poses. During fall semester 2013, we also co-taught a course at the University of Colorado entitled “Slavery: A Global Perspective,” which was intended to involve students in the *What Is a Slave Society?* conference and to introduce them to the broader world of slavery, past and present. This was a wonderful group of students who challenged us to think even more deeply about the ideas we were presenting in both the course and the conference.

The conference succeeded because of the skilled and efficient work of Sandra Crowell, University of Colorado Classics Department

Program Assistant, who arranged travel, receptions, dinners, and much more for our many attendees. Lesa Morris, Anthropology Department Program Assistant, offered parallel help. During the conference, three graduate students provided enthusiastic assistance: Erin Baxter, Paxton Bigler, and Lindsay Johansson. Erin also served as videographer. The conference was funded by grants from a variety of CU entities: the Center for Western Civilization, IMPART, the Graduate Committee for Arts and the Humanities, the Vice Chancellor's Research Council, the Dean's Fund for Excellence, the President's Fund for the Humanities, the Kayden Award Committee, and Classics Department Course Fees. We are grateful for their confidence in this endeavor and pleased to offer these studies in return. The conference was also sponsored by the Department of Anthropology, Department of Classics, Department of History, and Mediterranean Studies Group. The slavery course associated with the conference was supported by a grant from the University of Colorado's Gamm fund for interdisciplinary courses.

Translating the stimulation and excitement of a conference to written form is often a challenge, but the authors of these chapters have been a delight to work with. These prominent and enormously busy scholars met all of our many deadlines without complaint, making our editorial job easy. During the course of the project, we also requested chapters from scholars who had not attended the conference but whose work, we realized, would add enormously to the resulting book. We thank Bernard Freamon (Seton Hall University), Anthony Reid (Australian National University), Aldair Rodrigues (University of Campinas, Brazil), and Theresa Singleton (Syracuse University) for crafting excellent papers that add greatly to this volume.

Noel Lenski benefited greatly from interchanges with Dan Tompkins, who was especially generous with his knowledge and materials on Moses Finley, as well as Richard Talbert, who kindly supplied his special issue of the *American Journal of Philology*, dedicated to the theme of "Moses Finley in America," immediately after its publication. David Lewis and Kostas Vlassopoulos shared valuable ideas and critical advice on both of Lenski's chapters. Lenski also delivered the paper that became the first chapter of this volume not just at the initial conference but also at conferences held at the Institute



*Acknowledgments*

xvii

for the Study of the Ancient World and Yale University in 2014, and Washington University in St. Louis in 2015. The Yale audience, soon to be colleagues, offered invaluable advice and criticism, especially David Blight, Emily Greenwood, Ed Rugemer, and Stuart Schwartz. Blight and Rugemer as well as Eckart Frahm have been extremely helpful on questions of comparative bibliography.

At Cambridge University Press, Asya Graf, Editor of Archaeology and Renaissance Studies, encouraged us in the initial stages of developing this book project and Beatrice Rehl was equally helpful and encouraging as we moved through the remaining stages. Our thanks go to three anonymous scholars who reviewed this book's initial proposal and made important suggestions about its development, as well as the two anonymous reviewers who read the full manuscript and helped all of us to perfect our chapters. Indeed, "Reader B," whose expertise in the history of slavery globally and of Greek slavery in particular was formidable, contributed a wealth of suggestions that helped both authors and editors vastly improve their work. As this book came together, we had superb editorial assistance from Josh Fincher, who skillfully developed a referencing system for each chapter (no small task with scholars from multiple disciplines), built the bibliography, copyedited the entire document, and later produced its index. University of Colorado grad student Lindsay Johansson provided editorial assistance at the beginning of the project, and retired University of Colorado graphic artist Dave Underwood drew all the maps.

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