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Robert C.-H. Shell

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#7186610 in Books Wesleyan 1994-12-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.50 x 9.50 x 1.75l, #File Name: 0819552739560 pages | File size: 40.Mb

Robert C.-H. Shell : Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 16521838 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 16521838:

The Dutch East India Company introduced the first slave into the Cape of Good Hope in 1653. In this historiography of Cape slavery, Shell examines the complex and highly stratified hierarchies that evolved in South Africa, and outlines how its multiracial system of slavery was distinct from the biracial system that arose in the New World. He argues that while frontier and class interests were significant factors in South Africa's racial and political philosophies, these influences were secondary manifestations of a more universal force, namely the family as the fundamental unit of subordination. He also explores the history of oceanic and domestic slave trades, sexual and gender relations within the slave hierarchy, religious and political identity among slaves, and the promises and realities of manumission.

From Library JournalAn outgrowth of the author's doctoral thesis, this work has no peer in terms of quality or depth of research. It does not focus on slavery as an end in itself but shows how the sex and age composition and cultural origins of the imported slave population at the Cape shaped the slave-holding households in domestic, cultural,

demographic, gender, and even emotional terms. The work also does an excellent job in comparing slavery at the Cape with slave systems elsewhere, so that this work is equally a contribution to the study of slavery in general. It will make required reading for any understanding of early Cape history and probably of general South African history as well. Paul H. Thomas, Hoover Inst. Lib., Stanford, Cal. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.