

SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA STUDIED BY A SELECT NUMBER OF HISTORIANS

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Summary

This study analyzes how six historians have addressed slavery in the United States. It examines the work of Ulrich B. Phillips, who defended slavery with ethnocentric and racist arguments, contrasting it with more critical perspectives like Eugene D. Genovese's Marxist approach. Bias in traditional historiography is highlighted, showing how racism shaped perceptions of slavery in the southern U.S.

Keywords: slavery, historiography, racism, Ulrich B. Phillips, Eugene D. Genovese, United States, 19th century.

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INDEX

Summary	1
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER I:	5
RACISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM	7
EXTRAPOLATION FROM SAMPLES	7
PART B.	9
CONSTANT CRITICISM: KENNETH M. TAMPP AND HIS WORK ENTITLED THE PECULIAR INSTITUTION	9
STAMPP'S ANALYSIS OF SLAVERY AND THE BLACK PROBLEM	10
CHAPTER II	13
A Comparative Interpretation	13
A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION	15
CHAPTER III	15
THE MARXIST ANALYST: EUGENE D. GENOVESE	15
CONCLUSIONS:	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY	19



INTRODUCTION

This essay was originally written in English as part of a research paper on “Intellectual History of the Nineteenth Century United States of America” under the guidance of Professor Sally Miller in the Department of History at the UOP (*University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, USA*). In it we analyze the ideas that six notable historians present on the subject of slavery in the United States of America. In order to accomplish this task, we will compare and contrast them in order to logically draw the relevant conclusions.

In the analysis of this controversial topic, we will try to demonstrate, first of all, the anti-scientific nature of the arguments present in the work of Ulrich B. Phillips entitled << *Life and Labor in the old South* >>. In order to carry out this purpose, Phillips’ classic “pro-slavery” work will be examined, contrasting his thesis with the approaches of other authors who explain the subject from various historiographical positions.

We close this introductory section by clarifying what concerns the question fundamental sources and procedures.

Almost all the information presented in this text comes from the six authors and works cited in the bibliography listed at the end. By using these fundamental data that support this essay we will try to show their importance or not, their veracity or falsity, their strengths or weaknesses. Fulfilling this task of evaluating, contrasting and comparing, we could achieve our objective: To have a critical view on this controversial topic, which is undoubtedly slavery in contemporary times, specifically in the South of the United States of America and other regions where this system was also established until it disappeared during the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I:

The great debate: Ulrich B. Phillips. The classic and pro-slavery point of view on the subject and its recognized academic level.

This author has been widely recognized for his high intellectual standards in the field. Both friends and foes of his point of view recognize that his knowledge in general, as well as of the

specific subject of his book *Life and Labor in the Old South*, is a cornerstone of research on the subject of slavery. The reason that justifies the judgment is the breadth of sources used by this researcher, especially primary sources such as plantation ledgers and the testimonies of the slaves themselves; rather than the vitriolic pamphlets, some written by travelers who did not see the “old South” through the eyes of a Southerner like Phillips himself.

In my opinion, Phillips carried out a fundamental work when he “discovered” those plantation notebooks (Records) and used them to destroy the ingrained idea about slavery that he considered prejudiced and inaccurate.

Although he worked with sources that could be seen as suspect because of the high level of bias contained in them, he widely accepted those “truths” coming from there.

It may be thought that Phillips did not question his sources because he believed in them without question, despite the fact that most of them (as has been said) offered no objectivity whatsoever.

An interesting contribution of this work is the vision about the real function of laws and statutes in the slave society. Another important information it offers is news about black rebellions, criminal problems related to them, and especially, the characteristics of the free black population. A lot of information can be obtained from there about this specific population.

The treatment of this issue (that of free blacks) includes important data on their exclusion from the right to vote and to form part of the regional militia, their number or quantity in comparison with those subjected to slavery, the impossibility of granting them complete manumission, restrictions for emigration to places such as Liberia, education, employment, finally, the impediments they had to live “as the third element in a system planned for two”¹. Another topic developed by Phillips was the problem of the cost or value of labor. The section that deals with this raises the issue of the system of raising slaves for the purpose of specific to sell them in the lucrative market. In addition, the evolution of slave prices in relation to those of other commodities such as cotton and sugar is explained.

Finally, the explanation is completed by considering the classification of slaves, the system or practice of hiring slaves, the problems related to the trade, fugitive slaves, their conduct and discipline, among other situations. In short, the very serious research carried out by historian U.B. Phillips marked an important stage in the study of slavery in the United States of America. In spite of the fact that in our days nobody would accept his opinions or judgments and at the same time say that they mean a scientific historical truth.

1 Ulrich B. Phillips: *Life and Labor in the old South*, p. 172.

RACISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM

When Phillips' book *Life and labor in the Old South* is analyzed, several signs of racism and ethnocentrism can be observed. For example, when the author explains the origin of black slavery, he says that the Portuguese and Spanish brought black slaves to their colonies in the New World, and that, if "any people were to be held responsible for this involuntary service, they, the blacks of Africa, were perfect for the purpose"².

The first part of the above statement seems to be an ethnocentric view of the problem. Indeed, it was true that the Portuguese trafficked in black African slaves and the Spanish acquired them from those foreign traders who brought the merchandise to America. But the business of trafficking black slaves from Africa was mainly in the hands of the English, French and Dutch. The only thing that cleans up the dirty history of slavery and England's participation in it, was the policy that nation advanced very early since 1833 on that evil trade and the slave-based labor system.

The second part of the above quote clearly tells us Phillips' opinion of blacks. Another example of racism can be seen when the following information is examined. Phillips repeats an old myth that only blacks were fit to work in the hot, humid lands of the South.

The white man's alleged inability to work in those places where blacks toiled hard was a racist and unscientific justification, so that slave masters and their defenders could have a conscience at peace.

In the chapter entitled "Life in Thralldom" of the book cited above, it is pointed out that among the reasons why he enslaved the blacks were their own customs and characteristics. According to the author, Africans lived in a world of slavery, polygamy, human sacrifice, cannibalism and other barbaric institutions. The civilized Europeans were only accomplices of the African slave masters, who were the only ones who the slaves were imprisoned and kept by the millions in that situation there in Africa. But Phillips went further and wrote unashamedly that "the acquiescence of the slaves themselves made the conspiracy successful"³.

Finally, in addition to the above, the author, in analyzing the traits of various African groups, says that some of them had the ideal characteristics to serve as slaves.

EXTRAPOLATION FROM SAMPLES

The employment of white laborers in dangerous tasks instead of black slaves is pre-seated as a common practice, but according to common sense and authoritative opinions such as that of K.M. Stamp, such a practice existed, but not as Phillips presented it, that is, a general or

2 U.B. Phillips: op. cit., p. 160.

3 Ibidem: p. 188

common system used by the masters on their plantations, as a means of preserving the lives of the black slaves. This fact of which some travelers wrote does not prove that such a thing was. One of those testimonies described the astonishment of a traveler who observed a group of white (Irish) laborers working wet and in the middle of the cold winter. Upon inquiring about the reason for , the master of the plantation told him that if the Irish died sick, they were simply replaced with other workers brought in under . Whereas, if the valuable slave died, a valuable capital asset was lost, something of greater value than a mule or other beast.

The writings on the life of slaves⁴ and some “funeral eulogies” made by some kind- hearted masters⁵ when a faithful servant died are another example of extrapolation derived from a limited sample of information. The idea presented is the existence of a friendly, warm and playful relationship between slave masters and their servants. It is possible that there was some individual who for some reason had affection for his slaves, or more precisely, for one of them. But to believe that this was a general phenomenon is a big mistake. Another example of this “extrapolation” could be the generalization made by Dr. Phillips considering the characteristics of plantations. According to this writer, the plantation was a factory, a school, a religious parish, a show, a marriage bureau, something like a harem, a large nursery, and a divorce court⁶. Again, the possible existence of some plantations having one or more of these characteristics cannot be ruled out, but one may wonder:

How many plantations had them? It is obvious that extrapolation is present in these statements because this ideal plantation may have existed only in the mind of the author of this work.

Finally, I would like to quote this incredible statement: “the plantation was a family residence, isolated, permanent and populated by a social group with a common interest in achieving and maintaining social order”⁷. The last words of this text describing this imaginary plantation mean that the slaves who were exploited, whipped and worse, had a common interest in maintaining social order along with their “brother” masters.

The use of unsystematic figures:

Although the author developed some research that involved working with figures as shown in the first part of this chapter, several weaknesses in the whole discourse can be demonstrated. One might be the following: The author states that “hundreds, no doubt, thousands of slaves were literate, and they traveled in groups on the roads or gathered in the evenings to participate in Christian religious ceremonies, in voodoo rites, or simply for pastime”⁸.

4 Ibidem: pp. 202-213

5 Ibidem: pp. 214-215

6 Ibidem: pp. 196-203

7 Ibidem: p. 196

8 Ibidem: p. 164

The idea that Phillips tried to demonstrate was that the statutes were conveniently forgotten when times were quiet, as they generally were in his opinion. This is an example of the use of figures in a very general or vague way.

In the analysis of issues such as the groups of free blacks, the process of transferring slaves to America and others, there are no figures that, chronologically speaking, show an adequate view of the subject.

PART B.

CONSTANT CRITICISM: KENNETH M. TAMPP AND HIS WORK ENTITLED THE PECULIAR INSTITUTION

1. Myths, legends and fallacies in pro-slavery writings.

In different chapters of his book, this author analyzes several myths, legends and fallacies related to slavery. For example, he says that “some historians (U.B. Phillips) have explained the origins of southern slavery as deriving from the morbid climate of that area”⁹. Stamppp points out that the myth that Europeans could not do hard agricultural work in the South and that only blacks could do it is indefensible and has no scientific basis.

Another myth considered is that blacks have the important quality or trait of liking to live in subjugation. The reference to some of Phillips’ statements about blacks in Africa is obvious. He pointed out a broad classification of blacks into several groups, some of them ideal to serve as slaves because of their physical and cultural characteristics.

In addition, he says that by custom and nature blacks accept subjection to slavery as their natural condition.

Stamppp, taking the most advanced research, especially that of the anthropological field, demonstrates the falsity of such anti-scientific theses. The same fate would befall another idea of Phillips: “by racial quality (blacks) are submissive, good-hearted, friendly, like to please and are imitators”¹⁰.

The next myth criticized would be that Africans as barbarians needed to be controlled. And one way was to enslave them, which was necessary for their own good and for the welfare of white civilization. Achieving this task of controlling them for their own sake was possible on the plantations.

9 Kenneth M. Stamppp: *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 3.

10 K.M. Stamppp: *Ob. Cit.*, p. 8.

But according to Stamp, blacks by the 19th century were as “civilized” as when the first waves of slaves arrived from Africa centuries earlier. The education they received went no further than elementary training in using tools and following instructions in their day-to-day jobs.

“Pro-slavery writers” - as Stamp calls them - have created or propagated legends and fallacies claiming that slaves generally rejected offers of freedom. The number and significance of this has been exaggerated. In the cases in which such offers of freedom did exist (and were rejected) the specific circumstances explain the reason for this. Generally these were people of very advanced age, with family ties and friends whom they did not want to leave in order to go away from there, in some cases to emigrate to Liberia. And that was one of the conditions to be fulfilled by the beneficiary of this “freedom”, since their presence on the plantation was not convenient.

It can be proved that it was not a natural love of slavery that accounted for the refusal of the very rare offers of freedom. The same explanation may be useful in demonstrating why slave participation in rebellions was not common.

The cause was not acceptance or agreement with slavery or their inability to understand the benefits of freedom. The real reason was problems of a different nature, such as the characteristics of the slave population: lack of organization and support, and the fear of very harsh repression supported by laws and statutes, armed forces ready to control any outbreak of protest, barbaric punishments and terror.

The legend of racial harmony during the era of slavery in which love between pampered servants and generous masters (“massas,” mispronunciation of Masters) supposedly existed, was created by slave masters to prove that the racial strife that appeared after the emancipation or abolition of black slavery was not a consequence of the hostility that separated slaves from their masters and overseers.

In short, the pro-slavery writers presented the “Peculiar Institution” as they eufemistically called it, as if it were a patriarchal institution, but that was a fallacious idea.

STAMP'S ANALYSIS OF SLAVERY AND THE BLACK PROBLEM

The author has extensively reviewed the main characteristics of slavery throughout history. In the best academic style, he explains the main aspects of slavery in Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, England) and the important fact of mutual enslavement between Muslims and Christians. In the same line, he analyzes the slave trade in modern times and the participation of the Dutch, French and English, together with their partners in the trade of human beings: the African traffickers themselves.

After this, the process of abolition of slavery is studied in the British territories (1833), the

Spanish-American republics in the 1850s, and in Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Dutch Guiana in the 1860s. In addition, obviously, there is an extensive explanation of slavery in North America.

To do this, the legal structure that regulated issues such as white serfs (workers subjected to temporary servitude by means of a contract), Indian slaves and black slaves was studied. Other topics related to the previous idea were the Indians in servitude, the evolution of the black population through the 17th-18th-19th centuries, and the territories that were open to slavery in the United States of America. One of the most important contributions of Stamp's book is the presentation of the national geographic distribution of the black slave population, slave masters and number of plantations.

The author also presents calculated percentages that allow us to know what a typical plantation or a typical slave master was like.

In my opinion, the criterion applied by this writer can be discarded because it takes as valid the number of plantations, or the number of slave masters, independently of their "qualitative weight" in the structure. That could be considered a mathematical exercise without much meaning.

According to Kenneth Stamp, "To make them fearful"¹¹ was one of the objectives sought by the masters to better govern or control their slaves. They did this by writing harsh laws and other rules, judging offenders, and administering barbaric punishments. Whether they exercised their authority kindly or not depended very much on the master's personal qualities. To achieve the perfect submission of his slaves and to use their labor power profitably, each master designed a set of rules by which he governed. There were laws dictated for those private domains"¹².

In the same , it can be said that the book explained the way to produce the perfect slave, according to the typical southern master. The system consisted of applying rigid discipline, unconditional submission, making him harbor a strong sense of inferiority, and developing in his personality a total and paralyzing fear of the white man. In short, to train the servant to adopt the master's code of good conduct, so that he would feel completely dependent on his master. Obviously, that was the goal, and sometimes unfortunately they succeeded.

Other topics presented by Stamp in his work are: religious life among slaves, the different abolitionist movements, the legal structure of slavery, slave traders, characteristics of the concrete life of slaves (food maintenance, morbidity, mortality), cultural aspects, miscegenation, economic usefulness of the slave system, and finally, the meaning of slave captivity.

Explaining each of these aspects - or at least summarizing them - would make this paper very long. For this reason, we will only address three of them.

11 Ibidem: p. 141

12 Ibidem: p. 143

First, we will analyze the author's idea of slave mongering. He states that although the interstate trade had few advocates, nor is it defended in romantic accounts of life in the pre- Civil War South, it was a crucial part of its economic life¹³. An important fraction of the interstate slave trade had two causes: the first was the slave trade between the states, and the second was the slave trade between the states, which had two causes: the slave trade and the slave trade between the states, and the third was the slave trade between the states. An important fraction of the slave trade between the states had two causes: The economic expansion of the Deep South and the practice of "slave breeding" (real "farms" specialized in this task) by a large number of slave masters. This system was the solution that allowed slave traders to supply enough human merchandise when this trade was partially paralyzed by some decisions of the federal government, such as the closing of ports open to this traffic. The use of armed ships to guard the coasts where this trade was practiced, declared as piracy and punished with the death penalty. But "during the 1850s the illicit trade reached such proportions that it almost constituted a reopening of the slave trade or slave trade"¹⁴.

The second point to be considered is that of miscegenation. This occurred despite the fact that marriage between blacks or mulattos and whites was forbidden. But regardless of this, sexual relations between people belonging to different racial groups occurred. Especially common was the illegal relationship between a slave woman (black or mulatto) and a free white man. Often it was the master himself or his children. The result of this process of miscegenation was the growth of a large population of "people".

The existence of this growing group created a problem because it introduced social tensions into this rigid system. The existence of this growing group created a problem because it introduced social tensions into this rigid system.

The third aspect to take into account is the meaning of slave captivity. When Stamppe analyzed this, he stated: "But one must remember that the Negro, not the white man was the slave. And it was the slave who stood to gain most from emancipation. When that feeble freedom came, even if it was a quasi-freedom as a citizen, the Negro, in lost nothing but his chains."¹⁵. With these words, the author closes his writing, and it must be said that they are a clear challenge to the researchers who have defended the "peculiar institution", as they euphemistically called slavery.

13 Ibidem: p. 244

14 Ibidem: p. 271.

15 Ibidem: p. 430

CHAPTER II

A Comparative Interpretation

- Part A. - David B. Davis: Comparison or isolation.

Slavery in the United States of America has usually been studied by comparison with similar processes in other parts of the world, but it can also be investigated in geographic isolation. Although Davis has pointed this out in his paper, he states that he will try to explain the origin and characteristics of slavery through comparison.

After presenting a synopsis of the world history of slavery in the world that allows him to have an overview of the subject, the author states that “a trade that involved the six largest nations of the world and that for three centuries transported between ten and fifteen million Africans to the new world, and that became the main reason for international rivalry and the struggle between empires; this cannot be considered a mere chapter of the history of North America”¹⁶.

In my opinion, Davis, after affirming the possibility of isolating slavery - as a historical phenomenon - to avoid the justification given by the comparison with worse slave systems in other countries or other times, goes on to make the necessary contrasts with slavery in the West Indies, Spanish America and Brazil. In the past, a large group of academics, a vast group of businessmen, journalists and all kinds of “popular economists” preached this free-market and social-Darwinist creed as the solution to the country’s problems and as an ideological weapon against the reformers, socialists and communists.

1. Origin and characteristics slavery in North America.

The origin of slavery in North America is explained through the general process of the expansion of slavery from Africa to all the colonies of the New World, which could not be rapidly colonized and economically exploited without the participation of black slaves. Slavery in the British territories (North America) presented a paradox because the law took into account the welfare of enslaved servants, but at the same time there was a rigorous restriction on manumission. The question of the rules on manumission was “the most important distinction between the legal situation of the slave in territories under British rule and in Latin America”¹⁷.

North American slavery can be labeled, according to David: “as a slavery that served as a labor force for plantations (large estates) and commodity crops”. Although it presents characteristics such as having a wide and dispersed land tenure, the existence of relatively small

16 David B. Davis: *Slavery*, p. 122

17 D.B. Davis: *Ob Cit.*, p. 128.

production units scattered over a huge space, and the advantage for the slaves of living close to the white families, which allowed some relationship between them.

Finally, it is stated that the black slave in North America did not develop a sense of massive solidarity, an essential factor for rebellion, but this does not mean (says the author) that the slave in North America “was less oppressed than those in other regions, only that there were different forms of oppression”¹⁸.

As a preliminary conclusion, the following can be advanced: This thesis of Davis has important similarities with Stamp’s view, especially when both critically evaluate the typical plantation in the southern states of North America. In general, the more up-to-date analysis of these two historians contrasts with the views - old-style and unbiased - of U.B. Phillips.

• **Part B.- Herbert Klein: Slavery in the Americas.**

Different from all the preceding writings, the study presented by Klein is strictly a comparative study on slavery, not only in its title but also in its content: It consists of a series of analyses with respect to Cuba and the Virginia slave experience. Among the aspects examined are the legal structure, the black slave and the churches (Anglican and Catholic), the economy, and the assimilation of blacks into society.

According to the author, the two systems of slavery studied, that of Cuba (then a Spanish colony) and that of Virginia in the United States of America, had profound differences and also had a strong influence on the characteristics of those societies even after slavery was abolished.

Slavery in Virginia “developed a complete caste system, which essentially reinforced the slave system at all levels”¹⁹. Klein believes that whites in Virginia tried to keep the slave system alive (even though it was supposedly no longer lucrative) because it was an avenue for maintaining white dominance. Furthermore, it is argued that the strength of the caste system allowed it to survive after the abolition of slavery. Examples of this social scheme are the system of racial segregation and the rules or normative system on the color of people from the slave era, which classified mulattos as blacks. On the other hand, slavery in Cuba did not stimulate the development of a “caste” system that survived after the abolition of slavery.

The reasons given as causes are the following: The landowners who owned the plantations progressively eliminated the slave system when they realized that the contracted free workers (Europeans, Yucatan Indians and Chinese “Coolies”) turned out to be cheaper workers than their black slaves. Other reasons were technological changes in the sugar industry, the war of independence on the island, and the political decision taken by the Spanish government to abolish slavery in 1886.

18 Ibidem: p. 131

19 Herbert S. Klein: Slavery in the Americas, p. 254.

The consequence of this gradual process of abolition was a tripartite color system, in which whites, mulattos and blacks coexisted without major racial conflicts.

A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Some of Klein's ideas can be discarded, especially his point of view about the uneconomic nature of slavery in Virginia and the causes of the crisis of the Cuban slave system. First of all, it must be said that this situation where a non-lucrative slave economy supposedly existed in Virginia was not true, as authors such as Genovese have shown. The whites of Virginia kept the "peculiar institution" in force because it allowed the large landowners (the planters) to live as feudal lords in their castles, the rest was only ideology to justify the exploitation of slaves despite their terrible fear of blacks.

Secondly, it can be argued that the determining cause of the crisis of the Cuban slave system was not pointed out by the author. In my opinion, Cuban slavery could not renovate the number of slave laborers adequately because the abolitionist policy of England, and later of the United States of America, made the traffic very difficult, therefore, the prices of slaves became much higher than the costs of free laborers.

CHAPTER III

THE MARXIST ANALYST: EUGENE D. GENOVESE

Part A. Theoretical Basis

Eugene Genovese, among the historians analyzed in this essay, is the only author with an evident identification with the Marxist vision. His use of philosophical categories such as contradictions, ideology, fetishism of the commodity, etc. - as well as his training in the field of political economy also comes from Marxism. As an example of the above we can cite the following: "Capitalism has absorbed and also stimulated various pre-capitalist formations such as slavery, serfdom, and oriental state enterprises"²⁰. The latter is what Marx called the "Asiatic Mode of Production". The above idea shows the successive "modes of production" and what Marx defined as the "Law of the uneven and combined development of capitalism". The extensive use of Marxist categories, but mainly his approach aimed at understanding the totality of the problem or its overall structure is evidence of his Marxist theoretical foundation.

20 E. D. Genovese: *The Political Economy of Slavery*, p. 19.

Part B. Slavery and the Southern Economy, Society and Civilization.

1. Capitalist and Pre-capitalist Economics

Genovese openly disagreed with the thesis that sustained the supposed existence of a system of plantation capitalism. He said that “the slave economy developed from within and in a certain sense was exploited by the capitalist world market, , slavery developed visible capitalist characteristics, such as the use of banking, trade and credit”²¹.

As mentioned above, the author agrees with Karl Marx that capitalism absorbs or combines other modes of production without this meaning that the incorporated system becomes capitalist.

Obviously, the southern economy developed in an atypical way: it was a slave economy in a capitalist context. Among the pre-capitalist aspects that can be observed were the low productivity of southern agriculture and the backwardness of industry in that region. The aforementioned characteristic of agriculture was due to the low productivity of its labor force, the unscientific methods of cultivation (lack of fertilizers and machinery); all due to the low level of capital investment because most of it was spent buying and maintaining slaves.

The notable backwardness of industry in the South was the consequence of some barriers raised by the slave system. Industrialization was not possible because “the rural majority was composed of slaves, modest farmers producing at subsistence level and poor whites”²². All of them lived in poverty and had insufficient capacity as consumers of goods.

The hostility of agrarianism that existed in the South against industry and urbanization, and especially against the manufacturing system, cannot be explained without the ideological leadership of the great slave masters. In short, the slave plantation was the center of the Southern economy, even though it had some capitalist elements such as a banking system, commerce and industry; but mainly, strong links with the capitalist world market.

2. Southern Society and Civilization

The peculiar character of the southern way of life was determined by this social and economic context. It is accepted that this provided the basis for that social order. According to Genovese, hegemony was held by the lords, the masters who owned large plantations, including land and slaves²³.

That social class had some curious attributes as a ruling group with social hegemony. Their aristocratic tradition and ideology were important factors in contributing to the economic

21 E.D. Genovese: *Ob. Cit.*, p. 19.

22 *Ibidem*: p. 162

23 See the opposite idea in Stamp's work, p.30.

backwardness of the southern states. Also the paternalistic mentality and their commanding habits were typical elements that made the slave masters fight in defense of their old heritage.

Moreover, it is conceivable that Southerners did not abolish slavery voluntarily because it was more than a source of laborers; it also gave them political hegemony and aristocratic status.

The society formed in the “Old South” has been considered an irrational society by many authors, but most of its irrational elements were only irrational in capitalist terms. The author gives many examples of these so-called irrationalities, such as the very luxurious lifestyle of the great slaveholders in the Old South.

It can be added that the South developed “a special civilization structured on the master-slave relationship”²⁴. That strange model looked like an agrarianism that also presented a strong sense of independence and uniqueness.

Finally, as a preliminary conclusion we would like to consider some ideas and thus advance a judgment:

First of all, it is evident that the views put forward by Genovese in his book on the, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, represented the first step in the development of a new approach to slavery an approach based on Marxism. His analysis of slavery has the typical touch of someone who knows Historical Materialism well and applies it creatively, but without abandoning orthodoxy altogether.

The author studied slavery as a component of a larger issue: the characteristics of the economy, society, culture and government of the southern part of the United States of America. Their study also shows the relationship between those characteristics, some aspects visible in the northern states and the world capitalist market.

CONCLUSIONS:

The authors and their ideas analyzed in this essay could be grouped according to different criteria and consequently give rise to different sections.

Considering their positions, in general, none of them tries to openly justify the existence of slavery in the “Old South” in the pre-Civil War period. But one of them, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, made a subtle defense of the “Peculiar Institution,” slavery. For that reason, among those of that group, he can be considered as part of the “pro-slavery writers” separate from the others, the “anti-slavery writers”, that is, the objective and scientifically rigorous researchers such as Stampp, Davis, Klein and Genovese.

24 E.D. Genovese: Op. cit., p. 35.

On the other hand, if we consider the influence of Marx's thought on the writer and his approach to the issue of slavery as a fundamental element or aspect of the totality that includes economy, society, culture and government, only Eugene D. Genovese can be included in this limited group, because the other writers have opposite characteristics.

Although Kenneth M. Stampp and other writers acknowledged the serious research profile, pioneering status and general quality of Phillips' work, they also harshly criticized his theses. We would say that Stampp's complete book, *The Peculiar Institution*, was a refined reply to the renowned researcher, but the consequence was that he chained his argumentation to Phillips' approaches. In my opinion, Stampp became a prisoner of the strategy used by Phillips in his work. Furthermore, Elkins²⁵ claimed that the scheme used by Stampp and Phillips has a more remote origin, the work of James Ford Rhodes.

Davis and Stampp agreed on one important point: both said that slavery in the South had characteristics such as dispersed, predominance small production units, a majority of small farmers, many without owning slaves of their own.

This purely quantitative criterion is rejected (in my opinion) by the judgment of Genovese who analyzed the problem considering the qualitative and for that reason he concluded in an opinion opposite. Genovese asserted that the large slaveholders held hegemony in Southern society. I am not in a position to dispute the accuracy of the figures presented by Davis and Stampp, but I venture that the interpretation they made was not correct.

The research conducted by Phillips, Stampp, Davis and Klein has one particularity. It is purely descriptive. When we say this, we mean that these authors went no further than to offer an explanation of the origin and characteristic of slavery. They did not try to understand that slavery was a mode of production that was imposed, or whether it was somehow related to other economic-social systems and structures.

In my opinion, Genovese's essays, even if they were not as extensive and detailed as large books, answered the most important questions, since they were organized according to the principles of Historical Materialism, which allowed the author to avoid getting lost in the forest of details.

Finally, we conclude that each of these authors has made contributions to knowledge about slavery by taking different paths, the paths that each believed to be correct. And additionally showed his reasons for doing so, overtly or subtly.

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