

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

University of Abd El Hamid Ibn Badis- Mostaganem

Faculty of Foreign Languages

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Slavery in Islam Between the Past and Present

Case Study the Arab World and Africa

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of Master in

Literature and interdisciplinary approaches

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Academic Year 2019-2020

Dedication

This humble work is dedicated to my precious parents, who, after Allah's aid, I give all the credit for what I have become and to what I have accomplished so far.

To my brothers and sisters.

And a special thanks to my friends and colleagues Oussama, Mohammed, Lotfi, Radia, and Ines. It has been a pleasure knowing you all, and having this experience with you. May Allah bless you with endless happiness wherever you go.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Mr Tegua Cherif, for his dedication and honesty. I cannot find words to express my thankfulness and gratitude to him, he is such a good man. In addition, I would like to thank all my teachers who taught me in this Master Field.

Abstract

The coming of Islam did not prohibit slavery due to several measures, instead, it tolerated it in a way that avoided bringing harm to the society and its economy, since the latter was based on slave trade at that time. In addition, Islam narrowed the acquisition of slavery into one source which is the source of war and multiplied the gates of emancipation in an attempt to eliminate slavery one day. Furthermore, Islam grew and became a large empire in a short time controlled by the followers of Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him. The Muslims reached Africa in the mid-7th century conquering the North, the West and parts of the East aiming to spread their faith, while acquiring slaves at the same time under the name of the Holy Wars. By the end of the 11th century the expansion of Islam in Africa stopped, and so did Holy Wars. Nevertheless, acquiring slaves never stopped, instead it thrived thanks to Muslim merchants and visitors who travelled across the sub-Saharan desert and explored the hinterlands. That resulted in the creation of trade routes and slave markets causing a large campaign called the Islamic slave trade that lasted for more than seven centuries, where huge number of slaves and concubines were transported to the Arab world. Moreover, the abolition of slavery in the 20th century never demolished it, in fact slavery still exists in the Arab world in the form of domestics services, where many Africans and especially Kenyans, who they were offered deceiving contracts and promised good jobs with tempting salaries, but in fact found themselves exploited and trapped into a modern slavery working for long hours and exposed to different kinds of abuse and humiliation. in addition, this slavery became online regulated and controlled by employers (modern-day slaveholders) and business men bypassing both local and international laws of modern slavery and human rights.

Key words:

- Slaves
- Islam
- Africa
- Islamic Slave Trade
- Arab World
- Domestic services
- Kenyans
- Modern Slavery

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **PBUH:** peace be upon him.
- **qtd:** quoted.
- **UNESCO:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- **UAE:** The United Arab Emirates.

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General Introduction

In recent days, Europeans were notorious with reviving the institution of slavery. The Atlantic Slave Trade made a big fuss over the world, in which the African blacks were squeezed shipped like sardines and transported to the Americas. The horrible conditions of this middle passage triggered the awareness of people all over the world and many narratives of former slaves describing unbearable atmosphere of this middle passage like the one of Olaudah Equiano or Frederick Douglass, contributed to unmask the malicious deeds of the Europeans. However, when Europeans first arrived on the coasts of West Africa in the 15th century and started trading with slaves, another big slave holder was already dominating the markets in the other parts of the continent. In addition, for more than seven centuries, from the mid-seventh century until the arrival of the Europeans, the Arab often named Islamic Slave Trade was thriving in Africa, in which millions of Africans were brought from their homeland to the Arab World. Because of this Trade many routes were created linking distant areas and facilitating transport. Nevertheless, the religion of Islam has most of the credit in creating this trade. Since, the Muslim Arabs, under the urge to spread their religion, conquered Africa like many other nearby areas raging Holy Wars and enslaving their hostages since Islam did not prohibit slavery. By the 11th century the official scramble of the Arabs for Africa reached its peak, therefore, Holy Wars were minimized. For this reason, the source of acquiring slaves has shifted to trade, in which many Muslim merchants and visitors started providing the Arab world with slaves and thus, various markets were created, and here where the Arab Slave trade thrived.

This leads one to raise the following questions:

- Why did Islam not prohibit Slavery?
- Despite the advent of Islam, why did Muslims in Africa continue trading slaves?
- Is such a practice still prevailing in modern Arab World?

As possible answers, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- Islam tried to protect the society from an economic decline.
- Perhaps the Holy Wars never ended.
- The Arab World receives thousands of African migrants where some of them are subjected to slavery.

In order to find answers for the abovementioned questions, this work has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter, titled Slavery in Islam, shows the relationship between slavery and Islam. The Holy Quran, which is the primary source of Islamic Law, never mentioned a clear statement prohibiting slavery, even though Islam is most renowned with its support and emphasise on equality and human rights. As a matter of fact, Islam regulated slavery and followed a special approach to tolerate it. The second chapter entails the four centuries' scramble of Islam for Africa. The mid-seventh century was the time Islam officially set up on Africa, from then on it spread gradually sweeping the whole North and encompassing some parts of the West and the East of Africa creating a large empire that had a huge influence on most of the continent. Finally, in the last chapter, one will focus on the nature of Slavery and the Slave Trade that linked the Arabs and Africa before and after the abolition of slavery.

Chapter One
Historical background of Slavery

Chapter One: Historical background of Slavery

Introduction

The concept of slavery was well known in history. It was a common sight in many different societies, inherited from a generation to another, and evolved along with human consciousness by embracing new forms and shapes while maintaining the same principles. The existence of slavery came upon two main reasons. One created by social classes, and the other for economic purposes. The complexity of human nature for life and survival and his instinctive passion to overhead, lead, and be on the top gave birth to the two concepts of superiority and inferiority. As a result, the phenomenon of slavery emerged. In addition, one cannot talk about civilizations without mentioning slavery, most of the great civilizations were built on the ruins of slavery, such as the Greek, Egyptian, and Western civilizations. The cheap often free labour offered by slaves helped the economy to grow, hence, the prosperity of a society and the rise of a civilization. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to shed the light on the position of Islam toward slavery.

1- Definition of Slavery

According to Collins Dictionary slavery is “the state or condition of being a slave; a civil relationship whereby one person has absolute power over another and controls his life, liberty, and fortune” (Slavery). Whereby, in his book *Disposable People*, Kevin Bales the professor of Contemporary Slavery in the school of Politics and International Relations gave the definition of contemporary slavery stating that it is “The complete control of a person, for economic exploitation, by violence, or the threat of violence” (qtd. In Bell 35). This means that slavery is a condition of which one person is owned by another and considered in law as a property that was deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by a free person. However, despite the differences between the institutions of slavery throughout time, there is a general agreement among historians, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, and others who study slavery that a slave is considered as property that could be bought and sold, therefore he was irresponsible for his actions and had fewer rights than his owner. In addition, a slave has been deprived from the privilege of kinship in the law of slavery, in which he had no relatives to stand by his side and defend his rights, thus he was seen as an outsider and a socially dead person. Besides, the slaves’ choices were limited especially in terms of occupation and sexual partner (Hellie).

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2- Evolution of Slavery throughout History

One can trace back the roots of slavery to 6800 B.C. The world's first city-state emerges in Mesopotamia. Land ownership and the early stages of technology brought war—in which enemies were captured and forced to work (Slavery in History). From then on, slavery evolved through time until the year of 1641 that witnessed the legalization of slavery as an institution in a British colony in America called Massachusetts. Then, eventually, the world put an end to the crawling of slavery after several opposed campaigns that led to its abolition in the 19th century.

The description of slavery differs from one society, religion, and civilization to another. Slavery evolved through time till it became an essential pillar in every great civilization. The history of slavery can be divided into two phases, ancient history and modern history. At first slavery was not a common practice among hunter-gatherer societies, they collected food, just enough for themselves, and therefore, they could not afford one more mouth to feed. Hence, there was no economic advantage in owning slaves. Yet, when people started gathering and created cities and towns, more food and supplies were needed. The large farms and workshops made it possible to benefit from cheap labour, ushering the practice of slavery. Every great civilization used slavery and it was easy to be acquired. In the early days of slavery, wars were the main source to acquire slaves, most of enemies in captured towns were taken into slavery, the rest were killed. In addition, there were other ways to acquire slaves too. For instance, pirates offered their captives as slaves for sale, some criminals were sentenced to slavery, unpaid debts could bring an end to liberty and children of slaves also inherited the status of slaves. Under these conditions the access to slaves became easier and it encouraged slavery. The early societies related to slavery were the Babylon civilization as it was carved on their legal status the Code of Hammurabi¹ in the 18th century BC, however, the system used in slavery was not based on brutality and savagery. Surprisingly, slaves in Babylon were allowed to own properties, which would show how the so-called slaves could have a decent life. Unfortunately, such fair practice was not common in other societies such as the Greeks who were widely known for using forced labour as in Sparta and Athens. Later, the practice of slavery spread widely from European societies as the Romans and Germans to the Russian Empire passing down to the Mediterranean cities and Central East Africa and Arabia, where slavery and slave trade

¹ The Code of Hammurabi is a well-preserved Babylonian code of law of ancient Mesopotamia carved in a stone, dated to about 1754 BC

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thrived, causing in the creation of what one calls “Slave Society”; which is “*A society where the fundamental class conflict is based on the division of people into masters and slaves, with slaves being the dominant producing class, and ownership over this complete commodification of the human being controlled by masters*” (Encyclopaedia).

This paved the way for slavery to enter a new phase in its modern form in history. The new and disastrous chapter in the history of slavery begins with the arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa in the 15th century. In this period slaves witnessed unusual brutality and cruelty they never experienced before, especially with the discovery of the Americas where huge numbers of Africans were taken from their homeland Africa to be enslaved in colonies in the New World. Nonetheless, the real problem was not the huge number taken from Africa, but the way they were taken and enslaved. Africans were kidnapped and captured by their own people and sold to Europeans located on the coasts. They were chained and shipped like animals or worse, most of them died in the horrific middle passage due to diseases, hunger, and suffocating from the stench. Former slave Olaudah Equiano, described the horrors of the middle passage in his narratives saying that:

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocating us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs [large buckets for human waste], into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable (Equiano 51,52).

It was a nightmare for them to such an extent that many of them chose to die and threw themselves off-board. The worst was yet to come, when they finally arrived, the ones who survived somehow were cleaned and took to auctions and markets for sales. Slaves at that time were of great profit, large plantations and rich masters owned many of slaves as they could afford. They were forced to work in plantations for free in harsh conditions from sunrise to sunset with leftovers to eat and stables to sleep in. The whipping and beating became part of their daily life. They were seen as chattels more as soulless properties. The suffering of African slaves was unbearable. Although the Europeans’ merciless was one of

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its kind, slavery in Africa and other East regions was different from the West. Life was easier for slaves apart from the west and Europe.

One of the justifications used to keep the practice of slavery was religion, which had a great impact on societies, and had the ability to promote and neglect slavery.

3- Slavery in Islam

As it was explained above, slavery is an ancient human dilemma that encompassed all civilizations in the world, it was produced by the norm of conflict, throughout history, in the absence of any moral or divine law that can control (the right of power), put an end to it, or provide it with a humanitarian moral dimension that treats it. And the tracker of the history of ancient human civilizations, Babylonian, Pharaonic, Persian, Greek, Roman, Indian, and others will be horrified by their complicity in practising slavery on a large scale without any restrictions, as an ethical business and a human development for them. On the shoulders of slaves, the Babylonians built the Hanging Gardens, the Pharaohs had the Pyramids built, the Indians built temples and the Chinese built the Great Wall, until slavery became a customary system, and a tool for capital development (فخر الدين) .

3.1. Meaning of Slavery in Islam

The other major religions, Judaism and Christianity dealt with slavery in a supportive way. The Jews based their political and religious thought on the theory of “the chosen people” and the right to enslave others, then Christianity came and approved slavery, and recommended the slaves to be patient with slavery and content with it (فخر الدين). Out of more than three quarters of a million words in the Bible, Christian slaveholders—and, if asked, most slaveholders would have defined themselves as Christian—had two favourite texts, one from the beginning of the Old Testament¹ and the other from the end of the New Testament². In the words of the King James Bible³, which was the version then current, these were, first, Genesis IX, 18–27: “..... *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan*

¹ The Old Testament is the first section of the Bible (the Holy Book of Christianity), and it is very similar to the Hebrew Bible, which has origins in the ancient religion of Judaism

² New Testament, second, later, and smaller of the two major divisions of the Christian Bible, and the portion that is canonical (authoritative) only to Christianity.

³ the King James Bible or simply the Authorized Version, is an English translation of the Christian Bible for the Church of England, was commissioned in 1604 and completed as well as published in 1611 under the sponsorship of James VI and I

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shall be his servant.....” (Rae). This entails that the black people are forever doomed into slavery from the ancient time, and that is what the white Christian slaveholders used to justify enslaving the blacks.

However, Islam appeared and slavery was already rooted in the pre-Islamic era, as was prevalent among other people. To know if it was approved by Islam, one must first observe the nature of time and space that Islam appeared in. since the nature of the region helped the enlargement of the scope of slavery in the east more than of the west. And since the origin of Islam was in Arab peninsula, it is not difficult to determine what was the degree of slavery among the people of this region and their passion for it. And besides that the economy on which the Arab Peninsula was dependent on at that time was trade, and with the absence or shortage of industrial and agricultural materials at that time, the most important and profitable business they were relying on was slave trade, and merchants were professionals in this field. On the other hand, the Prophet (PBUH), met armed resistance and other threats and harassments at the beginning of His message and the spread of Islam, and His divine mission to bring people to light and lead them to the right path. The prohibition of a common practice that lasted for centuries and generations would, therefore, increase revolutionary thoughts against Islam which would explain why Islam did not prohibit slavery at once. However, it did not accept it as well, since it conflicts with its principles and morals. For that, Islam worked on draining sources of slavery, reducing its negative impact, and narrowing it in a way that is different from those days.

It is agreed now that slavery was already practised in the birthplace of Islam, which means that the latter did not create slavery. The Muslim scholar Sheikh Muhammad Metwalli al-Sha'rawi, in one of his speeches concerning the Quran exegesis, gave a clear explanation on how Islam tolerated slavery. He said that slavery was already rooted in the Arabs world, when Islam came, it was an essential pillar of the economy of this country, as it was the case in other countries. So Islam did not launch slavery, but legislated emancipation (الرق في الاسلام).

3.2. Sources of Slavery in Islam

Sources of slavery in the world before Islam were diverse and varied, such as, lust for slavery in wars, poverty and debt, serious crimes like stealing and murder, working and living in a land, kidnaping and captivity, insulting nobles and high class people, and many other sources that are considered as a justification for depriving a person of his freedom,

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dehumanizing him, and making him a humiliated slave. The treatment of slaves in the Rome, Persia, India, China, Greece and other countries was cruel and brutal, their humanity was wasted, dignity violated, and their responsibilities at work were heavy, even though it may differ from one country to another, a little or more in the extent of its cruelty and ugliness (علوان 11،12). Sheikh Sha'rawi also added that sources of slavery were many, while there was one outlet for emancipation, which is the will of the master to emancipate his slave, and that was so rare to happen. So when Islam came he united the varied sources under one legitimate source and multiplied the outlet into many solutions. The only sources left is the legitimate war and eliminate all other sources. This deed means only one thing, which is that Islam is supporting emancipation.

In addition, Islam drained all the old sources of slavery in the Arab Peninsula and other countries, and it could prohibit slavery definitively with a clear statement like bribery or alcohol, but it did not, because of the source of war that kept flowing everywhere, and have been used by many societies and countries. And Islam actually did not cancel this source of war completely for several measures, most importantly are universal, political, psychological, and legislative.

First, the principle of reciprocity, which is a universal warfare principle, in which when one side takes captives the other one should do the same in a wise and strategic act. In addition, in comparison between taking captives and killing them, Islam preferred to keep captives instead of killing them as a humanitarian act, unless they became a threat to Muslims.

Second, Islam gave the authority to the Imam or Muslims' leader to choose to free the captives, to keep them as slaves, or to kill them. It depended on the deep and wide political view of the leader that he thinks he should treat the captives upon, and, usually, the peaceful, necessary and harmless decision is made in this situation.

Third, Islam urged Muslims to treat slaves with kindness and good behaviour, until the slave tastes the joy of dignity, feel his existence as a human being, and embrace the characteristic of a free man. Therefore, this would free him from the inside so that when he would ask for his freedom, Islam would guarantee it. Hence this leads to his readiness, psychologically and mentally to be a free man to enjoy full freedom.

Finally, the ending of slavery in Islam, as it was explained before, was not a direct verdict, but with gradual legislation that would eventually bring an end to it without causing

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crisis and chaos in the society, since the economic system at that time was based on slavery. thus, the immediate elimination or change of system would force the society to fall into a great depression (علوان 77:69).

3.3. The Treatment of Slaves in Islam

The aim of Islam was to free slaves from the inside by preparing their minds and souls for freedom, so that when they became free they can survive and depend on themselves, since a quick change in situations from enslavement to freedom would not fully free slaves, and the American experiment of emancipating slaves by “Abraham Lincoln”¹ is the best proof to that, in which The slaves freed by Lincoln could not tolerate liberty and they came back kneeling to their masters because their minds were still chained. Therefore, Islam regulated the life of slaves under Muslim control by a set of rules that shows how they should be treated in this condition. Sheikh al-Sha’rawi summarized the treatment of slaves in the period of their bondage saying that if there is no reason to emancipate a slave and the master does not want to set him free, he is then obliged to treat him as narrated Al-Ma'rur stating that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said.:

... Your slaves are your brothers and Allah has put them under your command. So whoever has a brother under his command should feed him of what he eats and dress him of what he wears. Do not ask them (slaves) to do things beyond their capacity (power) and if you do so, then help them (Belief).

So if a slave can eat what his master eats and wear what his master wears, and if he cannot work properly due to disease, injury, or other constrains, his master should then help him, so, the so called slaves have every right not to ask for freedom. Therefore, a Muslim could then keep a slave under the condition of considering him as his equal, and his slave only. Thus, the slave of Muslim is considered free for other Muslims (الرق في الإسلام).

3.4. Emancipation in Islam

It has been said that Islam unified the sources of slavery under one source and multiply its outlets, in which it encouraged Muslims to emancipate their slaves by a set of legislations, and approaches, namely by enticement, penance, writing, state guarantee, mother of a child, and unjust beating (علوان 43-64).

¹ Abraham Lincoln was an American statesman and lawyer who served as the 16th president of the United States

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First, Emancipation with enticement which is the emancipation from the side of the masters by freeing their slaves in order to gain Allah's blessing, and to be rewarded with Paradise in the afterlife. As Abu Umamah reported: The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

Whenever a Muslim man emancipates a Muslim man, he will be his freedom from Hellfire; he will be rewarded for every limb of his in equal measure. Whenever a Muslim man emancipates two Muslim women, they will be his freedom from Hellfire; he will be rewarded for every limb of theirs in equal measure. Whenever a Muslim woman emancipates a Muslim woman, she will be her freedom from Hellfire; she will be rewarded for every limb of hers in equal measure (Abu Amina).

This entails that giving full freedom to the slave would grant protection from hellfire, hence many Muslims accepted the emancipation of slaves, foremost among whom was the Prophet Muhammad.

Then, emancipation for penance, in which the Holy Quran had, on many occasions, recommended Muslims to free their slaves as a compensation for violations and transgressions, such as accidental killing, perjury, or eating during the days of Ramadan, and many other wrong deeds. For instance, Allah says in the Quran: "...*Anyone who kills a believer by error must set free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the victim's family...*" (Surrat An-Nisa, V 92).

Next, Emancipation by writing, which is giving a slave's freedom whenever he asks for it in return for a sum of money they agree on, and the master has to accept his demand for freedom if he thinks he is a good person and that he will not cause harm while he is free. Allah says: "...*If any of your servants wish to be freed, grant them their wish, if you recognize some good in them...*" (Surrat An-Nur, V 33).

Furthermore, emancipation by state guarantee, in which Islam made a special expanse to free slaves from the money of almsgiving. History relates that in the ages of Caliphs¹, the surplus of money from Muslims' treasury were used to buy slaves then free them. Allah says in the Quran: "*Charities are for the poor, and the destitute, and those who administer them, and for reconciling hearts, and for freeing slaves, and for those in debt, and in the path of*

¹ Caliph, is a person considered a politico-religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire ummah (Muslim community), hence, a caliphate is an Islamic state under the leadership of an Islamic steward with the title of caliph.

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God, and for the traveller in need—an obligation from God. God is All-Knowing, Most Wise”
(Surrat al-Tawba V60).

Also, there is Emancipation by the mother of a child, which is a great means to honour the woman and to free female slaves. When a woman became a slave to a Muslim, he was allowed to enjoy her in their sexual intercourse as he did to his wives. When she gave birth to a child, he became free. As a result, her master was not allowed to sell her and she could not be inherited. Both the woman and her child could inherit from him his name, wealth and everything else like his wives and their children. Otherwise, if a slave or another man married her, her children became slaves.

Finally, Emancipation by unjust beating, which means that Muslims were not allowed to brutally beat their slaves, since. As a matter of fact, if a Muslim beat his slave or slapped him on the face, then he must set him free as a penance. Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari reported:

When I was beating my servant, I heard a voice behind me (saying): Abu Mas'ud, bear in mind Allah has more dominance over you than you have upon him. I turned and (found him) to be Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him). I said: Allah's Messenger, I set him free for the sake of Allah. Thereupon he said: Had you not done that, (the gates of) Hell would have opened for you, or the fire would have burnt you (The Book of Oaths).

This shows that Islam emphasised on the good relationship between the Muslim and his slaves.

conclusion

In short, it is understood that the intention of Islam was to free slaves, and for a necessity, made war the only source to acquire them.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, his followers succeeded him and continued spreading his message. Through this long period of succession, Islam's purpose to free slave has been forgotten, especially when it became a large empire, in which the expansion in slaves increased with the expansion of the empire. However, Muslims witnessed a unique acquisition of slaves after their conquest in the African continent where a special source of slaves thrived. In the next chapter, the way Muslims conquered Africa and the parts they covered will be discussed.

Chapter Two
The Spread of Islam in Africa

Chapter two The Spread of Islam in Africa

Introduction

The relationship between the Arabs and Africans seems to be an old one. Africa was already known to the Arabs before the coming of Islam due to trade and traveling, beside the factor of the short distance that separates the two continents of Africa and Asia. Islam reached Africa through two gateways, the north and the east. They are connected by the land of Egypt from the north and by the water of the Red Sea from the eastern area. The carriers of Islam navigated across vast empty spaces, the water of the red sea and the Indian ocean, and the Sahara Desert, which they were often considered as barriers and people needed navigation skills to move through. These empty spaces helped the influence of religion and culture. Whereas, densely populated lands were slowed down the infiltration of religion and culture. Although it was difficult back then to cross to another unknown continent, history witnessed the presence of people from African origins living among the Arabs. The Arabs narratives tells much about how Africans were intermingled in their community. Not necessary ordinary slaves, in fact, some of them were famous like Antarah ibn Shaddad ¹, the seven crows of Arabs², Wahshi ibn Harb³, and Bilal the famous muezzin (caller for prayer) at the time of prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him. This diversity was resulted due to the fact that Mecca was a famous trading center in the Arab peninsula. This brings us to a conclusion that the main elements that caused the mixture of races at that time were travels by land and sea and trading connections. Therefore, in this chapter one will try to answer the questions of, how and where Islam spread in Africa? and to which extent it affected the African people?

1- First and Unofficial Contact (614)

The first appearance of Islam in Africa was in Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia). In the face of torture, persecution, and the inability of Muslims to protect themselves, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) referred to His followers by emigration to Abyssinia, saying to them: “If you go out to the land of Abyssinia, then there is a king that no one is oppressed

¹ Antarah ibn Shaddad al-Absi (525–615 B.C.), was a pre-Islamic Arab knight and poet, who was born in Arabia to an Arab father and an Ethiopian slave mother.

² The seven crows of Arab, was a name given to a group of earl Arabic poets who were African or partly African parentage

³ Wahshi ibn Harb, was a slave of Ehiopian origins He is best known for killing a leading Muslim fighter, Hamza ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib, Muhammad's uncle, as an exchange for his freedom

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within his land and it is a land of truth so that God will pull you out of this dilemma” (qtd. In مجاهد 6٠5).

Furthermore, Mujahid said that the Muslims went to it for fear of sedition and desertion for their religion, and it was the first migration in Islam. The migration to Abyssinia was a two times journey. Muslims first arrived around the year 614 the first time in *Rajab*¹ of the fifth year after the prophetic mission, and it returned in *Shawwal*² of the same year. She said that the number of Muslims immigrated was 11 men and 4 women on a narration, ten men and three women on another account, whom left Mecca running from the prosecution of Qurayshes³, until they ended up at a small port on the shore of the Red Sea, called *Shaybah*, and Allah prepared for them two trading ships to carry them at the time of their arrival. They were taken to the land of Abyssinia with half a dinar, and Quraysh followed their footsteps to the dead end of the shores.

Abyssinia was already known to the people of Mecca, that they had a trading history with it, and its markets were attractive and of great profit for the Meccan merchants. The people of Mecca had a special place in the hearts of Abyssinians, in which they were considered as (the people of God) who enjoyed divine protection. Also, the Ethiopians embraced Christianity, which is a religion based on monotheism. For this reason and others, the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) chose Abyssinia to be an immigration destination for Muslims, where they would be well treated by the Ethiopians, though, they did not stay for more than three months, in which they returned to Mecca after they heard of the abstention of Quraysh on hurting Muslims and intimidating them.

However, Mujahid continues, on their arrival they found that Quraysh had continued to torture and prosecute the Muslims, so some of them returned to Abyssinia with other Muslims, and that was the second emigration to Abyssinia. The latter was not at once, but in successive waves that intensified during the siege of Quraysh and their boycott of the Prophet (PBUH) and his followers. The number of Muslims in Abyssinia was completed this time to 82 in most narrations, and 103 in total in others, 78 men, 17 women and 8 children, led by Ja'far ibn Abi Talib⁴ (مجاهد 6٠5).

¹ Rajab, is the 7th month of the lunar based Islamic calendar

² Shawwal, is the tenth month of the lunar based Islamic calendar.

³ The Quraysh are a mercantile Arab tribe that historically inhabited and controlled Mecca and its Ka'aba.

⁴ Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, was a companion of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and an older brother of Ali

Chapter two The Spread of Islam in Africa

Very soon after the advent of Islam, the Muslims found themselves commanding a very large empire. Their conquests carried them to the North, East, and West. 'Ifriqiya' was the term used for the Eastern portion of Africa to early Medieval Muslims, and it was stretching from Barqa in Tunisia in the east to Tangier in the west from the Mediterranean in the north to the Sahara Desert that represents the gateway to the land of Black Africa in the south. Whereas, the 'Maghrib' was for its western part (Uthman Sayyid 3).

2- Official Contact

Islam in Africa, one of the main religions of the continent, arrived early in Africa in the 7th century. By the 11th century the new religion had spread across north Africa and also part of the West and the East. It is perhaps more appropriate to consider Islam in Africa in terms of its multiple histories rather than as a unified movement.

2.1. North Africa (7th-11th CE)

The Arabs first arrived in North Africa in the 7th century with a main intention to spread Islam in the continent. Stepping in its land as a first stop in Africa, Egypt, served as the starting point for the spread of Islam across all of North Africa in a matter of decades. "Islam carried the Arabic language with it, and so Arabic is the main language of North Africans" (Newton). The 4,000 strong Arab invading forces came from Mecca under the leadership of the military ruler Amr ibn al-As¹ (The Story of Africa), who completed his conquest in Egypt with a peace agreement, that is why many Christians and Egyptian inhabitants welcomed Islam with open arms. A Christian account of the Muslim invasion of Egypt tells an interesting correspondence between the Leader of Muslim Forces, Amr ibn al-As and Benjamin, Patriarch of the Coptic Church² in Alexandria, in which Amr Ibn Al-As wrote: *"...the Muslims captured the city of Alexandria, and destroyed its walls and burnt many churches with fire and they burnt the church of Saint Mark, which was built by the sea, where his body was laid..."*. The Patriarch responded, *"Resume the government of all your churches and of your people, and administer their affairs. And if you will pray for me, that I may go to the West and to Pentapolis, and take possession of them, as I have of Egypt, and return to you in safety and speedily, I will do for you all that you shall ask of me"* (The Story of Africa).

¹ Amr ibn Al-As, a famous Muslim Arab commander and a companion of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

² Coptics, are the Christian people inhabiting North Africa and some of its other eastern parts

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“After penetrating Egypt the Arabs decided to attack the Christian Nubians in northern Sudan who were Christians for hundreds of years and destroyed their churches there and only their ruins remained” (BBC News Africa). From that point, Islam spread by means of “*Islamized Berbers (who had been differently pressured or tempted to change over)*” (The Spread of Islam in Ancient Africa). The history of the Maghreb from the 7th to the 16th century was dynamic and turbulent, with reforming movements and dynasties clashing and succeeding each other.

Zeinab Badawi a Sudanese-British television and radio journalist explained the spread of Islam in North Africa emphasising on the main points of history saying that, Okba ibn Nafi¹, the nephew to Amr Ibn Al-as who carried Islam to Egypt marched across North Africa and acquainted this part to the continent. According to Badawi, Okba first showed up in Africa around the year 644. He crushed the Berbers who followed their conventional religion or were Jewish or Christians, and where Conversion to Islam took some time. The heritage of Okba Ibn Nafi is as yet obvious today in the area. He carried with him numerous Muslims from Arabia, early devotees of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). the 7th century denoted the golden age in Kairouan². After his crusade in Tunisia, Okba went to modern-day Algeria where he was murdered fighting the Berbers. There was a long time gap before another Arab general Musa Bin Nusayr³ would go to North Africa in an attempt to subjugate the Berbers. He was one of the best Arab leaders at the time, who succeeded in bringing Africa into Arab control spreading Islam and extending the impact of the Muslim caliphate.

However, as Badawi said, there was some obstruction from the Berbers who rejected both Islam and the Arabs. They were known as the *Ridda* which is a term that representing those who convert to Islam and later deny it. A renowned Berber leader-woman was known as Queen Kahina, who drove the armed opposition against the Arabs and their religion. she was popular among her folks and she had a solid character as a lady warrior. Nevertheless, Kahina was killed battling the Arabs after her rejection to Islam, though, she urged her children to accept the religion in order to save their lives. In any case, the expansion of Islam was frequently peaceful. Another ruling bloodline emerged after Molay Idris⁴ had taken

¹ Okba ibn Nafi, was an Arab general serving the Rashidun Caliphate since the Reign of Umar and later on the Umayyad Caliphate

² Kairouan is a city in northern Tunisia’s inland desert

³ Musa bin Nusayr served as an Umayyad governor and an Arab general

⁴ Idris I, was the great-great-great-grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the founder of the Arab Idrisid dynasty in part of northern Morocco

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asylum in North Africa, precisely in Morocco. He intrigued the Berbers with his piety and goodness and turned into their chief, there where he began his dynasty the Idrisid (800-1000). The caliphate extended and affected the area and it was home of new learnings and one of the primary colleges in Africa (BBC News Africa).

Badawi added, a succession of dynasties ruled one after another, some were north African and others were from Arabia. The Abbasids¹ delegated Ibrahim Abu al Aghlab² as a legislative leader of Tunisia at the end of the 8th century. He established the Aghlabid regal family (800-812) which governed in the interest of Baghdad in North Africa. At that point, From Kabylie in central Algeria, another dynasty rose, the Fatimids Caliphate³ (900-1155), who followed the minority Shi'a sect. They subdued North Africa, and after a year they proclaimed a caliphate in today's Tunisia. They assembled another capital al Mahdia, which is most known of the art of the carved hand of Fatima, the daughter of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

After that, Badawi continued, the Fatimids turned their goal to Egypt, as they had an organized and solid armed force, and in 969 they conquered Egypt where they assembled another capital city, Cairo, and built up the famous mosque al Azhar. At that point, the Zirid dynasty⁴ split away from the Fatimids around 1045 and set up their own realm in Mahdia Tunisia. Initially, they followed the Shi'a order as the Fatimids, however, after sometime their third Zirid Emir al Muiz Ibn Badees disavowed the Shi'a faction and announced his alliance to the Sunni⁵ group.

Furthermore, Badawi said that around 1050, the Almoravids, the first of new incredible Berber administrations, rose in what is today Morocco. What is more, Almoravids were the ones who founded the city of Marrakesh, it was a flourishing city loaded with mosques and schools which quickly prompted Marrakesh turning it into the religious cultural trading focal point of the Almoravid Empire. The Almoravid's ruler Yusuf Ibn Tashfin was an incredible appealing man. Under him, much of Morocco was held into control by Almoravids. Their

¹ Abbasid caliphate (750-1258), second of the two great dynasties of the Muslim empire of the caliphate

² Ibrahim I ibn al-Aghlab (756-812), born in Kairouan, Tunisia and he was the first Emir of the Aghlabids in Ifriqiya

³ The Fatimid Caliphate was an Ismaili Shi'a caliphate of Arab origin ruled across the Mediterranean coast of Africa

⁴ The Zirid dynasty was a Sanhaja Berber dynasty from modern-day Algeria which ruled the central Maghreb from 972 to 1014 and Ifriqiya from 972 to 1148

⁵ Sunnah and Shi'a are two different sects in Islam. They chose sides following the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in AD 632 because of a dispute over succession to Islamic prophet Muhammad as a caliph of the Islamic community, and the Sunnis represent the majority of Muslims in the World.

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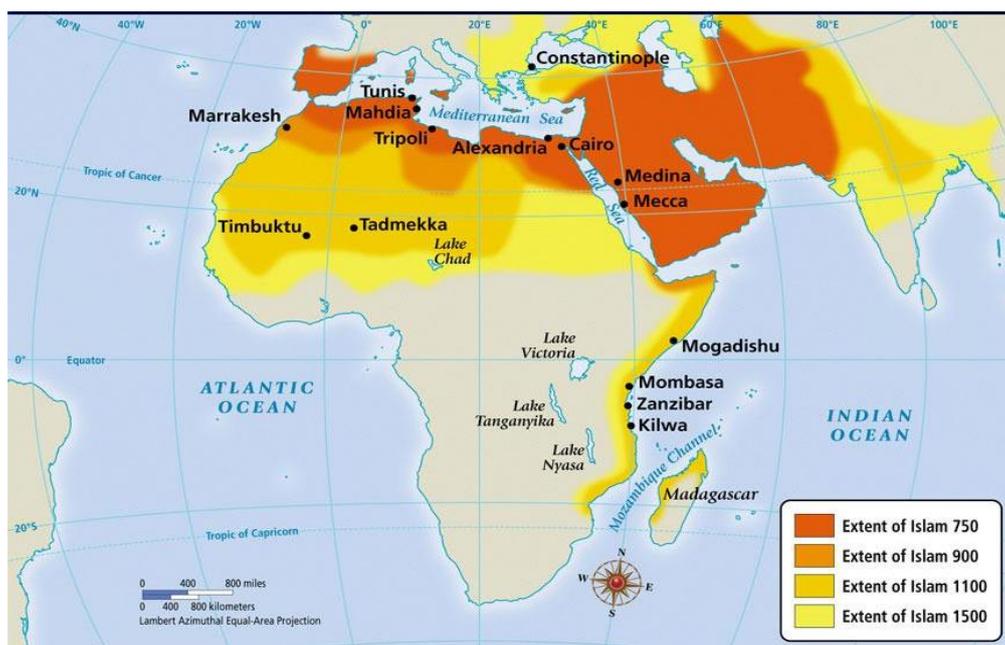
power reached out far and wide and encompassed regions of modern-day Spain, Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal. Their capital Marrakesh was a gathering point for caravan routes. As a result, they got rich from commerce particularly for exchanging salt over gold, and they had so much gold that the Almoravid gold coins were the most confided currency of the entire Mediterranean back then.

In addition, Badawi said that, by 1147 another dynasty came to rule the locals and they were the Almohads, who, like the Almoravids, they were responsible for Islamizing north Africa with religion as an essential part of their movement. From that point forward, another royal family emerged, the Merinids, a nomadic Berber clan who their ruler Abu al Hassan, known as the Black Sultan, governed his kingdom with an iron fist (BBC News Africa).

2.2. West Africa (8th-14th CE)

Islam was introduced to West Africa by the 8th century through trade across the Sahara. It first came to West Africa as a gradual and serene procedure, spread by Muslim merchants and researchers. The early excursions over the Sahara were done in stages, in which Merchandise went through chains of Muslim brokers, bought, at long last, by nearby non-Muslims at the southernmost end of the route. There were many trading associates in Sub-Saharan Africa, where gold was the primary ware sought by the North. Until the first half of the 13th century, the Ghana Empire was a key trading associate with the Muslim North (The Story of Africa).

Map01: Expansion of Islam 650-1500



Source: (Burkhardt)

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When Islam had arrived at the savannah region which spreads across Africa beneath the Sahara Desert, it was embraced by ruling African elites. Albeit, indigenous convictions and ceremonies kept on being practised or were even mixed with the new religion. As Muslim merchants infiltrated further into Africa, the religion spread from one kingdom to another, catching Gao¹ at first in 985 CE and afterward inside the Ghana Empire (6th-13th century) from the late 10th century, from where the religion spread eastwards to the Mali Empire (1240-1645 CE) and the Songhai Empire² (c. 1460 - c. 1591 CE). With the leaders of the Kingdom of Kanem³ (c. 900 - c. 1390 CE) accepting Islam between the 11th and 13th centuries and Hausaland⁴ from the late 14th century, the religion's spread underneath the Sahara Desert was complete (The spread of Islam in Ancient Africa).

By the 14th century, the most remarkable realm in West Africa was Mali under the administration of Sundiata⁵. One of his replacements, Mansa Musa⁶, made a praised *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca. His entourage was so immense and sumptuously dressed and conveying such a tremendous amount of gold, that he became the talk of the Muslim world. Just as being prosperous, Mali turned into an incredible seat of famous learnings throughout the Muslim world (The Story of Africa). The trade routes also carried education to West Africa. For example, one of the incredible trading points of the Sahara, Timbuktu, turned into a famous Islamic learning center.

The religion's spread was not boundless, since Islam remained a religion of the vendors, in which wherever the trade routes stopped did as well, Islam. Therefore, the deeper parts of the wildernesses of Africa remained unaffected by Islamic extension (Newton).

2.3. East Africa

As opposed to North Africa, East Africa was never dependent upon one wide, clear Muslim takeover. In fact, Islam went toward the East African coast in numerous waves and on various occasions. There is no single date in the records to state when Islam was

¹ Gao, is a city in Mali and the capital of the Gao Region.

² Songhai empire, great trading state of West Africa (flourished 15th–16th century), centred on the middle reaches of the Niger River in what is now central Mali.

³ The Kingdom of Kanem (aka Kanim) was an ancient African state located in modern-day Chad, which flourished from the 9th to 14th century CE.

⁴ Hausaland, was a collection of states started by the Hausa people, situated between the Niger River and Lake Chad.

⁵ Sundiata Keita, was a powerful prince and founder of the Mali Empire; Mansa Musa was his great-nephew.

⁶ Musa I, or Mansa Musa, was an African Muslim and the tenth Mansa of the Mali Empire He has been described as the wealthiest individual of the Middle Ages, his is most renowned with his famous pilgrimage to mecca.

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introduced to East Africa, however, it is believed that the new faith had flourished by the 8th century. The main Muslims who originated from various directions were most clearly from the Arab Peninsula, which is isolated from the Horn of Africa by less than fifty miles of water. In addition, there is Egypt, where Islam previously came to North Africa, and Somalia further up the coast, where the port of Zeila turned out to be significant in the 10th century because of the political focus of the Muslim world moving from Mecca to Baghdad. Another direction is Persia, in which it has been said that the main Muslims were originated from Shiraz in Persia, who they were known as the Shirazis (The Story of Africa).

Emeritus Yusef Fadil, former Vice Chancellor of Khartoum university, gave a brief history on Arabs who came to Africa from the east, when he said:

The ones who came across the red sea were pure Arabs. first, they came in small numbers after they heard about the fertile land and water in those areas of Sudan, most of them were merchants looking for a good trade. their migration was small and unnoticed and continued to rise in the 13th, 14th, and 15th century till it reached its peak, that was one attraction. the second one was the riches of the desert, Arabs discovered in the east desert gold mines and emeralds and this constituted a gold rush for Arabs and they came in large numbers this time, at same time lot of interaction and intermarriage was present that's what causes the mixture of culture which is clear nowadays in African people's costumes music and architecture u can see the influence of the Arab culture on their life however they maintained their African costumes as well (BBC News Africa).

This entails that, once more, trade was an effective element in increasing the number of Arabs in East Africa, which also lead to the spread of Islam. Muslim traders set up for business on the Swahili Coast in today's Kenya and Tanzania, but did not arrive on the Coast with the main aim of converting people. In fact, they came as traders, with influence, hence, not everyone became Muslim. For further explanation, the historian Mark Cartwright said that Islam had increasingly quick achievement further south on the Swahili Coast. From the mid-eighth century CE, Muslim merchants from Arabia and Egypt started officially to settle in towns and trading points along the Swahili coast, in which the neighbourhood Bantu people¹ and Arabs merged, as did their dialects, with intermarrying being common, and there

¹ Bantu people African indigenous of the Swahili coast and other southern part of Africa

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was a mixture of social practices that led to the emergence of a remarkable Swahili culture¹. As the historian P. Curtin puts it: "*The Muslim religion ultimately became one of the central elements of Swahili identity. To be a Swahili, in later centuries, meant to be a Muslim*". Islam triumphed on coastal areas of east Africa. while, it had no effect on the people living in the hinterland of the eastern part of the continent (The Spread of Islam in Ancient Africa).

Map 02: Muslim merchants stationed themselves along the Swahili Coast, from which Islam spread inward



Source: (Newton)

Cartwright said that, in East Africa, Islam confronted strong rivalry from Christianity which was implanted in Nubia and states, like, the Kingdoms of Faras² (aka Nobatia),

¹ Swahili culture is the product of the history of the coastal part of the African Great Lakes region, it has a Bantu core and has also borrowed from foreign influences.

² Faras was a town located on the Nile River near the border of modern Egypt and Sudan Around 350 CE, Faras became capital of the new kingdom of that name, also known as the Kingdom of Nobatia.

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Dongola¹, and Alodia², and in the Kingdom of Axum³ (1st – 8th century CE) in what is today Ethiopia. It was not until the 14th century CE and military interference from the Mamluk Sultanate⁴ of Egypt (1250-1517 CE) that these Christian realms became Muslim, the special case being the Kingdom of Abyssinia (13th-20th century CE). Moreover, two significant Muslim states in the Horn of Africa were the Sultanates of Adal (1415-1577 CE) and Ajuran (13th-17th century CE). Nevertheless, there were various difficulties other than the Christians of Nubia, in which there were many who stubbornly clutched to their old customs and faiths against this new religion.

Cartwright further added that another gathering that battled against the tide of Islam were the Mossi folks, who controlled the terrains south of the Niger River and who attacked such urban areas as Timbuktu in the first portion of the 15th century CE, where the Christian Portuguese showed up in Africa on both the West and East coasts where they tested the spread of Islam. Therefore, where the Europeans traded broadly, for example, on the western shoreline of Africa, states like the Kingdom of Kongo (14th-19th century CE) became Christian, and from the 16th century CE, Islamic control of the Swahili coast was tested (the spread of Islam in Ancient Africa).

3- Reasons for Adoption of Islam

Besides true spiritual conversion, African leaders knew that embracing Islam (or pretending to) or somehow adopting it would be of great advantage in commerce. Both Islam and trade are interconnected, as here explained in the *UNESCO General History of Africa*:

The association of Islam and trade in sub-Saharan Africa is a well-known fact. The commercially most active peoples, the Dyula, Hausa and Dyakhanke, were among the first to be converted when their respective countries came into contact with Muslims. The explanation of this phenomenon is to be found in social and economic factors. Islam is a religion born in the commercial society of Mecca and preached by a Prophet who himself had for a long time been a merchant, provides a set of ethical and practical prescripts closely related to business activities. This moral code helped to sanction and control commercial relationships and offered a unifying

¹ Dongola, is the capital of the state of Northern in Sudan.

² Alodia, was a medieval Nubian kingdom in what is now central and southern Sudan.

³ Axum, was an ancient kingdom centered in what is now Eritrea and the Tigray Region of northern Ethiopia.

⁴ The Mamluk Sultanate (1250-1517) was a medieval realm in Egypt that established itself as a caliphate after it overthrew the Ayyubid dynasty

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ideology among the members of different ethnic groups, thus providing for security and credit, two of the chief requirements of long-distance trade (Cartwright).

That means Islam is a practical religion, its teachings guides people in all aspects of everyday life. *“it is not obscure religion to follow, with fewer divisions and heresies than Christianity. There is no complicated hierarchy of priests. As in Christianity, there is much emphasis on charity and simplicity of lifestyle”* (The story of Africa).

Houria Mujahid brings a deeper clarification to this point saying that, the presence of Christianity in Africa was linked to continental exploitation, as the presence of the European in Africa was more commercial and exploitative than religious. Therefore, in the eyes of Africans, Christianity is the religion of the white man. In addition, there is the difficulty of understanding Christianity, in which Christianity itself is a difficult and complicated religion, as Christians mention themselves, especially the concept of the Trinity¹. A pope that Dr Mujahid interacted with, admitted that what had been offered to Christians in Africa was superficial Christianity. Furthermore, she said that there are also many dimensions in which there is debate and controversy such as the Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants² and other different sects in understanding Christianity itself. Whereas, Islam found itself spreading simply among the Africans for several considerations, foremost among them is the simplicity of Islamic teachings, especially since the Muslim is not required to do things that are beyond his comprehension. Also, the rituals themselves attract Africans such as ablution and purity, and many areas in Africa know a Muslim through the robe that he wears while covering his body, and also prayers, the call for the prayer, and the disciplined row in prayer, all of this attracts Africans.

Mujahid continues saying that African people never witnessed in their history the separation of mosques between the blacks and whites, in fact, equality was a fundamental principle in Islamic teachings. Moreover, Islam did not know the cases of religious imposition, however it spread through various means, most importantly interactions, mixture, and trade, and this was the reason for its rapid spread and acceptance. In short, one can say that Islam, with its concepts and principles represents an attractive power for anyone who reasonably comes near it.

¹ The Christian doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is one God, but three coeternal consubstantial persons or hypostases—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—as "one God in three Divine persons".

² Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, are sect in Christianity that have some differences in some aspect of the religion.

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There is a remarkable attraction in Islam for peoples of traditional beliefs. Whereas, there are difficulties in adopting Christianity despite the efforts made from the Christians. Therefore, when one compares, they find that if a person enters Christianity, groups of people enter Islam (مجاهد 12،8). This resulted in the conversion of many African leaders which was effective in spreading Islam. Cartwright elaborated this point saying that in the Mali Empire, the rulers converted to Islam, most famously Mansa Musa I (r. 1312-1337 CE) who visited Cairo and Mecca and took back to Mali Muslim researchers, architects, and books. Mosques were constructed, for example, Timbuktu's Great Mosque (known as Djinguereber or Jingereber), and Koranic schools and colleges were set up which immediately increased a worldwide reputation. One noted Timbuktu researcher was the holy person Sharif Sidi Yahya al-Tadlisi (d. c. 1464 CE) who turned into the chief saint of the city, and a religious class created, its members were mostly of Sudanese origins, and many often went about as preachers, spreading Islam into the southern portions of West Africa (The spread of Islam in Ancient Africa).

4- Influence of Islam in Africa

Another important point in the history of Islam in Africa is that the religion of Islam did not replace traditional beliefs and practices of the Africans, in fact, African people accommodate the religion while maintaining their costumes and traditions creating a unique mixed culture that is remarkable within the Swahili people in East Africa. In some cases, conversion to Islam was a way for Africans to protect themselves from being sold into slavery. In other cases, flourishing trade motivated some African rulers to embrace the religion for an aim in “gaining political support from the Arabs and facilitating commercial relationships”. (Department of the Arts)

In addition, Muslims of Arabia and the closest from the East brought to Europe just as Africa a huge measure of scholarship. Muslim society was one of a kind in creating parts of learning, astronomy, and medication, separated from religion and enchantment. Present-day mathematical information owes a lot to al Kwarizmi¹, whose book *The Calculation of Integration and Equation* dealt with algebra, and measurement. Geography was another domain where the Muslim world exceeded expectations. The most renowned geographer, born in the 12th century, was al Idrisi, who visited Spain, North Africa, and Anatolia. He

¹ Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī was a Persian polymath who produced works in mathematics, astronomy, and geography.

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drew up maps, which for their time, were very exact. There are numerous other Muslim scholars and explorers such as, Ibrahim ibn Yaqub¹, 9th century; Ibn Jubair², 12th century; and Ibn Battuta, in the 14th century (The Story of Africa)

Mark Cartwright said:

As more people were converted, so more Muslim clerics were attracted from abroad and the religion was spread further across West Africa. Many native converts studied in such places as Fez, Morocco, and became great scholars, missionaries, and even saints, and so Islam came to be seen no longer as a foreign religion but a black African one. Finally, Muslim clerics often made themselves very useful to the community in practical daily life (and so they increased the appeal of Islam) by offering prayers on request, performing administrative tasks, offering medical advice, divining - such as the interpretation of dreams, and making charms and amulets (the spread of Islam in Africa).

The account of ibn Battuta praising for the good Muslims in Mali, 1352 depicts the influence of Islam in Africa:

Table 01: Ibn Battuta's Praise for the good Muslims of Mali, 1352

<p>HONESTY "They do not interfere with the property of the white man who dies in their country even though it may consist of great wealth, but rather, they entrust it to the hand of someone dependable among the white men, until it is taken by the rightful claimant."</p>
<p>PIETY "...they meticulously observe the times of prayer...When it is Friday, if a man does not come early to the Mosque he will not find a place to pray because of the numbers of the crowd."</p>
<p>CLEANLINESS "... putting on of good white clothes on Friday. If a man among them has nothing except a tattered shirt he washes and cleans it and attends the Friday prayer in it."</p>

Source: (The Story of Africa)

This proved that Islam cared much in bringing literature in Africa, in which Many schools and universities were built for that purpose, while the main aim was the Arabic language and

¹ Ibrāhīm ibn Yaqūb was a Hispano-Arabic, Sephardi Jewish traveller, probably a merchant, who may have also engaged in diplomacy and espionage.

² Ibn Jubair, Ibn Jobair, was an Arab geographer, traveller and poet from al-Andalus.

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the teachings of the Quran. Besides, the influence of Muslims in Africa in terms of education, geography, social and religious traditions facilitated the infiltration and dominance of Muslims in the continents especially in the domain of trade, most importantly the slave trade.

Conclusion

The spread of Islam largely concentrated in the norther part of Africa reaching some parts of the west and east. The long period of more than 10 centuries habituating Africa, Muslims caused a drastic change in the life of Africans and had major contribution of what Africa became today. Some of Africans mixed the religion with their traditions, few had renounced it, and the majority accepted it. As a result, the whole Maghreb (North Africa) are Muslim countries.

Aside from Gold, Emeralds and other goods, Africa was also rich in a special trade, the slave trade that. Ironically, its merchandise was its own people, since slavery was a common practice in Africa for long time. Therefore, the relationship between slavery and Muslims before and after the abolition of slavery in Africa and how Muslims coped with this practice will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter Three
**The Evolution of Slavery from the Advent of
Islam to Present day**

Introduction

One of the major reasons that made Africa a flourishing source of slaves for a long period of time, is that slavery was a common practice among Africans even before settlers put foot into the continent. This encompassed Arabs and Muslims as well, in which it triggered their appetites for enslaving more and more of these people. The position of Muslims towards slavery in Africa before and after the abolition of slavery will be discussed in this chapter.

1- Slavery in Africa Before Foreign Settlers

The concept of slavery in Africa was common before it was a renowned destination for people from other continents. Lovejoy explained the nature of slavery practised by Africans in their land saying that slavery in Africa was one of its kind. In many areas in Africa weather the East, West or South, coasts or the hinterland, the characteristics of their social structure were based on ethnicity and kinship, in which age and sexual distinction contributed in their social formation. Hence many groups and societies in Africa were controlled by elders who they themselves controlled the social status and production formations of their society. The female element was more important in these societies in which elders marry many women, who they were preferred for production, that is why slavery did not alter the essential basis of the social formation. In fact, slaves could add to the size of the population and thereby increase the number of people mobilized by the elders. Therefore, slavery was a means of dependency, it was effective in situations where kinship was paramount. Although slaves were of great remarkable function, their presence was related to the desire of individuals or groups of related kin to increase the power of their social status. Thus, slavery was common in small-scale societies to increase the size of their social groups and their welfare was related to the wealth of their master and his kin (14).

Those slaves were often the result of raids, disputes between tribes and kin groups, or criminal punishment. However, they were the minority in the society, their function was of field production, defences and sometimes used as sacrifices for some religious rituals.

2- Islamic Factor

The existence of slave societies that emphasized on kinship and dependency resulted in the creation of a vast network of slavery. By the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries the Islamic world became the heir of this long stretching network, taking African slaves north the Sahara Desert and along the shores of the eastern part of the continent. Muslims interpreted the practice of slavery in accordance to Islam, in which the function of slaves remained the same concerning administration, military and domestic services, though there were some specific aspects that were modified. “For over seven hundred years before 1450 the Islamic world was virtually the only external influence on the political economy of Africa” (Lovejoy 15, 16). The coming of Islam initiated the Arab Slave Trade that led to the transportation of a massive number of African slaves. Initially, slaves were prisoners captured in Holy Wars that was the result of spreading Islam in Northern, Western and Eastern part of Africa. As it was clarified in the first chapter, Islam narrowed the sources of slavery to only one source, which is of the Holy War, where non-Muslims prisoners who resisted their conquests were often enslaved. Therefore, slavery was not limited to the black race in the Arab world. In fact, there were non-black slaves in the Arab world from different ethnic groups wherever their conquests carried them. However, during their long period of presence in Africa the black race represented the majority of slaves among Muslims.

Despite the difficulty in giving an accurate number to the slaves brought from Africa to the Islamic world, Historian Paul Lovejoy estimates that some 9.85 million Africans were shipped out as slaves to Arabia and, in small numbers, to the Indian subcontinent. Lovejoy breaks his figures down as follows:

Between AD 650 and 1600, an average of 5,000 Africans were shipped out by the Arabs. Then, between 1600 and 1800, another 1.4 million Africans were taken by the Arabs. The 19th century represented the highest point of the Arabian trade where 12,000 Africans were shipped out every year. The total figure for the 19th century alone was 1.2 million slaves to Arabia (qtd. In New African).

Austen gathered the number of slaves crossed the African Desert and the Red Sea to the Arab world from the mid seventh to the 16th century in the following tables:

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Table 02: Trans-Saharan Slave Trade, 650-1600

Period	Annual average	Estimated total
650-800	1,000	150,000
800-900	3,000	300,000
900-1100	8,700	1,740,000
1100-1400	5,500	1,650,000
1400-1500	4,300	430,000
1500-1600	5,500	550,000
Total		4,820,000

Source: (Lovejoy 26)

Table 03: Red Sea and East African Slave Trade, 800-1600

Red Sea coast	East African coast	Total
1,600,000	800,000	2,400,000

Source: (Lovejoy 26)

This indicates that, before the 14th century acquiring slaves was in a modest way and in gradual and slow tempo reaching its peak in the 11th century, where the Arabs were the dominant part. Whereas, after the 14th century there was a rush in slave trade in Africa due to the competition from the Christian Europeans, and also, thanks to the role of the Industrial Revolution that reinforced exploration and sophisticated transport, hence resulted in a large scale of acquiring slaves.

By observing the nature of slaves transported through the Arabs slave trade, one finds that the demand for female and children slaves was huge. Indeed, the gender estimation showed that the slaves shipped to the Arab world were in two to three women for one-man ratio. In addition, the boys were, either raised as domestic services or trained for military, and females were also used for domestic services and the pretties one were placed in *Harems*¹ where they would usually become concubines. This factor, hence, increased the price of female slaves in markets. Furthermore, the adult and least attractive women were used in more menial and laboured tasks. The function of slaves in Islamic societies was different from Europeans or even African themselves; the state like society of Islam offered

¹ Harems, (in former times) the separate part of a Muslim household reserved for wives, concubines, and female servants

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slaves government and military occupations, where slaves officials and soldiers proved very loyal. Besides, there were a special category of Eunuchs² who were adult slaves used for domestic services and often as overseers of *Harems*. Although slaves were frequently used for domestic (including sexual) purposes, or in government and military, some of them also were employed in productions such as the salt mines in Arabia, Persia and Northern Sahara and in recent time in Plantations in East Africa.

Despite the similarities between the Atlantic Slave Trade³ and the Arab or Islamic Slave Trade, there were some differences concerning the institution of slavery. While Europeans depended on the forced masculine labour, the Arabs concentrated on young girls and females as sexual vessels for their own pleasure. Moreover, the treatment of slaves in the Arab world was of huge difference from the ones in the Americas, where European were notorious for their harsh treatment of slaves, whereas, the Muslims treated their slaves in good protective manners.

The laws of Islam,” as the historian Hugh Thomas attests, “were in some ways more benign in respect of slavery than were those of Rome. Slaves were not to be treated as if they were animals. Slaves and freemen were equal from the point of view of God. The master did not have power of life and death over his slave property” (qtd. In Africa news).

The dominant influence in Africa was Islamic, both because the major external market for slaves was North Africa and the Middle East and because Islam had become a strong influence within many of the states and societies in the northern savannah, the Ethiopian highlands, and the East African coast, where slaves were used extensively. Lovejoy said that the Arab Slave Trade reflected a steady demand on slaves that resulted in the creation of a regular connected routes between the sub-Saharan states, the red sea, and the east African coast that contributed both in the spread of Islam and facilitating the slave trade. According to Lovejoy the six major routes crossed the desert:

...one went north from ancient Ghana to Morocco; a second stretched north from Timbuktu to Tuwat in southern Algeria; a third passed from the Niger valley and

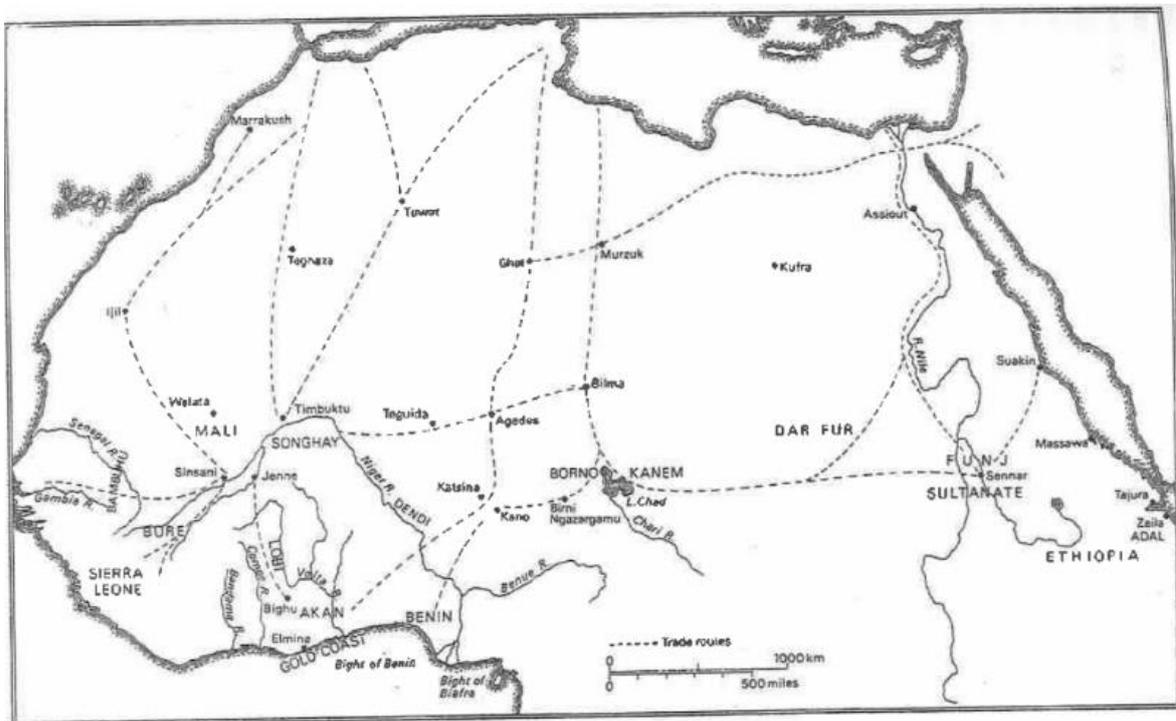
² Eunuch, a man who has been castrated, especially (in the past) one employed to guard the women's living areas at an oriental court

³ Transatlantic slave trade, segment of the global slave trade that transported between 10 million and 12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th century.

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the Hausa towns through the Air Massif to Ghat and Ghadames; a fourth travelled north from Lake Chad to Murzuk in Libya; a fifth reached north from Dar Fur in the eastern Sudan to the Nile valley at Assiout, and a sixth passed north from the confluence of the Blue and the White Nile to Egypt. Some of these routes were interconnected. The ones north from Timbuktu went to Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, while the Dar Fur-Egypt route, known as the Forty Days' Road, connected with the route north from the upper Nile valley. The Red Sea ports served the Ethiopian highlands and the Nile valley and included Suakin, Massawa, Tajura, and Zeila. The East African towns comprised one route that stretched northward along the coast. In total, therefore, there were only nine or ten outlets for the slave trade to the Muslim world” (25).

Map 03: The Islamic Slave Trade in the Sixteenth Century



Source: (Lovejoy 27)

These trading routes witnessed a remarkable large scale transportation of slaves. As a result, there were many markets created for the Arab Slave Trade. In North Africa, the main slave markets were in Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli and Cairo, and Timbuktu and Gao in the West, whereas, in the east markets were Zanzibar and Kilwa. Sales were held in public places

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or in Arab markets called souks. One of the famous and central places in the east African part that marked slave flourished markets was the Island of Zanzibar. “The slave trade in East Africa really took off from the 17th century. More and more merchants from Oman settled in Zanzibar. The island took on an even more important role in the international trade of goods due to the large trade at the Swahili coast and consequently also in the slave trade. This is how the largest slave market in East Africa was created” (Fröhlich).

Zanzibar was the largest slave hub in East Africa, where many captured Africans were transported to the North via the Sahara Desert and to the East via the Red Sea as the Senegalese author Tidiane N'Diaye said, “Eight million Africans were brought from East Africa via the Trans-Saharan route to Morocco or Egypt. A further nine million were deported to regions on the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean” (qtd in Fröhlich). Because of the modest transportation materials back then, many slaves died on their way to markets crossing the Sahara Desert due to hunger, illnesses, and exhaustion. In his book, *Slaves and Slavery*, published in 1998, the British writer Duncan Clarke said, “The hardships of these long marches across the desert were considerable, and much later travellers reported that the routes were lined with the parched skeletons of those who succumbed to exhaustion and thirst along the way” (qtd. In New African).

The early 19th century Omani settlers start cultivating in large clove plantations to keep up with the demands of world markets. Therefore, the demand of more slaves increased in the island, in which they were brought cheaply and easily from nearby slave markets. According to American historian Frederick Cooper. “Zanzibar's reputation changed from being the center of the slave trade to a center of slave keeping which produced notorious figures such as the legendary slave trader Tippu-Tip⁴” (qtd. In Fröhlich).

Slave traders like Tippu-Tip and others marked the shift of the Muslim acquired slaves from Holy Wars captives to buying slaves from markets which contradicts with slave regulations in the Islamic law. Since the sub-Saharan Africa was beyond the reach of Islamic states, Holy Wars were few, therefore sources of slaves reduced. For these reasons many Muslims and merchants resorted to other sources such as, “local warfare, convicted criminals, kidnapping, and probably debt were sources of slaves for visiting merchants, who individually gathered slaves in small lots for shipment by boat across the Red Sea or up the

⁴ Tippu-Tip, was an Afro-Arab slave trader, ivory trader, explorer, plantation owner and governor. He traded in slaves for Zanzibar's clove plantations.

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East African coast, or joined together to form caravans for the march across the Sahara” (Lovejoy 17)

“For the very moment when Africans were not found their men at the Atlantic end of the continent, we find the exit of thousands of women and children cross the Swahilian shores of the Sahara—through the commercial channels of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea” (Willis, Preface). The several decades of Arab Slave Trade caused tremendous damage to Africa and its inhabitants. The large scales of slave girls taken from Africa especially the Eastern part caused a notable decrease of female numbers, thus, a “far greater demographic damage and consequently greater economic decline, with its excessive poaching of the reproductive potential of the harvested areas” (New African). This trade that continued after the 19th century gave the Europeans, after they abolished their trade, the satisfaction to prove the malignity of Arabs who continued to enslave people in the first half of the 20th century, “*even to this day, Arab slavers are still at work in Sudan and Mauritania, buying and selling black Africans*” (New African).

3- Modern Slavery in The Arab World

The abolition of slavery in the Arab World between 1929 and 1970, put a theoretical end to slave trade and enslavement, in which, slavery and human trafficking never stopped. Adapting technology and modernity, slavery in the world and specifically in the Arab middle East took a new shape. Recruiting Agencies of the Arab world exploited many African people and took advantage of their poor living conditions by offering them contracts of indirect slavery. In the beginning, recruiters offer tempting and attractive contracts that contain reasonable working hours, medical assistance, and holidays. However, by the time of their arrival they get nothing but a non-stop working hours, regardless of their sickness or exhaustion, and in exchange for wages smaller than the ones they were first promised.

To illustrate, Frank Wetindi a Kenyan citizen was one of many victims to these operations, in which he was offered a job in Dubai as a driver in the airport to pay his debts. The time Frank arrived, he was given a different job of unloading planes under the heat and hard conditions, with longer hours to work and less others to rest or sleep, in return for a salary far less than he was promised. He has been given a room crowded with other eight men with different nationalities, perhaps trapped the same way he was. Wetindi narrated his experience saying that, "was not good. He says he was denied "freedom of workshop,

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freedom of movement and freedom of communication." Labor agencies "lie to [migrant workers about] the job they are going to do, the good salaries and all that. On arrival, you find something else," he says ("Cheated of Good Job").

Every year Kenyans leave their country seeking job opportunities in the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, in which they are offered jobs along with good payment and welfare advantages. However, the time they reach these Arab countries especially women, they find themselves trapped working other menial jobs and domestic services, and instead of getting paid, many end up exploited, abused, threatened and isolated by their employers with nowhere to go for help. In 2018, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated the number of Kenyan emigrants working in Saudi Arabia between 100.000 and 300.000 Kenyans, many of whom were from the coastal regions of Kenya migrated to the Gulf in search for a better life, seeking jobs in hotels and homes in the Middle East. Nonetheless, the reality can be different, for, most of them end up working in brothels or houses where they were abused, threatened and often raped. Moreover, in 2014, 50 Kenyan women returned from Saudi Arabia where they have been tempted with offers of well-paying domestic jobs. They have been rescued and brought home, some of them were back in tombs, others were fortunate enough to keep their lives, bearing scars, bruises, and horror stories of abuse and harassment to tell with zero compensations ("From the horse's mouth").

In addition, the stories of migrant women are far more traumatic, since they are considered the majority and most exploited gender. Another account is Fauzia Muthoni from Kenya, who worked as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, after she thought she applied for a receptionist in Qatar. When she arrived in Qatar airport, she was forced to travel another time to Saudi Arabia when their employers were waiting for her. Drowned in doubts and confusions, with the lack of means of communication, Fauzia found herself not only working as a maid, eating leftovers and expired food, but also was asked to work for 18 hours and she was given 4 hours to sleep. Nevertheless, she was treated as a slave especially by her owners' children, who exposed her to different kinds of verbal and physical abuses and sometimes forced to do dirty work for the boys in the house to avoid troubles. Besides, she rarely was allowed to communicate with her family. The horrible situation Fauzia had to tolerate was unbearable, therefore, she had to escape. She went to the police and after a few weeks she contacted the Kenyan embassy and managed to return home, where she started aiding other women thinking about migrating to the Arab world and those who were already offered jobs there ("Abused as Domestic Worker").

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Moreover, Kenya was not the only case, in fact many other Africans from Guinea, Mauritania, Niger and even Morocco where many Moroccan women, especially with difficult living conditions, were exploited by brokers and businessmen to work in Saudi Arabia, where they were subjected to slavery, harassed, threatened, and often raped. Also, in Libya there were accounts of illegal sub-Saharan African migrants who found themselves victims of enslavement by groups of businessmen who deal with human trafficking (“The Newsmakers”).

To a greater extent modern slavery has evolved, racing technology, to be practised in the internet. Women employed as domestic servants are being sold online via applications approved and provided by Google and Apple and it is called the online slave markets. Apps like ‘4sale’ offered maids for sale along with TVs and cars, while breaking local and international laws on modern slavery. The under-covered team of BBC News met with some of those sellers, under which they discovered Fatou, an underaged Guinean girl in Kuwait City. The team was shocked with the covered woman in Jilbab⁵ offering a 16 years Fatou, who, withdrawn and confusion drawn on her face. Although, many offers to sell African girls were found in Facebook, Instagram, and Google platforms, the latter denied such operations and rejected all accusations.

The online slave market would not be possible without the system of employment used across the Gulf known as kafala, where domestic worker visa is tied to their employer or sponsor, under this system the domestic workers cannot quit their jobs or leave the country without their sponsor’s permission. Kuwait has some of the strongest laws to prevent their sponsor from abusing their system, but apps like 4Sale, Harraj (حراج), and Instagram, enable employees to sell the sponsorship of these workers to other employers for profits, creating an unregulated black market that believes women more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (“Maids for sale”).

After a few days, the BBC News team cooperating with the Kuwait’s authorities found the underage girl Fatou, who has been sold to an employer. She was rescued and deported back to guinea. Fatou tells her story in Kuwait, saying that she worked in three houses and was abused and used to be called ‘animal’. Furthermore, she mentioned also something intense, a truth that breaks the heart of every genuine Muslim in the world “... I would tell

⁵ Jilbab, a full-length outer garment, traditionally covering the head and hands, worn in public by some Muslim women

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her [the women she was selling her] that she is wearing Muslims dress, but she is not Muslim, because Muslims would not act like that” (“Maids for sale”).

Conclusion

The Arab slave trade was a large slave trafficking process that resulted in the creation of routes and Arab slave markets connecting the north with sub-Saharan Africa, where slaves and concubines mostly were transporting in large scales. Although slavery was abolished, Arabs, apart from devout Muslims, proved again how malicious and menial they can be, trafficking with tens of thousands of innocent African girls, exploiting their vulnerability as helpless women to fulfil their desires in a modern form of slavery using online markets and deceiving contracts. This shows that though Islam bought salvation and freedom to humanity giving them equal rights and putting them on the same line, in an attempt to eradicate all forms of inhuman practices and abuses, evil is still haunting our world. This is clearly seen in how slavery is still surviving in a world where religious means were put forward to put an end to it.

General conclusion

Islam as a just religion permitted slavery under the necessity that it was an important aspect of the society's economy at that time, where it allowed Muslims to enslave other non-Muslim prisoners of war only. Besides, Islam provided a set of instructions to treat slaves under Muslims' possession hinting for the priority to free slaves and put an end to it. However, Muslims through time after the death of prophet Muhammad Peace (Be Upon Him), expanded the empire of Islam conquering nearby areas and spreading their faith, meanwhile, forgetting the purpose of Islam to free slaves. Furthermore, when Muslims reached Africa in mid-7th century, they penetrated from then on to many of its parts until the 11th century, sweeping up the whole North and some regions in the West and East. As a result, this facilitated the spread of Islam and provided a huge number of slaves in the way. The influence of Islam in Africa tied up the connections between Muslims and Africans resulting in the creation of many slave markets and transportation routes inland, and made the acquisition of slaves even more greater. The Muslims never stopped enslaving people as Islam's intention was to stop it, more than 10 million slaves mainly females were transported to the Arab world, where the role of slaves as opposed to the New World was for pleasure and a form of prestige. Moreover, even after the abolition of slavery in the Arab world, some Arabs still keep enslaving people from Africa mainly and elsewhere tempting them with better jobs and decent salaries, while, the only compensation they receive is bad treatment, physical and sexual abuse, and dehumanizing humiliation.

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