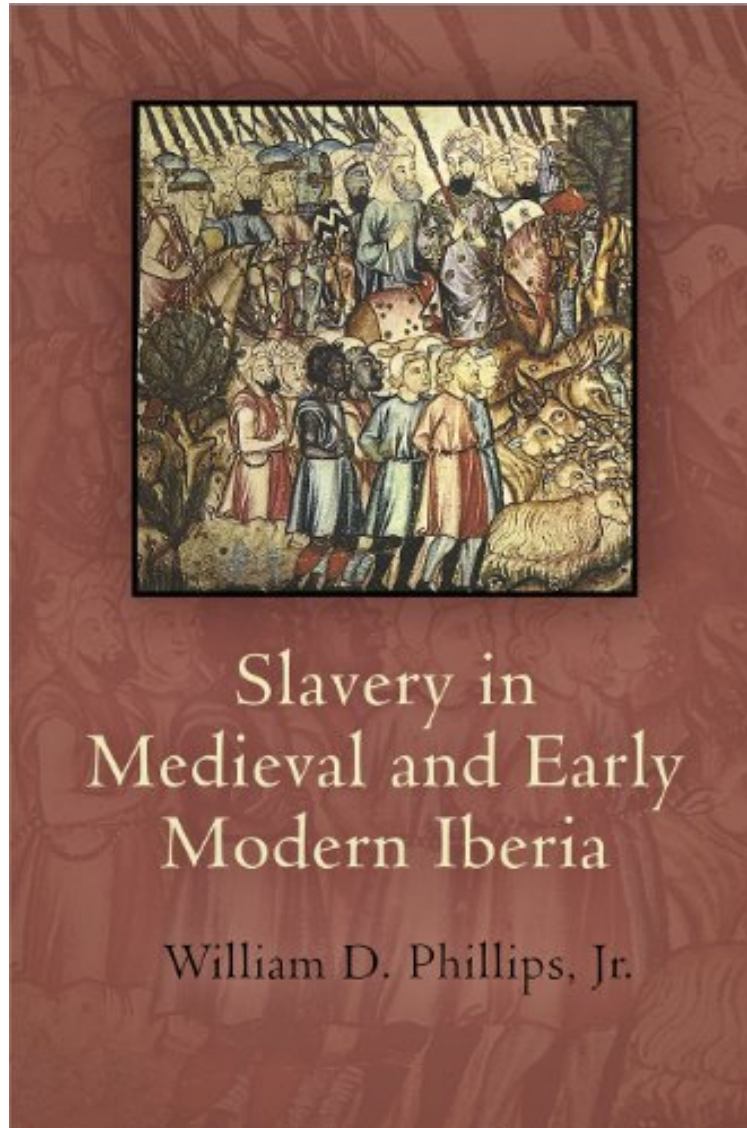


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Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (The Middle Ages Series)

William D. Phillips Jr.
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William D. Phillips Jr. : Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (The Middle Ages Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (The Middle Ages Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. or Seven Part Code describes a Castilian legal code first established during the reign of Alfonso the Great that lays out a liBy Tajae Pryce Systems of slavery have been present since the

beginning of recorded history. In the Iberian Peninsula, slavery was prominent and maintained under Muslim rule as well as under the governance of medieval Christian kingdoms and continued to be a structural component of Mediterranean society up until its eventual decline in the 19th century. Slavery, as a practice, traces its roots back to Greco-Roman societies where captives of war were turned into slaves and would eventually evolve into complex systems of social stratification, which would encompass not only social, but also economic and political implications as well. In this book, Phillips explores the history of slavery in Iberia by creating a synthesis of available surveys on the topic and referencing both archival records as well as contemporary scholarly literature. Historians attribute the noted boom period of a flourishing production of material on the study of Iberian slavery, spanning from the 1980s to the beginning of the 21st century, to the rise of the number of students pursuing advance degrees as well as the increased availability of production avenues. Phillips himself has written on the topic before in the 1980s and has now chosen to approach the subject with more focus on Spain and the Iberian Peninsula utilizing the vast amount of available research. In early Spain, three major avenues were commonplace in terms of one becoming a slave. Slaves were either captives of war, enemies of the ruling faith, or born into servitude by enslaved mothers. Cultural and societal variations existed; however, these methods would be the guidelines for the institution throughout its history. In some cases, slavery could be a punitive sentence for guilty offenders as was the case in the Visigothic kingdom where violent and public offenses carried mandatory enslavement sentences with the possibility of enslavement to the royal treasury or kingship. In the early modern period, convicts were subjected to enslavement fulfilling the roles of society too difficult to attract cheap or free labor such as the roles of galley slaves, miners, and menial public works. Evidence of the social and legal attitudes towards slavery can be shown through records of legal codes such as the Siete Partidas. The Siete Partidas, or Seven Part Code describes a Castilian legal code first established during the reign of Alfonso the Great that lays out a list of laws for the state. From this list of codes, historians have learned more about the life of a slave; Every slave is obliged to obey Not only is a slave under obligation to his master, but also to the wife and children of the latter (79). This is also where the practice of slavery by birth, captivity and treason is derived. It has also been observed that slavery in Spain and the surrounding states has always been a female dominant system. In all accounts from records stemming from Visigothic, Muslim or Christian society, women have always been the preferred gender for slaves. Women would also hold higher monetary value than their male counterparts primarily serving in domestic roles as well as being used as assistants in artisan shops and markets. With slave owners being in total control of their servants, it was often commonplace for female slaves to be coerced into concubinage or forced sexual relations. Although male slaves would also have been subjected to the sex trade, female slaves endured the most perilous of consequences such as unwanted pregnancies and unsupervised child bearing. Records of Spain under Muslim rule show the prevalence of concubinage on a mass, commonplace scale. Islamic tradition allowed free Muslim men to have up to four wives legally along with as many slave mistresses as he pleased. There were cases of Muslim men marrying slaves, whom they would have to have set free ceremoniously or by paying or being granted the permission of that slaves master, and would keep them confined to an isolated section of their homes, away from society. As for familial relations among slaves, permission to marry would have to be granted by ones owner. These instances of marriage among slaves were not very prominent as slaves lost their market value after marriage. In regards to attaining freedom, many slaves would resort to flight; either to their homelands or to carry out their lives in the underworld of their captive land. In Medieval Christian Spain, flight from enslavement or even the attempt to flee, was a punishable crime and labeled as theft of ones own person (123). Slaves who were caught attempted to flee would oftentimes be publically dragged through streets and hanged. Laws also existed in regards to those who aided a fleeing slave to have his ears cut off. These laws were barbaric, even for the time, especially in Christian Spain and are retroactively looked at by historians as a means to use fear to deter captives from attempting escape as well as freemen to assist them. The prevalence of escapees was so great, owners would often purchase a form of insurance on his slaves in the event of losing them and, as was the case in Barcelona in 1400 by a prominent slave owner Fransec Muntornes, agents would be hired to reclaim slaves who had fled captivity (124). Slaves from sub-Saharan Africa were obviously at a geographical loss when it came to the option of escaping to their homelands. There are also records of slaves who fled from ships and lived in hiding in the vast wilderness of the Americas. By the 15th century, the ethnic diversity of slaves in Spain over the ancient and Medieval periods would decline as sub-Saharan Africans became the dominant group of people involved in not only the slave trade in Iberia, but the rest of Europe as well. Estimated numbers of around 156,000 sub-Saharan Africans were imported into Europe and the Peninsula by the early 16th century, but the mass demand for slaves existed in the New World, The Americas. It was in the colonial Americas where more than 10 million Africans were transported to via the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Both the Spaniards and the Portuguese would shift to a forced labor population of Black Africans in the Americas and Brazil respectively. Labor in the newly acquired colonies was far too great and intensive to be done by the Europeans themselves and native populations of the indigenous people were withering away either to disease or by the initial attacks by the Europeans. Sub-Saharan slaves often came from civilizations that flourished in intensive agricultural practices and hard labor. The slave system would evolve, taking customs from Old World codes and adapt to commercialization of free labor that existed throughout the Western World. Demands for slaves would rise as demands for certain commodities such as sugar or

textiles would rise. This economic system led to what historians overall agree an even harsher system of slavery where the servants were first and foremost objects and commodities. This institution of slavery would continue in Spain and its vast colonies for centuries until gradual abolishment of the practice was attained in the 19th century. Phillips approach to this topic is done in the most effective way possible. He chose to delve into as much available literature on the subject as he could, while taking into account historical perspective and hindsight. He also recognizes that there is no black and white narrative in regards to slavery or the meaning of enslavement or freedom, nor can the multiple variations of slave systems be looked at as monolithic practices. The author gives examples of various societies and their practices in order to establish a background for their legal doctrines as well as their socio-economic traditions. The study of slavery is complicated and involves much more than a simple dichotomy between slave and free or slavery and freedom (5). The author is conscious of different cultures and various elements of society, but still manages to create a chronological account for Spanish slavery as a legal system and as a cultural element in a way that this book is fit for scholarly readers to utilize.

The enslaved population of medieval Iberia composed only a small percentage of the general populace at any given point, and slave labor was not essential to the regional economy during the period. Yet slaves were present in Iberia from the beginning of recorded history until the early modern era, and the regulations and norms for slavery and servitude shifted as time passed and kingdoms rose and fell. The Romans brought their imperially sanctioned forms of slavery to the Iberian peninsula, and these were adapted by successive Christian kingdoms during the Middle Ages. The Muslim conquest of Iberia introduced new ideas about slavery and effected an increase in slave trade. During the later Middle Ages and the early modern period, slave owners in Christian Spain and Portugal maintained slaves at home, frequently captives taken in wars and sea raids, and exported their slave systems to colonies across the Atlantic. Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia provides a magisterial survey of the many forms of bound labor in Iberia from ancient times to the decline of slavery in the eighteenth century. William D. Phillips, Jr., examines the pecuniary and legal terms of slavery from purchase to manumission. He pays particular attention to the conditions of life for the enslaved, which, in a religiously diverse society, differed greatly for Muslims and Christians as well as for men and women. This sweeping narrative will become the definitive account of slavery in a place and period that deeply influenced the forms of forced servitude that shaped the New World.

"The Iberian peninsula played a pivotal role in ushering in new systems of slavery in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. Engaging and clear, this book is the first comprehensive treatment of the topic and provides an entry into what it must have been like to be a slave in medieval Iberia." Teofilo Ruiz, University of California, Los Angeles "Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia provides a valuable overview of the institution of slavery in this region. Phillips should be commended for the breadth of his analysis and his ability to integrate and synthesize such a wide array of secondary works. . . . This work presents an excellent addition to the field that will be useful to scholars of European, Atlantic, African, and Latin American history." Sixteenth Century Journal About the Author William D. Phillips, Jr., is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Minnesota and author of *A Concise History of Spain*.