

SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE IN PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA

by

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Introduction

Slavery and the Slave Trade have been age old institutions and practices in almost every continent in the world. Orlando Patterson states:

There is nothing notably peculiar about the institution of slavery. It has existed from before the dawn of human history right down to the twentieth century, in the most primitive of human societies and in the most civilized. There is no region on earth that has not at some time harbored the institution. Probably there is no group of people whose ancestors were not at one time slaves or slave holders. Slavery was firmly established in all the great early centres of human civilization (Slavery and Social Death-A Comparative Study, U.S.A. 1982, p. vii).

The earliest known legal documents concerned not the sale of land, houses, animals, boats and such like, but the sale of slaves. In Mesopotamia for example, the sale of slaves was known from 2300 B.C. (A Slavery in Time and Space@, J. Goody, in Asian and African Systems of Slavery, Ed. by J.L. Watson, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1980, p.18).

Scholars cannot agree on the reasons for the rise of slavery. Some believe that the need for labor, especially agriculture gave rise to slavery. Others believe that political reasons gave rise to slavery, and yet others postulate that commerce gave rise to slavery.

The general belief held by Historians and Anthropologists is that slavery was not

important when Humankind depended on food gathering, hunting and fishing, i.e. the basic economy in the first stage of human evolution. Goody, however cautions that even among hunters and gatherers there were exceptional instances where slavery occurred, and he cites the example of the North West coast of America (Goody, Time & Space, p. 26).

From North to South, and from East to West, the African continent became intimately connected with slavery both as one of the principal areas in the world where slavery was common, and also as a major source of slaves for ancient civilization, the medieval world and all the continents of the modern period. The greatest African community in the Diaspora is believed to be in Brazil with a population of about 200 million, followed by the Carribean and the U.S.A.

In North Africa slavery was practiced in the Sahara desert and its southern border lands, as well as in the region of modern western Sahara, Morocco and Algeria among the Berbers. In the Central Sahara and in the sub desert areas further south, the Tuaregs practiced slavery. In North East Africa, the Ethiopians, Somalis, Egyptians and the people of the Sudan were all familiar with the institution of slavery. In West Africa slavery was known among many of the states and societies. For example among the Wolof and Serer of Senegambia, the Mende and Temne of Sierra Leone, the Vai of Liberia and Sierra Leone, and virtually all the states and societies in Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Mali, Nigeria etc. In Central Africa slavery was practiced in much of Bantu Africa for example among the Duala of Cameroon; the Bakongo, Bapende Luba and Lunda of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Congo and part of Angola, and the Lozi of Zambia. In East Africa the Buganda state, the Nyamwezi and the Chagga peoples practiced slavery. Along the coast, the Mrima Arabs, Omani Arabs and the ASawahilis@ practiced slavery. In Southern Africa the Cokwe of Angola, the Sena of Mozambique and the Ngoni people scattered across East, Central and Southern Africa were all familiar with the institution of slavery.

Two dimensions to Slavery and the Slave Trade

There were two dimensions to slavery and the slave trade in pre-colonial Africa, an **external** and **internal** dimension. **The external dimension** involved trade across the Sahara, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Arabic and Indian ocean worlds. This trade began in ancient times and continued into the modern period. Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome used African slaves. Medieval Europe and the Arabic and Islamic world, and the continent of Asia made use of African slaves. On the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean African slaves could be found working with slaves from Asia Minor, Greece, the Balkans, Eastern and Northern Europe.

In the early modern period the picture was very much the same. What I find interesting in the ancient, medieval and early modern period is the existence of not only black and white slaves working together but also the prevalence of three main forms of labor not limited to color, i.e. slave labor, indentured labor and serfdom.

In 1453 the Ottoman capture of Constantinople halted the flow of white slaves from the Black Sea region and the Balkans. Mediterranean Europe was thus cut off from one of its traditional source of slaves. Mediterranean Europe turned completely to Africa for slave labor (A History of World Societies, 3rd Ed., McKay, Hill & Bucklar, U.S.A. 1992, p. 596).

The last phase of the external trade was that which involved the Oriental, Islamic and Atlantic worlds during the 15th to the 19th centuries. Suzanne Miers relates that the function of slavery in the Islamic world was both social and economic, and that the market was selective and sophisticated. The most highly prized were not Africans but the white slaves usually Circassian or Georgian girls. They were wanted as concubines in harems as far apart as Zanzibar and Morocco in Africa, but they were expensive and the numbers small. In Arabia, Ethiopian men cost more than the black men of Africa because they were considered more refined and intelligent and less suited to heavy work. The desert nomads and the employers of heavy labor, however, wanted a hardy blacks. There was a market in Arabia for black slaves from as far afield as modern Malawi in Africa (Britain and the Ending of the Slave trade, S. Miers, London 1975, p. 56-58).

The internal trade was conducted within the African continent itself. It involved trade between North Africa and West Africa on the one hand and East, Central and Southern Africa on the other hand. My country Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast became important in the trade with other West African states and with North Africa because of its richness in gold. Daaku relates that the Akan of Ghana were drawn into the main stream of developments in the trade across the Sahara to North Africa because the Offin and the Pra river basins where they were concentrated in large numbers were rich in gold (Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720, K.Y. Daaku, Great Britain 1970, p. 3). Archaeological evidence indicates that the ancient gold mining areas in Ghana were at Jinjini and Chemraso in modern Dormaa Ahenkro; Nsuhunu, Banda Nkwanta, Jenikrom, Awusu and Atuna in the modern Takyiman area and a number of Adanse villages and towns such as Kenyasi, Jameskrom and Jeda (Rediscovering Ghana's Past, J. Anquandah, Great Britain, 1982, p.41).

Bono Manso and Begho in modern Brong Ahafo region became important centers for this trade from 1000 to 1750 A.D. The Mande Dyula were the professional merchants in this

trade. The West African forest region supplied gold, kola nuts, ivory and slaves in this trade. Ghana though in the forest region was known to have supplied gold, kola nuts and ivory. The West African savanna region provided millet, sorghum, wheat, livestock, gum, shea butter, ivory, ostrich feathers, cloth, gold and slaves. The Sahara contributed salt, copper, tobacco and dates. From Europe and the Muslim world came textiles and garments made from wool, silk, brocade, velvet or satin; calicoes, metals such as brass, copper, silver, tin and lead. Other goods from the Mediterranean world were books, writing paper, cowries, tea, coffee, sugar, spices, jewelry, perfumes, bracelets, mirrors, carpets, beads etc. Ghana obtained slaves through this trade from the 1st to the 16th centuries A.D.

All the West African states along the Atlantic coast were linked by a southern trade route covering modern Senegal to modern Nigeria. Ghana, again because of its wealth in gold, exchanged gold for slaves, beads, cotton, cloth and palm oil from the Benin state in modern Nigeria. From Dahomey and Ivory Coast, Ghana exchanged gold for the famous A quaqua@ cloth. Shama on the Ghana coast was the entrepot of trade.

When the first Europeans i.e. the Portuguese set foot on the shores of Ghana in 1471, they found in existence a brisk trade in slaves and other goods between Ghana and its coastal neighbors, it took part in the trade and for 100 years was the only European country trading directly with Ghana and its coastal neighbors. In 1479 Eustache de la Fosse stated that he bought slaves from the Grain Coast for sale at Shama. Pacheco Pereira reported that because the kingdom of Benin in modern Nigeria was usually at war with its neighbors it possessed many captives. The slaves were brought to Ghana and exchanged for gold (Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, D. Pacheco Pereira, translated and edited by G.H.T. Kimble, London 1937, p. 126). In addition to slaves the Portuguese brought cotton cloths, panther skins, palm oil and some blue shells with red stripes called A coris@ from Benin to exchange for gold.

The major means by which slaves were acquired in Africa

There were five major means by which slaves were acquired in Africa for both internal use and external demand. These were warfare, market supply, raiding and kidnapping, tribute and pawning.

Prisoners of war were enslaved and they usually constituted the largest proportion of the total slave output. Warfare was rife among the savanna and forest states of West, East, Central and Southern Africa. The jihads of the 19th century, waged from Senegambia in the west to the Red Sea in the east resulted in the enslavement of thousands of people. **Many markets** were established along the length and breadth of the continent and

members of royalty as well as free individuals could go to any of these markets to purchase slaves. The famous markets were those established along the caravan routes. In North and West Africa all the markets along the trans-Saharan routes were important suppliers of slaves. In West Africa some of the popular markets were Salaga, Yendi, Bole and Wa in Ghana; Bonduku and Buna in Ivory Coast, and Ouagadougou in modern Burkina Faso. In the North Eastern part of the continent Egypt and the Sudan had slave markets.

The popular markets along the East, Central and Southern trade routes were Tabora, Ujiji and Karagwe. The Nyamwezi people controlled the Central route and all the markets along the route, while the Yao people controlled the Southern route and all the markets along the route.

Raiding and kidnapping people into slavery were common practices in all the regions of Africa. The Tuaregs and the Berbers raided and kidnapped their southern neighbors. Raiding and kidnapping were institutionalized in Bambara society. The Damagaram of Northern Nigeria and the southern part of Niger procured some of their slaves by this method. In the Sokoto Caliphate of modern Nigeria and in the Nilotic Sudan, slave raiding was sometimes a state affair. Many slaves from the Sokoto Caliphate came from southern Adamawa in Cameroon or from the lands beyond Bornu. Slave raiding was also common in the Senegal valley. The Kajoor and Bawol were the main victims of slave raiding. The Kurtey was a small tribe in modern Mali and they traditionally also raided for slaves.

In Central Africa the Lunda slavers ravaged large areas of the Congo Basin. Kidnapping was practiced among the Lozi of Zambia and the Sena of Mozambique. The Amharas of Ethiopia raided and kidnapped the peoples of the East and Central African interior.

Tribute paying was a very common practice in pre-colonial Africa. The Yoruba of Nigeria obtained some of their slaves through this means. The Sokoto Caliphate demanded tribute from subjected communities. In Ghana the Akwamuhene for example demanded tribute from the Akwamus who remained in the old Akwamu Empire after their defeat. The chief of Asamankese for example had to pay an annual tribute of 500 slaves to the Akwamuhene. Almost all the states Asante conquered from 1700 to 1896 were asked to pay annual tributes in slaves and other goods. The state of Gonja paid 1000 slaves; Salaga paid 600 slaves; Akwapim paid 1000 slaves, and the small Ewe chiefships sent 12 slaves annually to Kumasi the Asante capital.

Pawning was basically the act of offering a person as security for money borrowed. The pawn became a pledge, mortgage or security for what a person owed. The pawn worked

for the creditor who fed and clothed him/her until the debt was paid. Pawning was not slavery, but pawns who were not redeemed found themselves in slavery. In Ghana there were several instances of this. The Sena of Mozambique and the Igbo of Nigeria also practiced pawning.

Why were slaves needed internally?

Slaves were needed in pre-colonial Africa to provide labor in agriculture, trade and industry. Some slaves were employed in the administrative sectors of the state, kingdom or empire. Other slaves served in the military; some performed domestic chores, a few others were sacrificed and some satisfied the personal needs of individuals.

Agriculture, Trade and Industry

Farming, animal rearing, hunting, and fishing were the basic economic activities in pre-colonial Africa and slave labor was used. Slaves helped to grow foodstuffs in the forest and the savanna regions of Africa as well as along the coast and the desert fringes. They were also used in collecting food plants like shea butter, kola nuts, oil palm and coconuts.

Slaves were employed in trade as porters, merchants or trading agents. Trusted slaves conducted trade on behalf of their owners. They traded for individuals as well as for the state. Some slaves were put in charge of the trade routes and asked to collect tolls.

The main industries in pre-colonial Africa were gold mining, iron working, salt making, cloth weaving and other art and craft industries. The Akan people of Ghana for example employed hundreds of slaves in the gold mining industry. The Etsi and the Borbor Fante of Ghana used slaves in the salt making industry.

Administration and Military

Slaves were recruited into the military divisions of traditional pre-colonial political society. Some served as soldiers for warfare; others performed menial jobs on the battle field; some were personal bodyguards of kings and chiefs; trusted slaves held command positions in battle.

In the Household division of the Palaces slaves served in the Music Department as drummers, horn blowers etc. In the Religious Department they were the caretakers of the Royal Mausoleum, the A soul washers®, the elephant tail switchers etc. In the ADiplomatic Corps® they were the sword bearers, heralds, assistant linguists; they served in the Finance department, the Kitchen Department and several other Departments.

Domestic Chores

Male and female slaves provided domestic chores in the palaces, shrines and individual households in the form of cooking, washing, fetching water and firewood, sweeping, cleaning etc.

Sacrifice

Some slaves were sacrificed in accordance with traditional beliefs and practices during festivals, ceremonial occasions, religious observances and the death of important personalities.

Personal

Some people acquired slaves for personal reasons. These included prestige, power and procreation. The more slaves one had reflected one's prestige, power and status in African society. A man whose wife was barren would go to the slave market and purchase a female slave to marry and bear him children. The children became part of his family, lineage and clan. A woman without children of her own could also go to any of the slave markets to purchase a slave, preferably a female to adopt.

One striking difference in the use of male and female slaves was in the area of procreation. Procreation did not only fulfill the needs of individuals but whole states. After war, disease or famine had decimated the population, the state would send officials to the slave markets to purchase female slaves to procreate and make up the dwindled population. Throughout the period of the slave trade, female slaves fetched higher prices than male slaves. Female slaves became the wives and concubines of individuals, chiefs and kings.

Slavery and the pre-colonial social structure

Kinship formed the core of Africa's pre-colonial social structure. Kinship relations and the kin group were dominant elements in Africa's social system. Kinship provided both the idiom and the metaphor for social relations. Kinship ties were derived from consanguinity, marriage or adoption. Slaves were often integrated into the kin of their owners either by adoption or marriage.

Among the Tuaregs and the Berbers of North Africa, slaves were regarded as part of the family (*Africa's Slaves Today*, J. Derrick, London 1975, p. 24-40). Baier and Lovejoy

relate that the slave was called Aiklan@ by the Tuareg, and he/she was integrated into Tuareg society at the level of the family. Slaves were fictive children and they used kinship terms to address members of the owner-s real family (A The Tuareg of Central Sudan@, Baier & Lovejoy, in S. Miers & I. Kopytoff, Slavery in Africa, U.S.A. 1977, p. 391-403).

The Maraka and the Bambara in the Middle Niger Valley assimilated slaves into the family. Unfortunately the Maraka threw away the traditional social laws on slavery during the 19th century A.D. when the Atlantic Slave Trade was at its peak. Consequently there was a marked divergence between the theory and practice of slavery. Maraka slavery became different from slavery as perceived and practiced by the Bambara. The Maraka and the Bambara spoke the same language, lived in the same ecological setting and participated in the same social formation. A slave who found his/her way into a Bambara family in the 19th century A.D., tended to be assimilated more fully and more quickly than one owned by a Maraka family (A Maraka Society in the Middle Niger Valley @, Roberts, in Lovejoy (Ed.), The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, U.S.A. 1981, p. 178-180).

The Wolof and the Serer of Senegambia integrated slaves into the family but they did this slowly and gradually. This was also the case among the Vai of Liberia and Sierra Leone (A The Wolof and Serer of Senegambia @, Klein, in Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 290). The Mende of Sierra Leone however made slaves part of the kin. By the second and third generation they were related to free born members of the family- they shared the same father or grandfather (A The Mende of Sierra Leone@, Grace, in Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 417-419). In Ghana all the ethnic groups integrated slaves into the family, lineage and clan. The lineages were either patrilineal or matrilineal, depending on the group. Many ethnic groups in Nigeria also integrated slaves into the kin. For example the Igbo, Ibibio, Ijo, Aboh and Yoruba (Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 123-129; Lovejoy, Ideology, p. 41-42, 73-75).

In Central Africa lineage structures were the basic social system. Slaves were assimilated into the local kin groups. Some of the ethnic groups which practiced assimilation of slaves were the Bakongo, Baluba, and the Lunda. The Ila of Zambia assimilated their slaves gradually and slowly. The little girls bought from neighboring and culturally similar peoples were however easily assimilated. The Ila of Zambia and the Kerebe of Tanzania regarded the clan as the basic social unit. They were patrilineal, and for those persons who were no longer members of a clan as a result of slavery or other circumstances, an arrangement was made by which they could be incorporated into a new clan but in a servile status (Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 205-212, 243; Lovejoy, Ideology, p. 41-42, 73-75; Miers, Slave Trade, p. 138-140; A The Kerebe of Tanzania @,

Hartwig, in Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 265).

In Southern Africa the Cokwe of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) and Angola practiced incorporative slavery. The Imbangala of Angola defined slaves as persons who had lost the names to which they had a right by birth and had assumed low status positions affiliated either to other lineages or to one of the Kasanje political titles. The Imbangala used the positions for aliens to assimilate other strangers of various sorts in addition to slaves. The Sena of Mozambique defined the position of slaves A akaporo @ in kinship terms. Upon arrival in their new homes, they received the A mutapa @ or clan name of their patron. This symbolic act created fictitious links in the absence of blood relationship. The A akaporo @ addressed their patrons as A baba @ or father, used the appropriate kin terms for other adopted relatives and paid homage to the local ancestor spirits at periodic religious ceremonies (A Imbangala of Angola @, Miller, in Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 205-212; A The Sena of Mozambique @, B. Isaacman & A. Isaacman, in Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 110-111).

A few African societies did not integrate or assimilate their slaves. These were the Batawana of Botswana in Southern Africa, the Yao of East Africa, the Ila of Zambia, the Duala of Cameroon and the Shebro of Sierra Leone (Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 187, 305-312, 367-388; Miers, Slave Trade, p. 118).

Rights and Privileges

Slaves in pre-colonial Africa enjoyed certain rights and privileges. They had the right to be fed, clothed, housed and granted the privileges of children while staying with their owners. They had the right to marry. They could marry among themselves or marry free people. Customary rites were performed to give such marriages legal backing. Among the Sena of Mozambique when a female slave married into another lineage, the Patron received the bride wealth. Among the Wolof and the Serer of Senegambia, the head of the lineage was obliged not only to feed and clothe his slaves but also to find spouses for his slaves. Intermarriage affected the status of Tuareg slaves. The offspring of a marriage between a free man and a slave woman inherited the status of his/her mother, but in practice children of free men and slave women were free.

Slaves enjoyed the privilege of an independent income. The Akan of Ghana say A Akoa nim som a, ofa ne ti ade di @ (a loyal and faithful slave or servant has debts to his/her owner remitted). Slaves who farmed for the their owners were also given plots of land on which to farm and enjoy its proceeds. Slaves could inherit property as well as hold property of their own. The Akan say A Akoa a onim som di ne wura ade@ (A slave or servant who knows how to serve succeeds to his/her owner=s property). Slave owners

did not have absolute power over their slaves, only the king or chief had power of life and death over the slave. Indeed the king or chief had power over every citizen of the state, including the slave owners. Hence the Akan saying *A Ohene nkoa na owo sikan* (It is only the king/chief who wields the knife/sword). In Ghana for example anyone who maltreated the slave to the point of death had to face the full rigors of the law. In Akyem and Asante for example, such people were asked to pay heavy fines. The Damagaram of Niger and Nigeria state that the slave owner had absolute rights over his/her slaves and yet the Sultan was the only one who could authorize the infliction of death.

The slave was entitled to legal protection. There were also avenues for social, political and economic mobility. Many African societies asserted that slavery was for life and yet they granted slaves the privilege of manumission or redemption. The Sena of Mozambique, the Kerebe of Tanzania, the Mende of Sierra leone and the Kongo of central Africa for example made provision for the manumission or redemption of slaves (Miers & Kopytoff, *Slavery*, p. 111, 129, 271, 424-425; Derrick, *Africa*, p. 95). All the ethnic groups in Ghana made provision for the manumission of slaves. The slave in Ghana gained freedom through formal and informal means. The informal means was over a period of time. It was buttressed by the famous saying attributed to Asantehene Osei Tutu *A Obi nkyere obi ase* (No one should disclose the origins of another person). The formal means was through monetary payment.

Slaves and the Traditional Political Setting

Political mobility was a very common phenomenon in pre-colonial traditional African society. Among the Aboh of Nigeria a slave's mobility depended to a considerable extent upon the status of his/her owner. Those in the larger trading group advanced more rapidly. In the Hausa-Fulani Emirates slaves could be appointed Village heads. Some slaves in Bornu occupied important governmental positions. Slaves among the Mende of Sierra Leone could achieve high political status, sometimes that of a chief. Slaves could rise to high political offices in the Efik Ward in Ibo, Ibibio and Ijo lands.

In Bonny and New Calabar, a slave could become Head of his House or even found one. The famous Jaja of Opobo started his own House and built a commercial empire. In the riverain trading centers and in most of the hinterland of Nigeria there were avenues for political mobility. The most remarkable example was Iron Bar, who lived on a 300 acre plantation bequeathed him by his master. Aspects of the Yoruba world view stressed personal achievement and the possibility of social and political mobility. Political mobility also occurred among the Kanuris, Tuaregs and Toubous who inhabited parts of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. (The information on the first two paragraphs is

derived from Miers & Kopytoff, Slavery, p. 134-157, 157-170, 424; Lovejoy, Ideology, p. 107, 112-113, 127).

In Ghana the pre-colonial social structure was transposed into the political realm. By virtue of his/her membership in his/her owner's family, lineage and clan, a slave could rise to occupy a position of authority especially if there were no suitable heirs. Examples abound among all the ethnic groups. The Asantes were perhaps the most generous in allowing slaves to occupy stools (the traditional symbol of authority).

A study I did of Asante Oral Stool Histories compiled by Agyeman-Duah for the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, revealed the following: The stools were 212 in number, out of these 36 Royal Stools were occupied in the past by slaves and servants residing in the palaces. There were 53 recorded instances when slaves succeeded to these stools. 31 of the 212 stools were created for slaves, servants and dependants at the palace of the Asantehene for their faithfulness and hard work. The stools were and are still called A Esom Dwa@ (Service Stools). Occupation of these stools was and still is by the prerogative of the Asantehene.

Disabilities

Slaves did suffer a number of disabilities. The first was the possibility of being sacrificed in accordance with traditional customs and religious beliefs. The second was that his/her status as a slave was never entirely forgotten no matter how high he/she rose on the social scale and no matter the level of integration or assimilation. Among the Aboh of Nigeria, although slaves were incorporated into the kinship structure, there was no question of equality between the slave and the free. In the Kongo state a slave's living conditions and economic role did not differ sharply from that of a free person, but when it came to sacrifice or the payment of a debt, it was the slave who was handed over.

The third disability had to do with physical appearance. The slave was supposed to dress simply. The Akan of Ghana say A Odonko nsiesie ne ho ti se ne wura @ (The slave does not dress like his/her owner). The fourth disability was linked to behavior. The slave was supposed to be unassuming and was not supposed to mix freely with free men and women. Five, slaves performed very much the same tasks as other free men and women, but they were required to work harder. Hence the Akan saying A Odonko adwuma @ (Slave work). Six, a slave was not supposed to take any decision of his/her own, or to embark on any enterprise without permission or instruction from his/her owner. Finally, slaves were simply buried.

The Treatment of Slaves

The treatment of slaves in pre-colonial African society depended on the owner, the family and the household in which the slave resided. On the whole oral and written records portray a picture of humane treatment.

Observers from outside Africa expressed surprise at the humane treatment of slaves. Freeman, Klose, Dr. Madden, Beecham, Crowther and some British Commissioners were a few of such observers. Freeman remarked that slavery in Africa was very different from that of Europe, North America and the West Indies. Klose stated that the slave in Africa was much better off than his/her counterpart in Europe or America. In the 1840's, Dr. Madden described the treatment of slaves as A mild @. District Commissioner Crowther who worked in Ghana at the turn of the 20th century in his evidence before the Committee of West African Lands in London on 7th February, 1913, described slaves in Ghana as A more like adopted children @.

The treatment of slaves in Ghana was regulated by customary rules and norms. In the event of his/her being cruelly treated by his/her owner, a slave in Ghana could have recourse to the following remedies. First, he/she could wait for an opportune time to run away. Second, he/she could seek protection by throwing himself/herself on the mercy of a god at the traditional grove or on an ancestral spirit in the Royal Mausoleum. Third, he/she could A swear an oath @ on another person to adopt him/her, in which case that person paid compensation to the owner.

Abolition

While we can talk of the year 1807 as the year Britain passed a law abolishing the Atlantic slave trade in Britain and all its colonial possessions and therefore most of Africa was affected, we cannot say the same with respect to the Internal/ Indigenous system of slavery. Every country had a different date passed by its colonial master. In Ghana for example Internal slavery and slave trading was abolished in 1874 by the British Colonial Government in the Gold Coast Colony. This was the southernmost part of Ghana marked by the Pra river. In Asante and the Northern Territories it was not until 1908.

There were immediate and long term effects of abolition in Ghana. The immediate effects were that first, freed slaves who could readily trace their relatives and families which could trace their enslaved relatives appealed to the British District Commissioners-Courts for redemption of their relatives after payment of a fee. Second, some freed slaves settled on Christian Mission Stations, especially the Basel Mission Stations at Agogo and Kumasi. Third, other slaves left their former owners to begin lives on their own. Fourth,

the majority of freed slaves remained in the households of their former owners under new terms and conditions. In the long term, freed slaves and their descendants were assimilated into the families to which they were already associated.

Conclusion

I have tried to show in this paper the knowledge and the practice of the institution of slavery and the slave trade in pre-colonial Africa, beginning with the rise of the institution from ancient times to its abolition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries A.D. I have indicated the use of African labor not only within the continent but in virtually all the continents in the world from ancient times, through the medieval period to the modern era. I have shown how slaves were acquired for both the internal and the external slave trade; why slaves were needed in Africa; the social and political setting in which slavery existed in Africa; the slaves= rights, privileges, disabilities and treatment. I deal finally with the abolition of the internal institution and its immediate and long term effects with special reference to Ghana, my primary field of work and research.