ANCIENT SLAVERY IN MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE:
A PROPOSAL OF GLOBAL APPROACH

**Escravidão antiga em perspectiva mediterrânica:
uma proposta de abordagem global**

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**DEBATE
ESCRAVIDÃO ANTIGA E HISTÓRIA GLOBAL
ANCIENT SLAVERY, AND GLOBAL HISTORY**

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to propose a new methodological alternative for the study of ancient slavery, considering the limits of the concept of "slave society" formulated by Moses Finley. This concept came increasingly under scrutiny in the last ten years by a scholarship that is devoting itself to a global history of slavery. In the first part of the article, we examine Finley's concept and the most recent objections from authors such as Noel Lenski, David Lewis and Kostas Vlassopoulos. In the second part, we propose to think of a "Mediterranean slave system" with distinct phases between the rise of the city-states in the Mediterranean and the development of the Roman Empire. To this end, we also propose a dialog with the most recent strands of study on Atlantic slavery, especially with the perspective forwarded by the concept of second slavery.

KEYWORDS

Ancient slavery. Roman Empire. Mediterranean.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é propor uma nova alternativa metodológica para o estudo da escravidão antiga, tendo em vista os limites do conceito de "sociedade escravista", formulado por Finley. Esse conceito tem sido criticado nos últimos dez anos de forma mais recorrente por uma historiografia que se volta para uma história global da escravidão. Na primeira parte do artigo examinamos o conceito finleyniano e as objeções mais recentes de autores como Noel Lenski, David Lewis e Kostas Vlassopoulos. Na segunda parte, propomos pensar um "sistema escravista mediterrânico" com diferentes fases entre o surgimento das cidades-estados no Mediterrâneo e o desenvolvimento do Império Romano. Para tanto, propõe-se um diálogo com as vertentes mais recentes de estudo sobre a escravidão atlântica, em especial com a perspectiva aberta pelo conceito de segunda escravidão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES

Escravidão antiga. Império Romano. Mediterrâneo.

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The field of "ancient slavery" studies is facing a major challenge. In the last ten years, there has been a search for renewal, along with a more incisive questioning of certain orthodoxies that were consolidated by the influence of the work of Moses Finley. This renewal has mobilized a dialogue beyond the field itself, as it also tackles issues in writing a global history of slavery. However, despite the merit of proposing other analytical possibilities for an aspect of the ancient world that has already been studied so much, this tendency seems still very dependent of the concept of "slave society" as coined initially by Finley almost fifty years ago, even though its limits are recognized.

The oscillation between abandoning the concept altogether or reformulating it to keep alive the "spirit of Moses Finley's inquiry", in the words of Noel Lenski (2018, p. 57), has resulted in keeping a fragmented, non-integrated view of slavery in Antiquity. Above all, the traditional "forms" – in the sense that Norberto Guarinello (2003) gives to the word – are preserved – that is, "Near Eastern slavery", "Greek slavery", "Roman slavery", "Jewish slavery" etc. –, albeit they do not satisfactorily contemplate the historical transformation of slavery in Antiquity by not taking into account local, regional, imperial and global historical experiences of enslavement/manumission processes in the ancient Mediterranean. The maintenance of this traditional historiographical morphology for studying slavery in Antiquity makes it difficult to ask questions such as, for example, whether "Roman slavery" was essentially the same and constant throughout history or whether there were transformations, suppressions, and rearticulations of local types of slavery along Mediterranean history.

The answers to such questions have proved difficult to give if the focus remains solely on the concept of "slave society" as conceived by Finley, so building new methodological alternatives may be worthwhile. This is the aim of this article. Taking as a starting point the analysis of Finley's position and the more recent criticisms of authors such as Noel Lenski, David Lewis, and Kostas Vlassopoulos, we will propose a new conceptual model for the study of ancient slavery. Our central argument is that it would be helpful to reassess the idea of a "Mediterranean slave system" and consider it as having two main phases: a Mediterranean "first slavery", initially constituted in the context of city-states from the 9th century BC, and then, with the Roman Empire, from the 1st century BC onwards, a Mediterranean "second slavery". This second phase had an impact on the dynamics of enslavement and mercantile chains established in the previous phase, along with the spread of an institutional-legal apparatus that acted as a convergence factor between different slave systems. To this end, we propose a dialog with the most recent strands of study on Atlantic slavery, especially with the perspective opened up by the concept of second slavery.

SLAVE SOCIETY: THE LIMITS OF A CONCEPT

Finley states, in *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1980), that a society is a *genuinely* slave one when the income that maintains the ruling elite is substantially based on slave labor. In this sense, the critical issue would be the "location" of slavery among other forms of compulsory labor and even in relation to free labor in Antiquity. For Finley, slaves constituted the *permanent* labor force for the elite, both in the countryside and in the city, and consequently "provided the bulk of the immediate income from property", that is, excluding those incomes whose origin was political, derived from military positions and public administration, or derived from financial operations, such as moneylending (Finley, 1991, p. 84).

Still according to Finley, a slave society was the result of the combination of three factors: private ownership of land and its concentration in a few hands; the development of production goods and the existence of a market for their sale; and the absence of available internal labor force (due to the abolition of debt-bondage), thus creating the need for foreign

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labor. These conditions – all explained by fundamentally endogenous reasons – would have existed simultaneously in Athens and other Greek communities in the 6th century BC as well as in Rome since the 3rd century BC (Finley, 1991, p. 88-89), so initially being restricted to the central areas of Greece, Italy and Sicily (Finley, 1991, p. 82). In this context, the slave emerged as the ideal labor force because the "three components of slavery — the slave's property status, the totality of the power over him, and his kinlessness — provided powerful advantages to the slaveowner as against other forms of involuntary labour: he had greater control and flexibility in the employment of his labour force and far more freedom to dispose of unwanted labour" (Finley, 1991, p. 79).

Finley, therefore, when describing the emergence of slave society in Greece and Rome, has in mind city-states regionally delimited and without yet consolidating imperial structures of domination over vast territories. After thus explaining the emergence of a Greco-Roman slave society, Finley then moves directly to the stage of its decline under the Roman Empire, when he oscillates, in the fourth chapter of *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, between referring to the Empire as a whole, Italy or Rome. This oscillation is not casual. It derives, in essence, from a monolithic vision of the empire, as if it implied a single society and an elite that was also homogeneous, based on slave labor, and who then stopped using it due to the new availability of labor inside the empire by citizens now deprived of the former privileges of restricted citizenship. As Norberto Guarinello noted, the terms of Finley's comparison are entirely different, since "slavery did not decline in the context of a city, but of a vast empire, for which the notion of citizenship had, from the outset, a completely different connotation" (Guarinello, 2009, p. 118).

Despite these problems in the formulation of the concept, Finley's thought became very influential not only in the historiography of ancient slavery, but also in that of slavery in the Americas (especially in the US South) and Africa. Even though he was a specialist in the ancient world, a marginal area within studies on the History of Slavery, Finley laid the foundations for what Rafael Marquese (forthcoming) called the structural and nomothetic approach to this field. The great work that synthesizes this approach, *Slavery and Social Death*, by Orlando Patterson (1982), reveals, not by chance, a profound Finleyan imprint in marking his position in the debates on the concept of slavery and slave society (cf. Bodel, 2019; for a reassessment of Patterson's work, see Bodel and Schneidel, 2017). On the other hand, an important alternative approach, defined by Marquese as historical and ideographic, has been forwarded by Joseph Miller (2008; 2012) and has been the starting point for essential criticisms of the Finleyan model, as it suggested an approach to *slaving* as a dynamic historical process.

This debate has indeed been hot in recent decades in the field of the Global History of Slavery, and not so much in the field of Ancient Slavery. However, the commemorations of Finley's centenary in 2012 encouraged the topic to be discussed again in this field as well, with books and articles in the United States and Europe assessing the impact of Finley's ideas (Harris, 2013; Jew; Osborne; Scott, 2016; Lenski; Cameron, 2018).

In this context, Finley's commentators gave a prominent place to the theme of slavery. "What is a Slave Society?" is precisely the title of one of the books that came to light in this context, organized by Noel Lenski and Catherine Cameron (2018). In his contribution to the volume, in an introductory chapter on the concept, Lenski (2018) lists what he considers as its main flaws. Firstly, he notes the ethnocentric perspective from which Finley elaborates the concept, since only Western societies are treated as genuinely slave societies. Secondly, Lenski cites some inconsistencies in the formulation of the concept: a very rigid distinction based on the binomial slave society/slaveholding society; the difficulty of precisely circumscribing the notion of "society" (for example, the whole Caribbean was *a* slave society?); the concept, moreover, is based on Western notions of freedom, political

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participation and private property; and, finally, its use would emphasize much more the similarities between slave societies than their differences in terms of internal and external sources of slaves, practices of manumission, the different employments of slave labor, and the racial issues involved in slavery.

These are pertinent criticisms, but Lenski does not suggest abandoning the concept. On the contrary, he believes that if adjusted to a global approach to slavery beyond the five societies that Finley set up as canonical (classical Greece and Italy, the American South, the English and French Caribbean, and Brazil), the concept remains valid. In his words:

> If we accept that "Slave Societies" are to be judged by the degree to which their structures of dependency approach "ideal slavery", the benchmark for comparing them would thus seem not to be Finley's tidy binary but a scale, or rather a series of scales. These might be termed *vectors of intensification*, that is, measures of the degree to which a particular "Slave Society" approaches each aspect of the ideal definition put forward earlier in this chapter (Lenski, 2018, p. 52).

It is an interesting solution to maintain the validity of Finley's concept of "slave society" within his proposal of a comparative history of slavery, but now with a broader range of societies. However, this maintenance of the concept also implies replicating some of its fundamental problems. Lenski states that the idea of "society" and its circumscription in time and space is problematic, but he does not consider this issue when reworking the concept. Consequently, he ends up reiterating the same kind of incoherence by citing societies with very different organizations – indigenous tribes, empires, kingdoms – to which the same observations he makes about the US South and the Caribbean could be applied as not constituting homogeneous "societies" since there could be geographical and temporal differences as well, and it would be more appropriate to circumscribe better what slave societies could exist within these broad spaces.

Therefore, the emphasis on the methodology of constructing ideal types maintains those traditional forms of slavery, such as "Roman slavery" and "slavery in the US South", as well as it hinders an understanding of these slaveries in the larger slave systems – Mediterranean and Atlantic – in which they were inserted. It is worth remembering that the concept of slave society, prior to its use by Finley, appeared in the historiography on slavery in the Americas from the 1940s onwards in the context of comparisons between empires, their colonization processes, and the consequences for building slave systems in the New World (Tannenbaum, 1946; Goveia, 1965).[1]

In any case, the concept of slave society, due to Finley, has assumed a preeminence over others, such as that of "slave system" (for example, as proposed by Wesermann, 1955) in the scholarship of ancient slavery. One consequence was the undertheorization of the relationship between connectivity, integration, empire, and slavery, thus reinforcing a segmented view of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean, as if each modality had developed independently, based mainly on internal political factors, and without any interrelationships between them. In short, the approaches based on the concept of slave society tend to subscribe a methodological internalism, an assumption which, not by chance, was at the basis of the formation of Ancient History as an academic field and which is still present in it, despite the orientation towards more global approaches (Morales; Silva, 2020).

An illustration of this point can be found in the first volume of *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* (2011), dedicated to the ancient Mediterranean and organized by Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge. Most of the chapters focus on Greek and Roman slavery, with

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[1] On Finley's knowledge with these debates, see Joly (2019).

only one chapter dedicated to slavery in the Ancient Near East and another to slavery among the Jews.[2] In the case of Greece and Rome, a thematic treatment (culture, economy, sources of slaves, archaeology of slavery, religion, law, and family) is combined with chapters focused on traditional periodizations (classical and Hellenistic periods; Republic, Empire and Late Antiquity). In those that deal with classical Athens, Republican Rome and Roman Italy under the Principate, the discussion still focuses on stressing the relevance of their qualifications as slave societies. Thus, Neville Morley, in his chapter on slavery in the Principate, adopts the concept as if there were no longer any need to question its applicability:

> Without wishing to downplay the special characteristics of Roman Italy during this period, with its high numbers of slaves and the particular ways in which they were employed in villas, it seems strange that a society in which slaves could be encountered in all areas of life and at all levels of social interaction, in which the ownership of slaves was one of the most important markers of social status and in which discussions of the state of society were dominated by the problems created by the presence of successful slaves and freedmen should not be described as a "slave society" (Morley, 2011, p. 284).

Rome, for the author, has spread "its beliefs, habits, practices and anxieties; the provinces were confronted with, and clearly influenced by, a culture that was permeated by slavery", so that the Principate meant more the "consolidation of the institutions of Roman slavery rather than their development – let alone their decline" (Morley, 2011, p. 285). Here there is an example of a strategy for dealing with the difficulty of situating slavery within the framework of a slave society at the imperial level: instead of thinking of alternatives for specifying the relations between empire and slavery in more systemic terms, it is adopted a view that presupposes a slave cultural unity in the Empire in particular and in the ancient Mediterranean in general.

However, in contrast to the more culturalist approaches, some alternatives have appeared in studies on Greek and Roman slavery, which start from Finley's concept of slave society, but along with the notion of slave system. These analyses have the advantage of thinking about other geographical and temporal units to contextualize ancient slavery.

An important step in this direction, still inspired by Finley, can be found in Kyle Harper's *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275-425* (2011), which argues that fourth-century imperial Roman society can still be understood as a slave society. Harper uses this concept to criticize the entrenched view that the slave system of the late Empire was a declining or transitional one, and therefore apart from the time when Roman society was a genuinely slave society, when the slave mode of production was dominant in the center of the Empire. For Harper (2011, p. 65):

> Rather than trying to salvage the uniqueness of Roman slavery by identifying a dominant slave mode of production, limited in space and time, we should see slavery as an integral component of the Roman imperial system. Slaves were often a thin presence within a given space, but this does not vitiate the claim to significance. The Roman empire was the interconnection of these zones of thin modernization, flung across a vast territory. Seen against the background of the giant, slow-moving world of subsistence and reproduction, the Roman slave system will appear small; seen, appropriately, within the

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[2] See Lewis (2018, p. 2-3) on the disregard, following Finley, of Near Eastern societies in studies of ancient slavery.

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vibrant, fast-moving world of capital floating atop the Mediterranean empire, Roman slavery takes on its true measure.

Harper's main argument is that the interrelationship between the slave supply and demand, institutions, and the management of estates in the fourth century kept slavery as it had already developed in the High Empire and far from declining. Roman law was the leading institution that allowed slavery to expand, even if slave work wasn't the main form of compulsory labor. Roman law had an impact on the labor market by giving owners the possibility of choosing between slaves, tenants, and wage earners to manage their estates according to the cost of labor and the desired degree of control over the production process (Harper, 2011, p. 156-157).

Harper's model is based on the assumptions of the New Institutional Economics, which is prevailing in studies on ancient economy. From this perspective, the efficiency of the economy is directly proportional to the efficiency of institutions (such as law), which ultimately allow the market economy to take precedence over other forms of organizing economic life. The analyses that point to the development and expansion of Roman Law as an important institutional element for the efficiency of the Roman Economy postulate the idea of an "integration of distant and heterogeneous regions into a Mediterranean market based on the development of 'supralocal' institutions", which is "a very interesting parallel with the very process of globalization in our capitalist present" (Knust, 2012, p. 21). It is ultimately a neomodernist position, which points to the existence of a market economy like the capitalist one in the ancient Mediterranean.

Notwithstanding this position of Harper's book – which is open to question –[3], it is of interest for the present discussion, the author's objective, albeit without further detailing throughout the book, of presenting a narrative of the "Mediterranean slave system, in the last period during which the Roman empire was home to a slave society" (Harper, 2011, p. 66). In his view, Roman slavery constituted "Roman slavery was a distinctive phase of Mediterranean history, when a convergence of forces acted to intensify both the supply and demand for slaves over an extended arc of time" (Harper, 2011, p. 61).

This perspective of thinking about connections between the Roman imperial system and a Mediterranean slave system would be interesting to move forward, as no study takes this direction. Despite describing isolated slave societies, it is an alternative to insert and articulate them in a broader slave system in time and space, which would itself be reproduced by local systems of slavery. A recent approach that helps us to reflect on this issue – even if it doesn't include Roman slavery – is that David Lewis offers in his book _Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context, c. 800-146 BC_ (2018). Lewis also criticizes Finley's ethnocentrism in selecting only five genuinely slave societies throughout history, and so stressing the exceptionality of slavery in Athens and Rome. Otherwise, Lewis argues that a more comprehensive understanding of Greek slavery depends on its framing into a larger context, which includes Sparta, Crete, the region of Attica, Israel (Iron Age, 8th-7th centuries BC), Assyria (8th-7th centuries BC), Babylon (7th-6th centuries BC), the Persian Empire (6th century BC) and Carthage (3rd-2nd centuries BC). To compare and describe the regional and legal specificities of each of these cases, Lewis follows William Westermann's (1955) notion of slave system – taken as a set of legal regulations involved in the possession of captives, the trade of slaves, and the guarantee of private property over them –, although he does not completely discard Finley's concept of slave society.

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[3] On this point, see the more detailed criticism of Harper's book by Kostas Vlassopoulos (2015). For a critique of the principles of New Institutional Economics as used in the historiography of Roman economy, see Hobson (2014).

It is indisputable that the author then provides a more composite view of slavery in the Eastern Mediterranean by highlighting the regional diversity of the institution according to the various legal arrangements that ensured the ownership of slaves as an essential element for the maintenance of the elites. However, this choice ends up leading to little theorizing about what constituted a slave system in local, regional or even Mediterranean terms, beyond its legal apparatus for defining levels of ownership. This problem is even recognized by Lewis, for example, when he analyses the case of the Persian Empire, which cannot be treated as a homogeneous regional unit. Therefore, the question of the relationship between connectivity, integration, empire and slavery is not addressed since the mentioned slave systems are basically portrayed as independent units.

A concept used by Lewis that can be useful for a systemic vision of the slave systems in the Mediterranean is that of the "slaving zone". For this author, the most important variable would be the transaction costs involved in obtaining slaves, bringing them from the slaving zones to the final buyer, a role that was played by "the institutions of many of the city states both strengthened the legal protections from enslavement for their own citizens and facilitated those trade networks that provided easy access to these nearby reservoirs of slave labour" (Lewis, 2018, p. 286). Jeff Fynn-Paul elaborates the concept of slaving zone deeper (2009; Fynn-Paul; Pargas, 2018) to develop the thesis that Christianity and Islam represented a turning point in the history of the great Mediterranean slave system, since empires based on these monotheistic religions began to adopt an ethical-religious taboo against the enslavement of the majority of their inhabitants and thus, in the long term, made it possible the enslavement of populations in Russia and Africa. Fynn-Paul thus presupposes a "Greater Mediterranean slave system", involving all of Asia west of the Indus, most of Africa, and the whole of Europe. Such a system has been constituted by the interaction between slaving zones and non-slaving ones, in the sense that a "slaving zone is defined as the geographical area impacted by a given society's demand for slaves, and a no-slaving zone is the area considered off limits for slave raiding by that society" (Fynn-Paul, 2009, p. 4). More recently, in his contribution to the second volume of *The Cambridge World History of Slavery,* Fynn-Paul defined a slave system as one made up of all the slaves, their owners and others involved in dealing with captives; the logistics of captivity, transportation and trade; the market forces of supply and demand; the political, ideological and normative institutions, both informal and formal, that regulate these systems, and, finally, a discourse of servitude, whose stability is variable over time, but preserving certain characteristics, such as the emphasis on dominance or hierarchy (Fynn-Paul, 2021, p. 28).

This notion of slave system, broader than those of Westermann and Lewis, as well as the idea that the slaving zones of a Mediterranean slave system have changed according to specific patterns of political and religious organization, are important elements for a new systematization of the study of slavery in Antiquity. It allows us to conceive slave systems not as isolated constructs, but as having combined and unequal developments. Otherwise, what we have is a comparative history of ancient slave systems that lists their similarities and differences in terms of the political, economic and cultural conditioning factors of slavery, as it is common in the long tradition of comparative studies of ancient and modern slavery (see Kolchin, 2006; Dal Lago; Katsari, 2008).

It is therefore necessary to conceive another narrative of the slave systems in the ancient Mediterranean, which is not restricted to their internal developments, especially their political and legal ones, but which relates these to a historical whole, in which the various developments of the city-states and imperial structures have a place. The connection of the history of ancient slavery with the discussions about a Global History of Slavery could be a perspective that allows this alternative to be explored.

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TOWARDS A GLOBAL HISTORY OF MEDITERRANEAN SLAVERY

It should be emphasized that the global framework of ancient slavery that we postulate here is not affiliated with those approaches that place slavery in Greco-Roman and Near Eastern antiquities side by side with other forms of slavery throughout history to provide a broad picture of the persistence and variability of slave relations over a very long period. A recent example of this option is the volume edited by Paulin Ismard, *Les mondes de l'esclavage - Une histoire comparée* (2021), which covers a time span from 12,000 BC to the present day.

Our proposal is closer to the discussions put forward by Kostas Vlassopoulos in his latest book *Historicizing Ancient Slavery* (2021). Like Lenski and Lewis, Vlassopoulos also criticizes Finley's notion of slave society but does not adopt a compromise solution to preserve its use. In Vlassopoulos' view, the path to renewing the field starts with abandoning this concept and building a typology that shifts the focus from "Greek slavery" and "Roman slavery" to a wider variety of *epichoric slaving systems,* understood as the result of combinations of conceptual systems of slavery, contexts, and strategies of enslavement, and dialectical relationships that constitute slavery beyond those between masters and slaves. These systems are also shaped by broader economic, political, social and cultural processes, both internal to these systems (such as the forms of relations between the citizens of a polis) and external to them, such as the connection to Mediterranean markets that facilitated the obtaining of slaves (for example, the situation of Athens compared to that of Sparta). The main question, in this sense, is to explain divergences and convergences between the epichoric systems and also the impact of empires, such as the Roman Empire, on the slaving systems that entered its orbit of influence (Vlassopoulos, 2021, p. 169; 175). However, as Vlassopoulos himself recognizes, the underlying problem lies in the fact that ancient slavery is still almost exclusively studied synchronically – "slavery in classical Athens" or "slavery in the Roman Republic" – and thus dissociated from a diachronic narrative of Greek or Roman history (Vlassopoulos, 2021, p. 190), and even from a history of the ancient Mediterranean. In the conclusion of his book, he claims for a change in the field of Ancient History to deal with this problem:

> Ancient historians need to construct a wider framework akin to that of the Atlantic World, the Indian Ocean world or the Islamic oecumene adopted by historians working on slaving in other areas and periods. Slaving was an inherent part of the geopolitical, economic, cultural and religious processes that linked the communities of the Mediterranean, the Near East, North Africa, the Black Sea and temperate Europe with central Asia and the Indian Ocean in the course of antiquity. Over the last twenty years historians and archaeologists are gradually constructing a wider framework for studying these interactions; the study of ancient slavery needs to follow suit urgently (Vlassopoulos, 2021, p. 204).

Such a research agenda could contribute to a re-evaluation of the history of ancient slavery not only by questioning the very centrality that has been given to the hegemonic models of slavery, the Athenian and Roman ones, but by suggesting new ways of conceiving the temporalities of slavery in Antiquity other than the usual one of rise and decline, of parallel histories of slave systems, or of the long permanence of a Roman model taken as normative and unitary.

Although, as we have seen, the terms "Mediterranean slave system" or "Mediterranean slavery" are evoked time and again by recent historiography, they are not

explored with more significant theoretical-methodological implications.[4] It is therefore necessary to study how local systems of enslavement, built on a common historical basis of a very long duration, but very different from each other, were historically reorganized and integrated into a unified system as the slave system of the Greater Mediterranean, which, over the centuries, will go through different historical phases. The relevance of such an approach would not be reduced to the limits of the field of ancient slavery studies, since it makes possible to analyze the interconnection of two world-systems, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, over the centuries.[5] Based upon Norberto Guarinello's (2013) reflections on the history of Mediterranean's integration process from the Iron Age onwards, we assume that some parallels could be drawn between the stages of this long process and the phases of Mediterranean slavery, marked by the articulation of epichoric slaving systems.

The first phase of Mediterranean slavery took place during the formation of the city-states from the 9th century BC, and in the context of phenomena such as the Greek and Phoenician dispersion in the Mediterranean, and the political configuration of the Italian Peninsula, especially in Etruria and Latium, when the internal social boundaries of the communities were strengthened, differentiating citizens and non-citizens, and identifying the slave as the foreigner par excellence, whose employment made it possible to intensify production in the centers most linked to Mediterranean exchanges (Guarinello, 2013, p. 91; Broodbank, 2013, p. 549). At this point, it would be possible to imagine a diffuse situation in which countless local slaving systems would have arisen around the Mediterranean basin, some organized mainly as forms of intra- or inter-community servitude, as Garlan (1988) classifies them. In this period, the processes of enslavement were structured internally to the communities themselves, creating social boundaries and forms of exploitation or between two communities, with one being subjected by the other. This does not mean that these local systems were totally disconnected from each other. It is possible to identify some circulation of captives between different regions, although much of this circulation must have been non-market dependent, ranging from looting to the aristocratic "gift exchange".

As Finley had already insightfully pointed out, a key moment seems to have been the process of formation and consolidation of the city-states and the social struggles that permeated this process. Finley's classic argument is that the poorer population of some city-states (Athens and Rome are the paradigmatic cases) managed to impose themselves politically in this process by putting an end to the practices of intracommunity enslavement (such as debt slavery), forcing the political elites to seek labor by buying enslaved foreigners.[6] This argument should not be dismissed out of hand. If we put aside its methodological internalism, it is possible to argue that the poorest people were not only

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[4] Take, for example, its summary treatment in Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's seminal book, *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), which laid the foundations for a whole range of studies on Mediterranean history. The assertion that "the forms of slavery which are characteristic of the Mediterranean are shaped by its connectivity" (Horden; Purcell, 2000, p. 388) is not further explored in the book. See also Rotman (2014).

[5] This is not really a new approach, as demonstrated, for example, by the studies of Charles Verlinden throughout the 1950s, in which he tried to present the medieval precedents of slavery in the Americas (see collection of his texts in Verlinden (1970). It is true that Verlinden's thesis has already been duly criticized – among others, by Robin Blackburn (1997, p. 33) – for ultimately disregarding the novelty and originality of slavery in the New World. However, what is at stake is a global history of slavery that is not bound by formal comparisons, but seeks to understand that the Atlantic world, and particularly its slave system, should be taken as an extension of a "greater Mediterranean slave system", as Fynn-Paul mentions. From this perspective, the objective is to trace the transmission and re-elaboration of slave practices between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, which is fundamental for an analysis of the time strata of American slavery, which was made up of "normative precepts stemming from classical antiquity, the recurrence of a set of practices established in the Middle Ages and the mutual institutional recognition of captivity that would allow the slave trade between Europeans and Africans" (Marquese; Silva Jr., 2018, p. 71). A global approach to slavery from the perspective of its time strata in the long term can also be found in Zeuske (2013, p. 120; 2018, p. 30), who speaks of "plateaus" of slavery.

[6] As Vlassopoulos (2016, p. 84) points out, in Finley's conception, slavery has no explanatory role as an economic factor. It is merely a solution to the problem of labor and the extraction of income for the elite.

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trying to avoid being enslaved by their city's elite, but also trying to avoid being sold outside the city. In other words, the Mediterranean mercantile connection process was already in development, and this afforded the possibility for local elites to use their epichoric processes of enslavement to sell captives in this expanding market.

If this argument is correct, it is possible to think of the process of city-state formation due to the social struggles of the poorest, at least in part, as the result of the struggle to form a "non-slaving zone", according to Fynn-Paul's formulation, although he points to the ancient empires and their (precarious) monopoly of violence as the ones which constituted first, albeit imperfect, non-slaving zones. Although Fynn-Paul does not acknowledge it, these zones would have predated the Roman Empire or even the Hellenistic kingdoms, at least in the Mediterranean.

The process of city-state building seems, however, to be only the first phase in the formation of non-slaving zones in the Mediterranean slave system. Non-slaving zones were not limited to city-states, and new dynamics seem to have led to the organization of wider zones. Garlan (1987) points to the fact that, already in the classical period, enslaved people of non-Greek origin seem to have predominated in the Greek-speaking world, showing that at some level the rise of panhellenism after the Greco-Persian wars seems to have contributed to the formation of a panhellenic non-slaving zone. At the same time, but driven by different dynamics, an Italic non-slaving zone seems to have been formed by the organization of the Roman hegemonic system in the peninsula. Eckstein (2006, p. 252) observes that Roman strategy after the Latin War, through the notions of *municipium* and *civitas sine suffragio*, which aimed to incorporate the subjected communities in the 4th century BC, altered customary enslavement practices, such as the sale of captives into slavery.[7]

Another consequence of this argument is the identification of mercantile integration as a key element in the formation of the Mediterranean slave system. Captives from different epichoric slaving systems were trafficked through different territories. This does not mean a homogenization of all slave practices within the system around the figure of the chattel slave, but the articulation within a system of different slave practices based on a progressive centrality assumed in this system under construction by the figure of the chattel slave.

This mercantilization is related to two important elements in the construction of a Mediterranean slave system. Firstly, it generates a mercantile chain that connects different slave regions and practices as parts of a coherent whole, articulated precisely by mercantile dynamics. Secondly, it consolidates and disseminates the figure of the socially uprooted chattel slave. While this categorization really shouldn't be used as an absolute boundary for differentiating a "true" slavery from other forms of compulsory labour, it still seems to be a helpful category for thinking about precisely the passage from local, epichoric slave practices to systemic, panchoric ones articulated by the long-distance slave trade.

With the rising of hegemonies in the Mediterranean between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC, there was a gradual emergence of major centers of power in the Mediterranean, at the same time as interactions intensified along the Mediterranean and connecting to the Black Sea and the interior of Europe (Guarinello, 2013, p. 98). In this epoch there was the making of Athenian hegemony and its consequences as the Peloponnesian; Macedonian expansion dominating the eastern Mediterranean as far as India; Carthage in North Africa, with its control of the routes and colonies in the western Mediterranean; and Rome, with the consolidation of its hegemony in the Italian Peninsula.

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[7] See Scheidel (2023), for the hypothesis that, before Roman hegemony in the Italian Peninsula, the region was a slaving zone, supplying captives to more central and wealthy regions, such as the Greek communities of Sicily and southern Italy, as well as Carthage.

These processes meant a new scale of Mediterranean slavery because, at the same time as they preserved the structure of the *poleis*, the continuous wars turned the conquered territories into slaving zones within the Mediterranean, with mass displacement of captives. As Fynn-Paul shows, the formation of non-slaving zones necessarily goes hand in hand with the formation of slaving zones on their fringes, and it establishes mercantile chains which in turn had an impact on the forms of social organization and practices of enslavement of the regions which import captives as well as of those which export them. The creation and expansion of slave trade networks connecting Greece with the Black Sea and the Anatolian region (Lewis, 2015), and the Italian peninsula with Gaul (Fentress, 2019) and Syria, Phoenicia, and Asia Minor (Musti, 1980; Mavrojannis, 2018) are examples of this phenomenon. The control of territories by the conquering centers also resulted in the diffusion of types of slavery from these centers to other areas (Thompson, 2011, for the case of slavery in the Hellenistic world), which opened up the possibility of local readings of Carthaginian, Greek and Roman practices of slavery/manumission.[8]

The first phase of Mediterranean slavery was thus consolidated, based on local practices within the *poleis,* and then spread by cities that became centers of hegemony over certain areas of the Mediterranean, either through the creation of mercantile networks of captives or territorial conquest. This first phase is marked both by an initial movement towards the establishment of panchoric slave systems at a Mediterranean level, boosted by slave trade and territorial conquests, and by its great internal fractures, carved out by slaving zones within the Mediterranean world, permeated by wars, raids and piracy.

From the 1st century BC onwards, the Roman Empire, built on the foundations of the integration processes and structures that had preceded it, began a new and second phase of Mediterranean slavery. Although the Empire did not become a perfect non-slaving zone itself, the main slaving zones were now located around it and somehow linked to its political and economic dynamics.

One analytical possibility that can be tested for the study of this phase is to think of it in terms similar to that of the "second slavery" in the Americas, a concept that part of the scholarship on Atlantic slavery uses to interpret the expansion of the frontiers of slave production of commodities – cotton in the US South, sugar in Cuba, and coffee in Brazil – throughout the 19th century and their role in the economic and political transformations of the 19th century world-economy. This approach proposes that the new zones of slave production were formed as part of a distinct historical cycle of economic and geographical expansion of the capitalist world economy that transformed the Atlantic world during the first half of the 19th century. Slavery in these new agricultural frontiers had its systemic character and significance profoundly altered in comparison with previous forms of slavery. At the heart of this second slavery expansion was the redistribution of slave labor as a mass productive force, that is, the mass concentration of slave workers dedicated to monoculture production and the creation of new productive spaces to meet the growing demand of the world market (Tomich, 2018, p. 479-482).

From a theoretical point of view, studies on second slavery propose, based on the work of the sociologist Philip McMichael (1990), an incorporated comparison that considers, on a global scale, multiplicities and singularities, diachronies and synchronies, in an analysis in which the whole is first and foremost a methodological construct obtained by the integrated analysis of the parts. In other words, as Rafael Marquese (2019, p. 31) argues, "rather than being treated as external and independent of each other, the slave regions

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[8] As indicated, for example, by the debate about the manumission inscriptions in Thessaly, from the 2nd century BC onwards, and the extent to which they were related to the Roman practice of charging a manumission fee, the *vicesima libertatis* (Zelnick-Abramowitz, 2013).

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subjected to observation should be understood as particular moments of the same long-term historical process, that is, of the same historical structure that forms them and is formed by them".

We are not suggesting that the Roman imperial economy could have been qualitatively like the capitalist world-economy of the 19th century. The political integration of the Mediterranean under the aegis of Rome did not necessarily mean a unified economy, despite some level of economic integration, as it entailed the submission of local orders to Roman domination (Guarinello, 2013, p. 147-151). The logic of the imperial Roman economy is best explained within the framework of a tributary empire,[9] which led to a certain degree of unification in terms of the networks of tax transfers. The emergence of a Second Mediterranean Slavery is linked to the transformations imposed on the dynamics of enslavement by the unification of the entire Mediterranean world by an empire. Two aspects seem to stand out: the changes in the dynamics of enslavement and its mercantile chains, and the institutional-legal apparatus.

As Rome's empire expanded and the conquered regions became provinces, the slaving zones moved to the margins of the empire, with war and slave trade supplying captives and thus impacting on peripheral societies. New slave trade networks need to be established with these new frontier enslavement zones, at the same time as previous trade chains are reconfigured or even dismantled. However, the empire did not become a complete non-slaving zone either, as internal sources such as the sale of children, kidnappings, and the internal reproduction of the slave population continued to generate slaves (HARRIS, 1999). In other words, borders and fractures internal to societies within the Empire continued to be exploited as zones of enslavement, albeit to a lesser extent. Other mercantile chains, of lesser extent and intensity, had to be organized around these internal borders, probably for more localized and smaller-scale demands, such as domestic work or small-scale manufacturing. In the case of rural estates oriented towards specialized production of a greater volume of commodities, only long-distance slave trade associated with war could likely meet a higher and more frequent demand.

Thus, if, on the one hand, the existence of a politically unstable fringe on the frontiers is very important for the formation of slaving zones, which feed the entire mercantile chain of slave labor, on the other hand, the process of the formation of the Empire tends precisely to incorporate these regions in order to transform them into provinces, changing the specific way in which these regions are integrated into the imperial system and, if not turning them into perfect non-slaving zones, at least reducing the potential for enslavement by wars and raids in these places. As Greg Woolf (1990, p. 49) remarks, "expansion was in fact contrary to the interests of slave traders, since enslavement within the empire was forbidden and slaves were regularly extracted from lands beyond the empire. In this respect, Roman imperialism would conform to Wallerstein's description of the expansion of a world-empire within, and to the detriment of, a world-system". What seems at first glance to be a contradiction of the Roman imperial system, it is actually a constituent part of its very structure, which combines two central tendencies in the construction of this system: one that revolves around the slave trade chain and another that revolves around military expansionism very much guided by Roman intra-aristocratic political conflicts and a more tributary economic dynamic, less dependent on the slave trade chain.

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[9] We follow here the general definition of these empires proposed by P. Bang and C. A. Bayly (2011, p. 6), for whom "common to these empires is that they may be described as tributary, rather than commercial and colonial. Roughly speaking, they were all based on the conquest of wide agrarian domains and the taxation of peasant surplus production". Such was the case of those, like the Roman Empire, that were world-empires, that is, "vast empires that dominated their wider worlds and were able to absorb most of their competitors and reduce them either to taxpaying provinces or tributary client kingdoms".

Another characteristic of the second Mediterranean slavery was the impact of the empire on the practices of local slave systems through the dissemination of a "Roman law of slavery", which had repercussions on the structuring of the processes of enslavement and manumission in the provinces. Perhaps it is appropriate to approach Roman law from the perspective that Waldomiro da Silva Júnior (2020) advocates for understanding Atlantic slavery through its world-legal culture, which provided the basis for the social organization and stabilization of slavery in the long term. A "Roman world-legal culture" could be interpreted locally, glocalized, as a legal instrument of reference not only reserved for Roman citizens, but also used by non-citizens to deal with situations involving slaves, such as buying and selling (Czajkowski; Eckhardt, 2018, p. 27). Particularly for the case of Greek communities in the Mediterranean, it would be a question of studying, in the words of Maria Youni (2010) in her analysis of manumission inscriptions in Roman Macedonia, the transformation of Greek practices into Roman law, a question which a more systematic and comprehensive study of the epigraphy of slavery in the Mediterranean can shed light on (see Salsano, 1998, for a case study in this regard). The notion of world-legal culture thus also proves useful for analyzing a central aspect of second Mediterranean slavery, which is the practice of manumission and the possible grant of full or partial citizenship for freedmen and freedwomen in the Roman Empire (Perry, 2016; Barja de Quiroga; Doria; Roth, 2023), which makes this phase of slavery in the Great Sea the "Age of Manumission".

CONCLUSION

This article proposes an alternative approach to go beyond one centered on the concept of "slave society", which is still predominant in studies on ancient slavery and whose methodological internalism is an important limit to the development of research in the field. Following the works of Kostas Vlassopoulos and Jeff Fynn-Paul, we tried to outline a general model for the progressive construction and historical transformation of a Mediterranean slave system.

The concept of system is fundamental because it allows for an analysis that recognizes the historical diversity of epichoric, local forms of enslavement, while at the same time seeking to understand the ways in which these forms were historically connected and integrated. This integration did not necessarily generate homogeneous forms of enslavement and manumission practices throughout the territory that we recognize as part of this slave system. However, it created an integrated history, in which local experiences of enslavement and manumission can only be understood (compared to other realities) under the logic of how this system worked.

An important part of the proposal outlined here concerns the historicity of this Mediterranean slave system. It has a history of formation and transformation. Inspired on studies on the Atlantic slave system, we propose the notions of a First Mediterranean Slavery and a Second Mediterranean Slavery as frameworks for thinking about this historicity. The development of specific research based on these frameworks, analyzing local and regional dynamics within these historical frameworks, will allow the development and refinement of this model.

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