José Miguel López García, *La esclavitud a finales del antiguo régimen. Madrid, 1701-1837. De moros de presa a negros de nación*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2020, pp. 214

José Miguel López García, associate professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, presents a work which, while part of the well-

[2] E. Hobsbawm, "Historians and Economists", I-II, in Idem, *On History*, The New Press, New York, 1997, pp. 94-123.
[3] W. Kula, *Théorie économique du système féodal: pour un modèle de l'économie polonaise 16e-18e siècles*, École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris and the Hague, 1970.

established line of studies concerning slavery in the Early Modern Period, also introduces important new elements with regard to the chronological period treated (the end of the *ancien régime*) and the "where" (Madrid). In fact, López García introduces his study with the sale of a black slave in Madrid in 1765. This person, sold like any other commodity, was a human being, condemned – as Orlando Patterson observes – to social death, that is, the lack of any right over his own person. He was an outcast, and, like many slaves of the time, he could have an "S" on one cheek and an "I" (or a nail) on the other, perhaps signifying the Spanish word *esclavo* or, as Sebastián de Covarrubias asserts, *Sine Iure*.

Although the 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, condemned slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity, López García underlines that the plagues of slavery and racism still strike tens of millions of people to this very day. Precisely for this reason, the author analyzes the last period in which slavery was absolutely legal and structural in the Catholic Monarchy: from the reign of Philip V, the main beneficiary of the slave trade within his empire, until 1837, when the *Cortes* declared slavery illegal both in the Iberian Peninsula and in the Balearic and Canary Islands. Another element of interest is the origin of these slaves: if in the Early Modern Period they were mostly Muslims from the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb (*moros de presa*), in the period covered by this book they came mainly from western Africa and Spanish America, that is to say from Atlantic territories. The Spanish élites called these slaves *negros de nación*.

In the first chapter the author gives us a sweeping historical overview of slavery not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but globally. An analysis of the Greco-Roman world is followed by detailed treatment of slavery during the Middle Ages, with a focus on Spain. Between 850 and 886, Emir Muhammad ben Abd al Rahmman founded the city of Mayrit, Madrid. The historical record attests to the employment of slaves in Madrid both in the domestic sphere and in agriculture and handicrafts. Beyond this clearly Muslim city, slaves continued to be abundantly used in the Christian world. Following the *Reconquista* of the central territories of the Iberian Peninsula, the Castilian monarchy began to define and regulate slavery starting out from Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. Thus, already in the 1260s, the *Siete Partidas* provided an apparatus regulating the institution of slavery and laid down that enslavement was permitted in three cases: non-Christian prisoners of war, children of slave mothers, and voluntary servitude to pay off a debt. Slaves, however, also had the right to obtain freedom: through direct manumission by the master in a testamentary disposition;

through meritorious acts of a social nature, such as the denunciation of traitors, murderers and counterfeiters to the authorities; by payment of a sum of money, the price of freedom, which in the Spanish world was known as *coartación*. In any case, at the end of the Middle Ages, slavery in Madrid, as well as in other territories of the peninsula, such as Aragon and Valencia, was mostly urban and centered on domestic service, and most of the slaves were Muslims captured in raids on Algiers, Tunis and Morocco or in naval battles against Ottoman galleys. This situation changed with transoceanic expansion and the huge infusion of Black Africans. In fact, between the 16th and 19th centuries, over 12 million Africans were transported to the New World – the largest forced migration in history. The companies of *asentistas* obtained from the monarchy the monopoly on the ever-expanding slave trade, while Madrid, seat of the Spanish court from 1561, became one of the main slave cities of the Iberian Peninsula. In fact, as the number of nobles, clergy and bankers grew, so did the number of slaves. The sale of slaves took place in various locations: from the arcades of the Alcazár, to the Monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial, to the parishes. During the seventeenth century the population continued to grow and resort was had to so-called *in conditione* or *sub conditione* baptisms. A provision of the *Sala de Alcaldes* of 1601 barred unbaptized slaves from the court of the King of Spain. The above-mentioned baptisms were intended to insert slaves into a hegemonic structure modeled on the patron-client relationship, with the aim of improving their acculturation and living conditions through integration into the basic cell of society of the *ancien régime* and thus facilitate their exploitation. In some cases, these baptisms took place *en masse*, as happened in 1670 in the Imperial College of the Jesuits, when 10 *morisco* slaves were baptized in the presence of ministers, grandees and the royal guard. Where did these slaves come from? In Madrid, more than half were *moros de presa*, that is, of Berber and Ottoman origin, captured in the Mediterranean; 30% were blacks from southern Africa, and some 20% came from Bosnia, Greece, or Hungary, territories subject to the Ottoman Empire.

In the second chapter, López García introduces us to Bourbon Madrid. His starting point is a document that certifies the presence of a black slave who came from West Africa, was bought in the Lisbon market and became the property of a Portuguese, one Mateo, and was then bought in Madrid by the Marquis Fuente Pelayo. In the mid-18th century, Madrid was the peninsula's principal pole of attraction for immigration, owing to the presence of the court and the élites. Slave labour was concentrated in the residences of the privileged class and the Royal House. Furthermore, in the heart of the city there were small buildings that belonged to Black African and Maghreb freedmen,

giving the city a multi-ethnic character. The abundant presence of slaves stemmed from the Bourbon policy of extracting profit from the slave trade: Philip V not only signed monopoly contracts with companies that carried on this trade, but he also entered the business himself. For example, in the concession granted to the Company of Guinea in 1701, the sovereigns of Spain and France participated as partners, each reserving 25% of the annual benefits. Enlightenment reformism campaigned to eliminate the role of foreigners in the slave trade, in favour of Spanish companies and ships: between 1701 and 1810 the Spanish-American colonies legally imported 578,600 African slaves, more than one and a half times more than in the two preceding centuries. During that time, Charles III became the largest slave owner in the Spanish Empire. At the height of his reign, the king's 9,500 slaves worked in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Chile; 10,000 worked on the fortifications of Havana and in the copper mines of Santiago de Cuba, and 1,500 worked in the Iberian Peninsula, specifically in the mines of Almadén and the arsenals of Cadiz, Ferrol and Cartagena. In Madrid itself, four slaves from the Casa de los Negros, educated and indoctrinated by the presbyter Don Miguel de Ignarra, were integrated into the staff of the *Real Cámara del Palacio Nuevo*, constituting the symbolic representation of the king's slaves inside the palace. The author estimates that around 6,000 domestic slaves worked in Madrid in the mid-18th century, and his extensive archival work enables him to calculate the age, sex, origin and phenotype of over 800 slaves who lived in Madrid between 1701 and 1837. López García shows that the élites, starting with the royal family, were the largest slave-holders.

The third chapter analyses the slave market in absolutist Madrid, starting from the interesting hypothesis that the Spanish slave market was not a capitalist market, i.e., matching supply and demand, but was actually pre-capitalist inasmuch as legislation of the absolutist State established how it was to function and how taxes were to be paid on the sale of slaves. No doubt other variables also came into play in setting the price of slaves, for example what Marx calls the "fetishism of use value". This explains the willingness of the masters to pay a high price for this type of commodity as a badge of social status. When the slaves, often victims of raids in the Mediterranean, were converted into inalienable goods, the master had the right to exploit their work for an unlimited time, but he also had the right to sell the man-commodity. And indeed, most of the slaves traded in Madrid had been purchased from commercial companies or individual *asentistas* operating in the markets of the Spanish Empire. The majority of these Madrid slaves were young adults who could be exploited for many years and were mostly used in domestic service. During the 17th century they

were mostly Turks and *moros de presa*, whereas in the 18th century 61% of them were registered as *negro* or *moreno*, that is to say Negro-Africans or Creoles born in Spain's American colonies. Although Madrid was a secondary market, there is no lack of evidence of the sale of slaves. Often the owners preferred to delegate the purchase to others, so as not to sully their hands with human trafficking. The Royal House, the high and low nobility, the knights of the military orders and the clergy made 87% of all the sales analysed by the author and 79.5% of the purchases. It is worth noting that the majority of slaves passed through the hands of at least three masters. The Plaza Mayor, the Puerta de Guadalajara, the Plaza de Santa Cruz were just some of the places where human beings were bought and sold. On average, women carried a higher price, owing to their higher productivity and their ability to bear children. Not all transactions involved sales and purchases, for on many occasions there was an exchange of slaves or even a gift of these human-goods. This practice is extensively documented in *ancien régime* Europe and is connected with a type of moral economy that is foreign to the logic of *homo economicus*. In Spain, a lengthy treatise originating in late scholasticism explained the exact importance of social bonds in which nobles, clerics and bureaucrats received slaves as gifts from other persons, an operation based on friendship and gratitude that served to cement clientelist ties and asymmetrical relationships.

In the fourth chapter, the author investigates slave rebellions and crimes committed by slaves. Since slavery in Madrid was chiefly domestic, its victims practiced individual modes of resistance. The punishments inflicted by the master often simply reinforced the slave's rebelliousness, making it all the harder for the master to correct the slave's deviant behaviour. López García focuses on the lives of some individual slaves, drawing on documentation preserved in the Archivo Histórico Nacional and on the *Libros de Gobierno de la Sala de Alcaldes*. Some slaves managed to build a personal life and, in rare instances, even to marry. Their attempts did not always succeed. In 1772, the slave Francisco Carlos de Borbón asked King Charles III for his consent to marry María Portolés. The request infuriated the king and was denied. Furthermore, to prevent an attempt at elopement, Francisco Carlos was assigned to Pedro Piccioli, an employee of the *Buen Retiro*, who was tasked with not letting him leave the gardens and keeping María Portolés from visiting him there. From that moment on, a special item appears in the accounts of the *Casa de los Negros* intended to cover the costs of the gardener and his prisoner, about 496 *reales* per month. Another interesting story is that of the architect Antonio Carlos de Borbón, also a slave of the monarch's family and a member of the Casa

de los Negros. He managed to marry and emancipate himself, but soon encountered economic problems. Unable to pay the rent on his apartment, which belonged to the convent of San Ildefonso de las Trinitarias Descalzas, he went into debt and asked for a loan from one Bonifacio García, who in exchange sought a job inside the royal palace. Antonio did not honour his commitment and Bonifacio denounced him. On May 18, 1767, Charles III ordered the magistrate to incarcerate him for six months. Not only. After his release from prison, Antonio Carlos de Borbón failed to win any commissions and lost the competition with another royal architect, the official of the Cuerpo de Ingenieros, Don Francisco Sabatini. The unfortunate Antonio and his wife could no longer improve their lot and eventually died in absolute misery, like most of the slaves of the *Casa de los Negros*.

Chapter five deals with the liberation of slaves. López García presents us with a *carta de libertad* certifying that one of the *negros* belonging to the counts de la Rivera, and whose name was Joaquín Xavier Armando de la Cámara, was freed by the widow and the eldest son of Don Francisco. The document explains the reason for this decision: the beneficiary had not only been baptized, but had also faithfully served his masters, as if he were a *catolico blanco y cristiano viejo*. In addition, this deed of charity would reduce the deceased count's time in purgatory, an aspect that reinforced the socio-religious usefulness of manumission. The author, taking into consideration the period 1701-1821, records 307 *cartas de ahorria* granted by slave masters. These free and charitable concessions sometimes convey heroic biographical profiles of the beneficiaries. In 1701, Ana Francisca de la Santísima Trinidad, a 40-year-old Turkish woman, was freed by the administrator of the *Hospital General y de la Pasión* because in the previous four years she had worked with special dedication for the institution's poor and, for this very reason, had suffered various illnesses. The same happened in 1763 with the black man Joseph Manuel, whose master, a resident of Havana, freed him for having devoted himself to the defence of the city, showing his worth and risking his life. At other times, masters freed their slaves through testamentary dispositions, and during the eighteenth century manumission sometimes took place because the very legitimacy of slavery was questioned. Masters were influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. Some also put forward religious reasons for granting freedom. On other occasions, release from slavery took place because the master wanted to avoid the costs of the slave's upkeep and, sometimes, slaves were able to gain freedom by paying their redemption price. Finally, the author investigates the case of *cimarrones*, fugitive slaves, who always represented a threat to the *paterfamilias*, upon whose authority society rested. Their capture was a matter of prime importance not only

for the masters, but also for the army and the *Sala de Alcaldes*, whose job was to maintain public order in the city. The author concludes the chapter with a look at slave burials, distinguishing different cases, such as, for example, the differences between baptized and unbaptized slaves and the problems related to the cost of funeral homes and possible burial in consecrated ground.

In the book's epilogue, the author outlines the fundamental stages of his research. Perhaps the most interesting point he makes is that slavery, although abolished *de jure*, is still present *de facto* in the main cities of Europe, including Madrid. This new slavery, or second slavery, is not very different from that of the *ancien regime*, seeing that in 2011 the Madrid public defender's office called the people suffering from this condition "invisible victims", reminiscent of the "social death" that Orlando Patterson discusses in his work.

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