

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INDIGENOUS AMERICAN SLAVERY¹

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CENTRAL AMERICAN SLAVERY

Debtor slavery.—In a collection of data on slavery in aboriginal North America elsewhere presented, the writer offered under the above category instances, covering virtually the whole continent north of Mexico, of servitude resulting from the staking of the person of one's self, one's wife, or one's dependents, by way of gambling; the selling of one's self for a lump sum of money, for a period, or for life; the pledging of the person of one's self or of one's dependents as security for a pecuniary obligation incurred through ordinary commercial transactions or as a consequence of theft, or of injury, intentional or unintentional, to another's person or property. Staking of the person in a game of chance is the most widely diffused of these types. For regional distinctions the reader is referred to the paper mentioned.²

For the Maya of Yucatan we have Cogolludo's word for it that a person is not enslaved for default in the payment of a commercial debt or of a fine, but his word is at least questionable; however, the debt or fine was usually paid by the relatives of the debtor or offender, or by his liege lord. Thieves were enslaved pending restitution on the part of themselves or of their relatives; if no restitution was forthcoming, their enslavement was perpetual. He who sold a freeman into slavery was executed, and his wife and children were auctioned in the slave market by the state, some of the receipts of sale going to the injured parties, though most went to the state.³ In Mayan Nicaragua, a man might sell

¹ A paper by Dr. MacLeod on the Origin of Servile Labor Groups will appear in one of our forthcoming issues. EDITOR.

² Debtor and Chattel Slavery in Aboriginal North America. *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST*, n. s., 27: 370-380, 1925.

³ Cogolludo, *Historia de Yucatan*. Lib. 4, cap's 3 and 4. The lord or relatives paid "if the debt were incurred without malice." Enslavement of insolvent debtors is noted for the Maya of Guatemala. Consider the Aztec notes above. Whether

himself or his children into slavery, but the right of redemption seems to have attached.⁴ Among the Mayan peoples generally, a death sentence usually involved confiscation of property and the enslavement of the criminal's family.⁵ In Yucatan, a murderer under age was not executed, but enslaved. In Guatemala attempted rape was punished by slavery. Among the Pipile, and in Yucatan, any freeman cohabiting with another's slave was enslaved.⁶

Among the Nahuatl of the Valley of Mexico (Aztec), as among so many of the North American tribes, gamblers could take a loan, giving their persons as security. Prostitutes could sell themselves for a sum with which to buy finery. These two classes did not have to begin their servitude until one year after the date of their receipt of the money paid to them. Poor persons sold themselves, their wives, or their children, into servitude, in order to avoid starvation or uncertainty of subsistence. Parents might pawn or sell a son, but were permitted to substitute another son for him at any time. Gomara says, but admits that others deny it, that the son (or the wife, in absence of a son) of an insolvent debtor, might be enslaved by the creditors of a man deceased. Torquemada writes ironically (as does also Cogolludo on the same subject, for Yucatan of the Maya) that the "Christian" Spaniards introduced this debtor slavery into the New World, and that it was not an indigenous custom of the "gentle" Indians. On this enslavement in case of insolvent debtors we must, therefore, remain in doubt.⁷

this means that the slave status would be hereditary or not is a question. It seems that, as appears to be the case in northwestern North America, a person taken for commercial debt became a transferable chattel, probably with hereditary status. (See Herrera, *Historia General*, Dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 7). In Nicaragua he was permitted to compensate the injured party and go free, only with the consent of the state. (Ibid.).

⁴ Las Casas, in Kingsborough, *Antiquities*.

⁵ Oviedo, *Historia General*, 4: 51, 54; Herrera.

⁶ For additional reference on the Maya see Herrera, Dec. 4, lib. 2; Palacio, *Carta*, 80-82; Oviedo, 3: 229-230; Peter Maryr, *De Novo Orbo*, Dec. 4, lib. 2.

⁷ Gomara, *Historia*. Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*; Las Casas, *Historia Apologetica*, in Kingsborough, *op. cit.*; Clavigero, *Storia*. All of these writers on early Central America have special chapters on slavery. In their discussion of Aztec prisons

We note now two types, among others of what I have chosen to categorize as "debtor slavery," which are peculiar and significant. The Nahuatl had what they called *huehueltlacolli* ("Ancient Servitude"). When a family, or several families, were destitute, they might collectively sell a son to some noble, and bind themselves to "keep him alive"; that is, to perpetually furnish, from generation to generation, one of their number as a slave for the lord and his lineage. This slave usually lived with his own family (freemen), as was usually the wish of the master, because in the contract it was always provided that if the slave died in the master's house, or if the master took any property belonging to the slave personally, the contracting family or families would not have to continue furnishing a servitor to succeed the deceased. In 1505-6 there was a great famine in the Valley of Mexico. King Nezahualpilli, of Tezcuco, considering the possible evil results from many families agreeing to *huehueltlacolli* contracts in order that they might get food, forbade the making of new contracts and declared all old ones null and void. It is said, but the fact is in doubt, that Moctezuma II, the last king of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) shortly afterward followed suit.⁸

This is a very aberrant type of debtor slavery, if it may be categorized as slavery at all, which, however, I think should be done. *The quasi-hereditary feature, for the Aztec, is peculiarly interesting. Such hereditary feature is again to be noted in the case of enslavement for the crime of treason.* Ixtlilochitl writes that the children of a traitor were enslaved *until* the fifth generation.⁹ With the crudeness of Aztec record keeping, such stipulations are

we note that debtors who refused to pay up were detained in the prisons designated for non-capital offenses. Prisons were places of detention, not of punishment, among the Aztec. What, then, were the debtors being detained for if not, perhaps, for trial and enslavement? Oviedo, Lib. 42, cap. 3, should be considered particularly in this connection.

⁸ Sahagún, *Historia General*, v. 2, lib. 8; Torquemada. Cf. Sahagún, v. 2, lib. 7. Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Histoire*, 1857-59, says that these contracts remained in force in Mexico City up to the conquest; however, he does not document this statement.

⁹ Ixtlilochitl, *Relacion*, in Kingsborough, 9: 245. Ixtlilochitl is supported in this by others.

remarkable. Remarkable, moreover, because of *the apparent absence of any hereditary chattel slavery* among the Aztec.

Traitors themselves were executed. Besides their wives and children and unborn descendants for four generations, those relatives of traitors who knew of their plotting were enslaved if they did not inform. Other crimes were punished with enslavement. Plebeians were enslaved for disorderly conduct in public. Duran alone writes that murderers were not executed, but were made slaves *for life* to the wife and relatives of the murdered man.¹⁰ Persons guilty of selling into slavery any free person lost or kidnaped, without authority, were themselves enslaved. Anyone, save the owner's son, who hindered a slave, who was fleeing to sanctuary on certain feast days, was himself enslaved in place of the fleeing slave who was permitted to go free. Thieves over ten years of age were enslaved. A man was enslaved if he made pregnant another's female slave and the slave woman died consequent upon her pregnancy.¹¹

It is interesting to note as above that the Aztec, at least in the case of murder and theft, exempted juveniles of less than ten years of age from full responsibility for crimes committed by themselves, and that they had separate prisons for those guilty, respectively, of capital and non-capital offenses. Their penology was somewhat in advance of that of contemporary Europe and Asia. If an offender had injured the state—the case of the traitor and of the disorderly—he was auctioned off, and the proceeds went to the state treasury. If his offense was against persons, according as the offended persons desired, the offender was given to the offended as a slave, or the offender was auctioned off in the public slave mart, the offended being given the proceeds as compensation for injury received. The punishment of a penal slave was not considered to have begun until he had formally been delivered over to an owner.¹²

¹⁰ Duran, *Historia*, in Kingsborough, 8: 240–241.

¹¹ Torquemada says that some learned Indians told him that this was not true either in law or in practice; but he seems to have missed the qualification in the older sources "if the woman dies in pregnancy."

¹² On penal slavery see the authors above cited, particularly Las Casas and Torquemada.

For the Nahuatl we have data indicating that elaborate safeguards were thrown by the state over the rights of the various types of debtor slaves. A slave might not be transferred without his consent, until, in the presence of reputable witnesses, he had been warned two or three times concerning his laziness, disobedience, or about his running away, if he were guilty of those offenses. If he then continued undutiful, the owner was authorized by the state to collar the slave, and the slave was imprisoned pending his sale to another owner. The purchaser of a collared slave always inquired as to how many times the slave had thus been transferred for incorrigibility; after two or three of such transfers, the last owner was authorized to sell the slave for sacrifice if he so desired. Sales of slaves were usually made publicly, in the market, and always before at least four reputable witnesses. In the case of a person selling himself into slavery, the witnesses acted as conscientious arbitrators to secure a fair price for the seller.¹³

Chattel slavery.—Throughout the Americas, captives were the slaves of their individual captors, pending possible sacrifice or adoption. It seems that males, especially adult males, were those most generally sacrificed, while children and women were most likely to be adopted, or retained permanently as slaves. Among the Nahuatl of the Valley of Mexico it might seem that there was no chattel slavery at all; this, however, is merely due to the fact that virtually all captives were sacrificed. A captive, among the Aztec, was the personal property of the captor. Pending sacrifice, the captive was caged or imprisoned under care of the state; if the captive escaped from this prison through public negligence, the captor and owner was compensated by the state for the loss of his human property. According to Sahagun, captives who possessed unusual talent in some line might be bought by

¹³ See particularly Gomara. All of our informants speak of these provisions concerning the rights of slaves as if they applied to the non-hereditary chattel slaves of the Aztec (captives) as well as to the various types of debtor slaves. But captives were almost all sacrificed, and chattel slavery, therefore, had no real place in the Aztec social system; the safeguards are evidently such as have arisen to protect fellow countrymen fallen into a form of servitude from debt incurred commercially or through injury to another or to the state.

the rich and noble from their captors and used as domestic slaves instead of being sacrificed. Besides captives, the only other persons who might be used as human chattel and sacrificed were slaves (i.e., debtor slaves) who were incorrigible; and slaves "brought from foreign parts." We have note of this purchase by the Aztec of slaves from abroad for sacrifices, but *not* any note indicating that slave *labor* was sought in foreign markets; slavery apparently was not important economically.¹⁴

All of our informants state positively that there was no hereditary slavery among the Nahuatl; that the children of slaves were free.¹⁵ In the quasi-hereditary character noted as typical of certain types of debtor slavery above, however, it may be seen that their generalization is too sweeping, although true, no doubt, for the chattel slaves (captives).

Among the Maya of Yucatan, in contrast to the Nahuatl, only socially eminent captives were sacrificed; commoners were enslaved. Moreover, it has been recorded that "The children of slaves were slaves until they redeemed themselves, or were made serfs." This means that hereditary slavery obtained. Cogolludo, a secondary source so far as really pre-European days in Yucatan go, whose original sources have been lost, is our only warrant for concluding that Mayan slavery was hereditary. He does not state specifically, however, whether he means to refer to captives (chattel slaves) as well as to the various types of debtor slaves.

¹⁴ See especially Gomara. *Las Casas*, the Anonymous Conqueror, *Relacion*, (in *Icazbalceta*, *Coleccion de Documentos*, v. 1); and Sahagún, v. 1, lib. 1; all state that a captor had a *right* if he chose, to keep his captives as slaves, admitting, however that sacrifice was usually chosen. The sacrifice of a captive was a personal sacrifice on the part of the captor, the sacrifice, however, being made by the publicly maintained priests, at the temple. Motolinia, *Carta* (in *Icazbalceta*, v. 1), and Gomara, however, insist that *all* captives were sacrificed; Gomara adds, whimsically, that "they no longer had to eat, but to be eaten." It seems to me, in considering the nature of our sources, and comparative materials, that one tribe or city varied from another in these matters; that a captive was a slave; that in Mexico City all, or virtually all, captors, chose the spiritual benefit of sacrifice rather than the material benefit of slavery. See also, Sahagún, v. 2, lib. 1, lib. 9. It is Gomara who notes the purchase of foreign slaves for sacrifice.

¹⁵ It is apparently the quasi-hereditary slavery of debtors and criminals to which Sahagún refers in his work, v. 2, lib. 7.

The complexity of the Aztec institution of slavery leads us to suspect that Mayan slavery was equally complex, and to be unwilling to place much faith in the above-quoted simplicity of Cogolludo's generalization. At any rate, the children of slaves appear to have been sometimes, frequently or usually perhaps, absorbed into the lower classes.¹⁶

THE OCCUPATIONS OF SLAVES IN NORTH AMERICA

Of the Vancouver Island Nootka tribes, Sproat observes¹⁷ that:

In a tribe of two hundred men, perhaps fifty possess various degrees of rank; *there may be about as many slaves*; the remainder are independent members, less rich as a body than the men of rank, but who live much in the same way, the difference in position being noticeable only on public occasions.

The slaves were not evenly distributed property, however. For the Clayoquot Nootka specifically Jewitt¹⁸ wrote:

Only the king and chiefs have slaves, the common people being prevented from holding them either from their inability to purchase them, or, as I am rather inclined to think, from its being considered as the privilege alone of the former to have them, especially as all those made prisoners in war belong either to the king or to the chiefs who have captured them, each one holding such as have been *taken by himself and his slaves*. There is probably, however, some distinction in favor of the king, who is always commander of the expedition; for Maquinna had nearly fifty, male and female, in his house, *a number constituting one-half of its inhabitants*, comprehending those obtained by war and by purchase, whereas none of the other chiefs had more than *twelve*.

Sproat's and Jewitt's notes would indicate that Simpson's estimate that one-third of the total population of the upper north-

¹⁶ Cogolludo, lib. 4, cap. 3. Cf. Helps, *Spanish Conquest*, 3: 257. The phrase I have translated ends,—“*hasta que se redemian, ó se hacian tributarios.*”

The limitations on the sale of slaves noted for the Aztecs are not noted for the Maya. In Yucatan, if a slave died or ran away soon after his sale, the purchaser was entitled to receive back a portion of the sales price. See Las Casas; Gomara; Herrera, Dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 7; and Cogolludo.

¹⁷ Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, 117, 1889.

¹⁸ Jewitt, *Narrative*, 139, 1815. Other evidence indicates that the head chief received a differential share of war booty. For context see MacLeod, *The Origins of the State*, 1924, where other notes on Maquinna, the king, and his slaves appear. There were about twenty houses and chiefs in the Clayoquot village, with about five hundred adult males. Cf. F. Densmore, *Makah. Smiths. Misc. Coll.*, 73: 121, 1924.

west coast was slave is, perhaps, rather exaggerated. Censuses taken between 1836 and 1846 indicate that at that time the percentage of the total population which was slave varied from about one-seventh among the southern Tlingit to about as low as one-twentieth among the southern Kwakiutl and Oregon coast tribes. Of course in the case of weak tribes, continually victims of slave raiding by large tribes, there would be few slaves, while powerful tribes after a period of successful wars might, perhaps, be as much as one-fourth slave, as indicated by Sproat (who lived long among the Nootka).¹⁹ These proportions make the northwest coast tribes of aboriginal America comparable in the economic importance of hereditary slavery, with the greater part of early colonial America, even with parts of the plantation regions of the south!

What, then, was the economic use of such a large proportion of slaves among peoples still in the Stone Age and without agriculture? Jewitt²⁰ writes for the Clayoquot:

Their slaves . . . form their most valuable kind of property. These are of both sexes being either captives taken by themselves, or purchased from the neighboring tribes, who reside in the same house, forming, as it were, a part of the family, are usually kindly treated, eat of the same food, and live as well as their masters. They are compelled at times, however, to labor severely as not only are all the menial offices performed by them, such as bringing water, cutting wood, and a variety of such things, but they are obliged to make the canoes, to assist in building and repairing the houses, to supply their masters with fish, and to attend them to war and to fight for them. The females are employed principally in manufacturing cloth,

¹⁹ See MacLeod, *Slavery in Aboriginal North America*. AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, 1925. This earlier paper was merely a study of distribution and its significance. For censuses see P. Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians*, 457, 1846; Schoolcraft, *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge*, 5: 700-701; Curtis, *The North American Indian*, v. 10, Appendix.

²⁰ Jewitt, 73. Cf. p. 59. Jewitt was himself a slave for three years. He acted as iron armorer for the king, and labored hard at gathering firewood at considerable distances from the village. Simpson, *Narrative, 1841-42*, considered slaves to have been cruelly treated. Most slaves on the coast were slaves by birth, he says. Jewitt's last phrase refers to the prostitution of slave women to the crews of American whaling vessels.

On rather large scale manufacturing by slaves see F. G. Swan, *The Makah*. *Smiths. Cont.*, 10, 1869, citing Gibbs with references to facts of a decade before. On slaves as firewood gatherers see also particularly Swanton, *Haida Myths*. *B. A. E. Bull.*, 29: 159, 1905.

in cooking and collecting berries, etc., and in regard to food and living conditions in general have not a much harder lot than their mistresses, the principal difference consisting in that these poor and unfortunate creatures are considered free to anyone. . . .

Sproat writes²¹ also of the Nootka, that slaves did mostly women's work, and women's work he describes as follows:

The women do all the work of the camps, prepare fur skins, collect roots and berries, take charge of the fish upon the canoes reaching the shore, manage the cooking, and prepare food for winter. They also make mats, straw hats, and capes, wreaths, and ornamental niceties of grass and of cedar fiber. I have met women in autumn at four o'clock in the morning staggering under a great burden of cedar bark.

Of the Chinook of the Columbia river, Curtis²² noted that:

Male slaves were used mainly to paddle the canoe of the master, and in fishing, hunting, and carrying wood; and occasionally as assassin and in avenging wrongs. Female slaves were the drudges of the women, digging roots, gathering berries, curing fish, and carrying water.

We may now appreciate the attitude of a Kegarnie chief²³ who was asked if he cared to visit America or England:

He answered "No!" as he considered we were slaves—even our chiefs—who were always doing something from necessity, and as we were always at

²¹ Sproat.

²² Curtis, 8: 88. For further use of slaves in war, mainly as paddlers of the war canoes, however, see Kotzebue, cited in Bancroft, *Wild Tribes*, 1: 108; Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology* (B. A. E. Ann. Rept., 31: 45, 230, 361, 400, 434). For further reference to slaves going hunting for their masters see Swanton, *Haida Myths*, 273-274, and Emmons, *The Tahltan Indians* (Univ. of Penn. Publ. Anthr., 4: 29, 1911). For slaves as paddlers of canoes on long trading expeditions, see Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, 434, and, for the Aleut, L. Petroff, *Alaska* (U. S. Census Report, 10th Census, 8: 152). Hill-Tout, *Salish and Dene*, 163, 1907, says of the slaves of the Salish of the coast that "Every family of distinction had its own body of slaves, male and female. These did all the rough, dirty work, such as keeping the house clean, fetching water, and carrying firewood." Cf. on the same, Boas, *The Lkungen*. *Brit. Assoc. Adv. Sci.*, 570, 1890.

For slaves used as assassins by their masters see further Simpson, 1: 211, 242, for the Tlingit and Tsimshian; and Swanton, *Haida Myths*, 273-274, for the Haida.

Slaves were also used as messengers by their noble and chiefly owners.

Kane, 175, describes the use of his slave by Casenov, a Chinook chief, to execute the desecrator of a grave.

²³ Dunn, *Oregon*, 193. Sproat, 95: "An active female slave, however, is more valued than any wife *who does not bring riches or powerful connections*, for the slave cannot leave the master's service."

work for a living. "I have slaves," said he, "who hunt for me, paddle me in my canoes; and my wives to attend me. Why should I wish to leave?"

In the agricultural eastern woodlands, where only the non-hereditary enslavement of captives obtained, it is unlikely that slaves ever formed any very important part of the labor of the community. Yet there existed some intertribal trading in slaves, and there is little doubt that the value of the slaves bore some relation to their surplus production—apart from their prestige value. Slaves were used in maple-sugar making, wild rice gathering, fire-wood collecting, water carrying, in servile attendance on hunting parties, and even in the hunting itself. They served as paddlers and carriers for native traders.²⁴ They also worked in the fields and gardens, not alone among the southeastern tribes but among the Iroquois. De Soto found captives with feet mutilated (just as the Iroquois, even in the eighteenth century, mutilated the feet of their slaves), very extensively used in the Southeast as farm workers, and much in demand for this purpose.²⁵ This, De Soto's party, it would seem, first noted among the Creek:

What is something remarkable, the Spaniards found in the villages which were subject to the lady of Cofaciqui, many slaves—Indians of other countries whom those who went hunting and fishing had made prisoners. These slaves served to cultivate the lands, and had been very badly treated to prevent them from escaping. *Some* had the tendons of their insteps cut, and *others* that of their heels.

As on the northwest coast, in the southeast it was considered seemly for a chief to be attended by a body of slaves, who, in off hours, could serve in the household. Bartram, in 1791, noted that the Creek chiefs were attended by enslaved captives. More than half a century earlier (1715) a writer²⁶ noted for the chief of the Coweta Creek that:

²⁴ W. J. Hoffman, *The Menominee*, 1896; La Hontan, *Voyages* (2nd ed., 1725), 1: 9; 2, 43, 49. Cf. *The Jesuit Relations*, 63: 77, 1653.

²⁵ Garcilasso, *La Florida* (B. Shipp's translation in *De Soto and the Conquest of Florida*, 1891, Dec. 1, lib. 3, cap. 17). Cf. MacLeod, *Slavery, and Lawson, Carolina*, 307, on Iroquois use of slaves. Cf. Garcilasso, Dec. 1, lib. 2, cap. 2, on Ortiz' work as a slave; also Dec. 2, lib. 1, cap. 11, lib. 2, cap. 7, and lib. 3, cap. 4. for Garcilasso on the desire for captives to use them in field labor, and for further notes on tendon cutting—which appears to have been general in the southeast.

²⁶ Anonymous French author in Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians*. B. A. E. Bull. 73: 225, 1924.

He has numbers of slaves who are busy night and day cooking food for those going and coming to visit him

In 1540 De Soto's party noted the same use of enslaved captives as attendants among the Creeks and their neighbors. Every noble, even when a youth, had his retinue; even, it seems, before he had taken captives himself. Natchez nobles, however, had certain freemen assigned to them as servitors, instead of slaves.²⁷

INDIGENOUS AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE

Slave raiding.—Slave raiding (European influence aside) was a practice widespread on the North American northwest coast, a region where slavery was of much greater economic importance than elsewhere in the Americas. Not satisfied merely with breeding slaves, or enslaving captives in the ordinary course of wars of blood revenge, groups all along the coast and the adjacent plateau frequently made offensive war expeditions against weaker groups, primarily with the object of getting captives to sell in the intertribal slave trade. Hill-Tout writes for the coastal Salish,²⁸ for example:

They made slave raids on one another. . . . These wars were usually very small affairs and might properly be called forays. Bands of the younger, more restless, and more warlike men of the tribes would go off at times in their canoes and surprise some distant and unsuspecting settlement, kill such men as offered resistance, and carry off the others with the women and children and sell them to their wealthier, stay-at-home neighbors.

Of the Tcilquek in particular²⁹ he noted that:

²⁷ See Garcilasso, Dec. 1, lib. 3, cap. 12; lib. 2, cap. 23. MacLeod, *Origins of the State*, 85.

²⁸ Salish and Dene, 164, 1907.

²⁹ The Halkomelem Tribes. *Brit. Assoc. Adv. Sci.*, 357, 1902. Cf. Siciatl, *ibid.*, 1904.

W. C. Grant, *Vancouver Island*. *London Geographical Soc. Journ.*, 27: 296, 1857, mentions slave raiding. Jewitt, 121, describes a slave raid on a large scale. Forty canoes of the Clayoquot carried five hundred warriors and the party completely destroyed a village fifty miles down the coast. Cf. the war party in Sproat, 195. S. Powers, *The Indians of California* (*Smith. Cont.*, 1: 65, 1866), describes the practice of the Tolowa of frequently raiding the Yurok with a view to obtaining ransom money for the captives.

The *siam* would generally discountenance these forays; but as in every other tribe there were . . . some restless venturesome spirits. . . . Some times these war parties were never heard of again, being ambushed or slain by the way. . . . The captives they would sell to the more timid and less venturesome of the tribe, and thus enrich themselves.

Sproat³⁰ writes that the Vancouver Island tribes raided the Salish of the Sound, and one another, to sell to the Nootka of Cape Flattery (Makah)

who are great promoters and supporters of this hateful commerce. Being comparatively rich and numerous they induce the larger Vancouver tribes to attack the small neighboring tribes on their shores and capture persons fit for the slave market. Some of the smaller tribes at the north of the island are practically regarded as slave-breeding tribes, and are attacked periodically by stronger tribes who make prisoners and sell them as slaves.

We recall that the kidnapping of free persons in time of peace in Central America was a serious penal offense, punishable by enslavement of the offender and all of his family. No such safeguards surrounded the stranger, apparently, on the northwest coast of North America. Kane³¹ writes:

On the coast a custom prevails which authorizes the seizure and enslavement, unless ransomed by friends, of every Indian met with at any distance from his tribe, although they may not be at war with each other.

This, of course, did not include traders and others on more or less official business, and, if Kane had given details, I presume it would turn out to appear merely a punishment for trespass.

Contact with the slave-holding and slave-trading Europeans stimulated slave raiding among the natives of the Eastern Woodlands in the early days of European contact. But, there is no doubt that slave raiding of a sort obtained here also, indigenously, apart from European influences, though it was certainly of less moment culturally or economically than on the northwest coast. Marquette,³² for example, among the Illinois in 1673, before this people had made any direct contact with the Europeans, and before they had any fur traders among them even, wrote of them that:

³⁰ Sproat, 92.

³¹ Kane, 214-215.

³² Marquette, in Shea, *The Discovery of the Mississippi*, 32.

They are very warlike and formidable to distant nations in the south and west where they go to carry off slaves which they make an article of trade, selling them at a high price to other nations for goods.

Grignon's recollections of this region reached back to about 1690 and earlier, and are therefore of value in disclosing institutions before the day of notable European influence; he writes³³ of the Indians of Wisconsin:

During the constant wars of the Indians, several of the Wisconsin tribes were in the habit of making captives of the Pawnee, Osages, Missouri, and even of the distant Mandans, and these were consigned to servitude. I know that the Ottawas and Sauks made such captives, but am not certain about the Menominees, Chippewas, Pottawattomies, Foxes, and Winnebagos. *The Menominees, with a few individual exceptions, did not engage in these distant forays. They, and probably other tribes, had Pawnee slaves which they obtained by purchase from the Ottawas, Sauks, and others, who captured them.* But I never knew the Menominees to have any by capture, and but few by purchase. . . . Of the fourteen I have known personally, six were males and eight were females, and the most of them were captured while young.

Among these tribes of the lakes, and later, among the Europeans of the lake region who made some use of Indian slaves in their households, Indian slaves were known generically as Pawnees (Panis), although they were in fact of Mandan, Missouri, Osage, and other tribal origin, very few of them being actually Pawnees.³⁴ This, of course, is very much of the same sort of coincidence by which slaves in Europe were called after the racial term Slav.

The possible economic loss from the running away of slaves no doubt had its effect in stimulating the development of the slave trade. In the absence of active intertribal trade it would appear that those captives who were taken from remoter tribes were more likely to be those who would be selected for enslavement than for sacrifice; those taken from near-by tribes, even though their feet were maimed, would find it much easier to escape home. This is indicated, for example, in the fact that, in 1676, the Iroquois sacrificed all of the many captives taken from the proximate Mahickan tribe, but in the same year fifty captives

³³ A. Grignon, *Seventy-Two Years Recollection of Wisconsin*. Coll. Hist. Soc. Wis., 3:256, 1857.

³⁴ Grignon, 257.

taken from a tribe two hundred leagues away were "granted their lives *because they destine them to work in their fields.*"³⁵

The trade.—The northwest coast was probably a region of much more active and voluminous intertribal trade than any in America. Wealthy commoners, as well as chiefs, engaged in the trade. In their great forty-foot war and trade canoes they paddled hundreds of miles in single trade expeditions. Slaves were one of the many commodities carried. A certain amount of intertribal trading in slaves was necessary to effect the distribution of those taken in raids definitely with the object of selling; on the other hand, slave raids were motivated partly by the knowledge that the booty could be profitably disposed of in the existing intertribal slave trade. The principal cause behind the slave trade, it would seem, was the desirability of getting captives as far away from their homes as possible; first, because if this were not effected, the captive's relatives would constantly attempt his recapture, and second, the nearness to home would tend to keep the captive restless and eager to run away or to attempt the lives of his masters, jeopardizing the safety of the owning tribe.³⁶

The northwest coast intertribal trade in slaves seemed to follow much longer and more regular and deep-cut social channels than the trade in other commodities, largely, no doubt, because of the preference of flat-head tribes for round-head slaves and vice versa³⁷; possibly, also, for another reason with note of which we will conclude our remarks.

The plateau of Oregon and Washington, and northern California were regions marginal to the hereditary slave area of the northwest coast. The tribes of these areas being little interested in keeping slaves themselves, were always active in raiding their neighbors to the east and south to get captives whom they might sell to the Chinook in the great intertribal mart at the Dalles on

³⁵ Jesuit Relations, 60: 185, 1676.

³⁶ Swan in *The Makah* (Smith. Cont., p. 10, 1867), writes for the Sound tribes that "it was said that slaves born in the tribe would be sure not to run away; others attempt to escape to their relatives." Gibbs, 188, points out some of the dangers of holding captive those of near-by tribes. See further above.

³⁷ See, for example, the Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington, 1857), 327.

the Columbia river. The Klamath and Shasta of northern California even sold their own children into this slave market—a habit which they share with the Ute but in which they are in contrast with, say, the Carolina tribes of the East.³⁸ The Yakima took captives from the Nez Percé; the Modoc and Klamath often joined forces to raid the Achomawi of Pit river, and these Achomawi became, like the northern Nootka tribes mentioned by Sproat, virtually slave-breeding groups, without power to resist their aggressors.³⁹

Concerning the Chinook, the traders *par excellence* of all tribes below the Tsimshian, Dunn⁴⁰ writes:

These Indians deal in slaves purchased from the southern tribes, the original kidnappers, and then sell them at a profit to the northern tribes who come down to purchase them.

Strong⁴¹ writes:

In olden times the Chinooks dealt very largely in slaves. Trading as they did with the inland Indians who were much of the time at war with one another and making slaves of their prisoners, and desired a market which would take these slaves as far as possible from their native country, the Chinook had a fine opportunity to purchase and bring these slaves to the coast. These they sold to the tribes both north and south, realizing a handsome profit, and became the wealthiest nation of the region.

Kane⁴² adds that the Chinook, while usually they brought rather than raided, sometimes warred themselves and took prisoners. Curtis⁴³ writes of the upper Chinookan tribes that:

They secured the majority of their slaves from the Wasco and from the Klamath, who brought Paiute and Modoc captives to the intertribal mart at the Dalles.

While captives and slaves of north California and the neighboring plateau moved down the Columbia river and in general

³⁸ Cf. Lawson, Carolina, 1715. Gatschet, The Klamath. Smith. Cont., lxii, 1887. Kane, 181. Bancroft, Wild Tribes, 436.

³⁹ Gatschet, 16, 59–60, 62. Lewis, Oregon Tribes. Mem. Am. Anthr. Assn., 154, 1915. Curtis, 7:14. Francheres, Narrative, 241, 1854. Gibbs, 188. Powers, 254–255, 267.

⁴⁰ Dunn, Oregon, 184.

⁴¹ Wah-Kee-Nah and her People, 1893.

⁴² Kane, 181.

⁴³ Curtis, 8: 93.

northward to the Sound and above, others flowed southward in exchange from the Sound.⁴⁴ Some note of this southward movement we have already made.

This reciprocal movement appears also north of the Sound. The Kwakiutl raided the "more timid and less war-like Salish tribes of the Frazer River delta."⁴⁵ Kane⁴⁶ writes concerning Saw-se-na, a Cowichan chief of southeastern Vancouver island, that:

In his young days he took many captives, whom he usually sold to the tribes further north, thus diminishing their chance of escaping back through a hostile country to their own people, the northern tribes making slaves only of those living south of them.

The Tsimshian appear to have been of great importance as middlemen, buying the southern slaves who were sent up from the region of the Sound, and selling them to the Haida, who passed them on to the Tlingit, the Haida, however, doing some raiding on northern Vancouver island on their own account. Ft. Simpson, located in Tsimshian territory, was in the center of this mid-coast trade activity,⁴⁷ and the native settlement about there as an aboriginal trade mart ranks with the Dalles on the Columbia. From the days of discovery by the Russians, it was noticed that the tribes of the north, who made use of the labret but did not flatten the head, usually had slaves from the south whose heads were flattened.⁴⁸

It is an interesting commentary on the generally observed fact that the tribes of the bleak and barren plateau of northern British Columbia and Alaska were innately peaceable and timid, that in contrast with the tribes of the plateau of the Oregon region who fed the Dalles slave market, these northern Plateau tribes not only did not furnish any captives to the coast markets, but that the few slaves they did hold frequently were bought from the coast tribes, sometimes, however, in exchange for captives which they did take.⁴⁹ The existence, furthermore, among the northern

⁴⁴ Gibbs, 188. Swan, Makah, 10, 31; Swan, The Northwest Coast, 166, 1869.

⁴⁵ Boas, Halkomelem. Brit. Assoc. Adv. Sci., 526, 1892. Hill-Tout, 163, 1907.

⁴⁶ Kane, 220.

⁴⁷ Niblack, Indians of Alaska. Smith. Rept., 338, 1888. Emmons, 29. Simpson, 127.

⁴⁸ W. H. Dall, Native Tribes. Smith. Cont., 427, 1877.

⁴⁹ Emmons, 29. Simpson, 127.

coast tribes of the sib, intertribally and interracially recognized as a social tie, making for the redemption rather than the enslavement of captives, in connection with the failure of the neighboring plateau tribes to bring supplies of captives to the coast, no doubt tended to make the volume of traffic in northward bound slaves greater than that of southward bound slaves. Such is indicated more or less definitely in most early observations, and such seems to be probable.

We have already noted the relative insignificance of the slave trade in agricultural North America. There appears also to have been relatively little in Central America. The town of Azcapuzalco, about nine miles from Mexico City (Tenochtitlan), located on the site of the former capital of the Tepanecs which was destroyed by Nezahualcoyotl, King of Tezcuco, in the fifteenth century, was the principal slave mart in the Valley of Mexico. Slaves were brought here from all of the provinces of the Nahuatl, a truly international mart. Traders took great care to guard their human property on the road to the mart, and when exhibited for sale the slaves were kept well fed and clothed, and forced to dance and look cheerful. One of the three principal groups of the international merchant organization of the Nahuatl nations, whose headquarters was at Tlatilalco, were the *Teyaohualohuan* (slave traders). The sacrifices made in the month Panquetzaliztli, to the god Huitzilopochtli, by the merchant bodies were of slaves brought to the market of Azcapuzalco.⁵⁰

For the Maya of Yucatan and Nicaragua, Landa⁵¹ writes of Ulua and Tabasco as cities to which slaves were brought from great distances, along with other goods, to be exchanged for the native cacao and copper money; and Cortez writes as if Acalan were a slave mart of some importance.⁵²

The price of slaves.—It is already obvious that aboriginal American slaves produced enough for their keep and a surplus

⁵⁰ See especially Sahagún, *Historia*, v. 1, lib. 4; v. 2, lib. 9, on the feasts of the merchant guilds. Acosta also speaks of the slave merchants of Cholula.

⁵¹ Landa, 129.

⁵² In his last letter to the Emperor. (See Mac Nutt's translation.)

besides. The prices paid for them would roughly indicate the value of their surplus. Swan⁵³ said that about 1860 the prices of slaves varied from twenty to one hundred blankets or their equivalent—the standard blanket at that time being equivalent to five dollars in the American money then obtaining currency through the American fur trade. Some slaves brought a price greater than this equivalent of five hundred dollars, “and not infrequently a valuable canoe is added to the bargain.” Dunn⁵⁴ says that here the most highly prized slave would be one who was “*a full-grown, athletic slave who is a good hunter.*” In 1879 Euro-American suppression of slave raiding and slave trading, successful in a measure, made slaves scarce among the Indians, and a good slave then among the Haida would bring two hundred blankets, the trade equivalent of one thousand dollars.⁵⁵ Some indication of the nature of price variation is in Gatschet’s note that at the Dalles in 1857 a California captive woman would sell for five or six Cayuse ponies; a boy, for one pony.⁵⁶ This price for slaves at the Dalles would increase as they passed down the Columbia and northward along the coast to their ultimate consumer. Sproat writes that on the coast each powerful tribe insisted on acting as middlemen between adjacent tribes and taking a profit for their function; therefore “the price of a slave increases at each stage as he is conveyed along the coast to the best market.”⁵⁷

The data available on prices in connection with the data on the percentage of the slaves to the total population, distinctly suggest that slavery on the northwest coast among the natives was of nearly as much economic importance to them as was slavery to the plantation regions of the United States before the Civil War.

⁵³ Swan, Northwest Coast, 166. Cf. Emmons, 29.

⁵⁴ Dunn, 184. Cf. Sproat, 91–92 of appreciation in the price of slave *women* consequent on their use in prostitution to the whites.

⁵⁵ Dawson, Queen Charlotte Islands. Smith. Cont., 132, 1879.

⁵⁶ Gatschet, p. lx; cf. Curtis, 7: 191. Horses were scarce and valuable in the region at that time

⁵⁷ Sproat, 92. Cf. on all the above, Kane, 236, 239; Jewitt, 63; Curtis, 9: 91. It is necessary to take account of the fluctuations in the value of native shell money and in the difference of value of different length dentalia in a fathom.

Incredible as this may seem, it seems very definitely indicated by all the facts.

As we might expect, due in part to the fact that in agricultural North America the progeny of slaves were free, the slender data available on prices indicates that slaves were of considerably less value than on the northwest coast.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Cf. Grignon, 257; Landa, 129; La Salle in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of The Lower Mississippi* (B. A. E. Bull. 43: 261, 1911). Among the Menominee a slave woman was worth one hundred dollars in Grignon's time. Among the Aztec a self-sold debtor slave was worth twenty mantels, which were worth one load of cotton cloth.