

# Islam, archaeology and slavery in Africa

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## Abstract

Two different types of chattel slavery, those permitted by the Christian and Islamic religions, were introduced into Africa but only the Christian slave trade to the Americas has been studied by archaeologists. The much longer duration (over 1000 years) of the Islamic slave trade to Asia and of the Dar el Islam in North and East Africa is at present known only from literary and eyewitness accounts. It will prove difficult to recognise archaeologically and new techniques will have to be developed. Even more difficult to recognise will be the indigenous forms of slavery which existed in many parts of the continent at the coming of both Christianity and Islam, and the interaction between the three different concepts on which they were based.

## Keywords

Chattel slavery; Dar el Islam; Dar el Mu'haā; Dar el Harb; Bilād es Sudan; Zanj; Jihad.

Slavery is a term used so loosely in European languages and Christian societies that only by careful definition can it be used in studying human relationships throughout the world. A correct identification of the word's correspondence with terms in other languages is essential, especially when an attempt has to be made, as it must be by archaeologists, to identify slavery by a study of material remains. The problem is a particularly difficult one in Africa where Christian and Islamic concepts of slavery, both defined in different and complex legal systems and imposed from outside on large areas of the continent, interacted with a variety of indigenous African concepts transmitted only by oral traditions before contacts with Arabic or European visitors added a new source. The interaction of Islamic and indigenous concepts resulted in a number of partial assimilations more easily recognized from literary than material cultural evidence. The present inability of archaeologists to recognize slavery and its effect on societies without using literary evidence remains one of the last major field problems of the discipline (Insoll 1998).



Here only the strictest definition of one kind of slavery, 'chattel slavery', will be considered. 'A slave is a human being who is the property of, and entirely subject to, another human being under the religious, social and legal conventions of the society in which he or she lives.' Being 'the property of' means that an owner, restricted only by the conventions of his society, is able to buy, sell, free, adopt, ill-treat or kill his slave whose children belong to their owner and can be treated in the same way. A slave has no freedom or personal rights and can become one voluntarily, by a legal decision or by force. The general pattern of Islamic slavery in Africa has been most recently summarized by Kelly (1996) and Levtzion and Pouwels (2000), but see also Willis (1985). Before addressing the evidence from Africa, a general appreciation of the Islamic concept of slavery is necessary for it differs from the Christian one. Quranic teaching from the first distinguished between the Dar el Islam (the land where its inhabitants have made their submission (Islam) to the Muslim faith) and the Dar el Harb (where they have not). Slavery, including chattel slavery, was permitted by the Holy Quran and further defined in the Hadith (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed's lifetime). It became codified in the Shari'a (sacred) law codes administered by members of the Ulama (those learned in its interpretation). In general, its concept of slavery followed the practice of the Roman Empire and its predecessors in Western Asia (Snowden 1970), the main difference being that, in the Dar el Islam, Christianity and Judaism were accepted as permissible if incomplete religions. Believers in them, if they made their (non-religious) submission to Islamic rulers, paid the required taxes and accepted Shari'a law, were citizens (Dhimi) and not subject to chattel slavery unless condemned to it for crimes carrying that punishment under Shari'a law in the same way as Muslims were.

The distinction between the Dar al Harb and Dar al Islam had profound effects in Africa. Inhabitants of the Dar el Harb (Figs 1–3), which Muslims were under obligation to conquer and incorporate into the Dar el Islam, could be enslaved, although, if individuals voluntarily accepted the Muslim faith, they could mitigate their status, although, unless manumitted, they remained slaves (Fisher and Fisher 1970).

During the first Muslim penetration of Africa in the seventh century AD these concepts were put into practice (Lovejoy 1983). The sedentary populations of North and North-east Africa had long professed Christianity within the provinces of the Late Roman Empire, which stretched from Egypt to Morocco and outside it in the Middle Nile Valley and in modern Eritrea/Ethiopia. Nomadic transhumant Berber and Beja communities south of the northern coastal plains or away from the Nile Valley had been a little affected by Christianity and Judaism but remained largely animists (Brett and Fentress 1996; Paul 1954). The submission (Islam) of the various Roman provinces to the Muslim Arab invaders meant that their Christian inhabitants were accepted into the Dar el Islam and not subjected to chattel slavery. Desert-dwelling animists were part of the Dar el Harb, and could be enslaved so that the boundary between the Dar el Harb and Islam in North West Africa roughly followed the old Roman (Christian) frontier. A slave trade bringing Saharans and sub-Saharan through the desert to North Africa, which existed in Roman times, continued and documentary evidence in the Nile Valley shows it to have been regulated there by treaty. In succeeding centuries the desert routes were increasingly used as camel nomadism became commoner and the frontier of the Dar el Harb was pushed further and further southwards until in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries it had reached

the West African forest zone and the sub-Saharan savannahs became known as the Bilad es Sudan (the land of the blacks) and the source of slaves. The nature of this trade and the use of slaves in the savannahs will be discussed below.

The second Muslim penetration of Africa followed a different course. There was no military conquest by Arabs of the African coast of the Red Sea south of Egypt, but here and beyond the Horn the pre-Islamic sea-borne trade continued along the Somali, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique coasts to Madagascar (Alpers 1975; Chaudhuri 1990). Muslim trading posts existed from at least the eighth century AD on this coast (Horton 1996) and, except on the Eritrean/Ethiopian coast, Muslims were in direct contact with Negro animists who could legally be subjected to chattel slavery. Small-scale slave trading may well have begun at this time. The development of a coastal Muslim Ki-swahili-speaking society and its slave trade in the interior will be considered below.

### **Slavery and the slave trade in North Africa**

After the Arab conquest of the North African provinces of the East Roman Empire in the seventh to eighth centuries AD, chattel slavery, which had always had legal existence under that Empire, continued to be legal under Islamic religious (Shari'a) law. The new social and governmental systems introduced changed the pattern of slave recruitment as did the spread of Islam among peoples, especially Berbers and Bejas, who had never been within the Roman Empire (Brett and Fentress 1996). There continued to be a need for slaves in the traditional categories in which they had been employed: domestic service, agriculture, artisan industries and mineral extraction. In the succeeding centuries the use of chattel-slaves as soldiers and in agriculture among the nomadic pastoralists of the Sahara were important new developments. The importance of the camel-keeping Arab, Beja- and Berber-speaking tribes who came, at least six centuries after the introduction of the camel (Shaw 1979), to fill the empty ecological niches in the sahels north and south of the desert and the oases within it cannot be over-emphasized. For over a thousand years after their acceptance of Islam they developed and controlled the desert transit routes of the slave trade and by their spread through the sub-Saharan sahel steadily advanced the boundary between Dar el Islam and the Dar el Harb southwards, until the borders of the forests were reached in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD. Non-Muslim enclaves in the savannahs continued to be raided and the sources of slaves enlarged into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by 'Jihads' undertaken for religious reasons.

The boundary between the Dar el Islam and the Dar el Harb, in terms of the slave trade, was more important than in Roman times because, in religious terms, it marked the zones in which the recruitment of slaves by force was either permitted or forbidden. Although sometimes ignored, this distinction was always maintained and resulted in the penetration of the sub-Saharan savannahs and so great an increase in the trade in slaves through the deserts that, although the numbers cannot be precisely defined, they are thought to have reached, over the thousand years of the trade, millions (Manning 1981; Lovejoy 1983). Its effect on the sedentary negroid populations of the savannahs and on the Dar el Islam rivals that of the Christian slave trade to the Americas after 1600 AD. It can best be analysed by considering the six types of slave required for different types of employment,

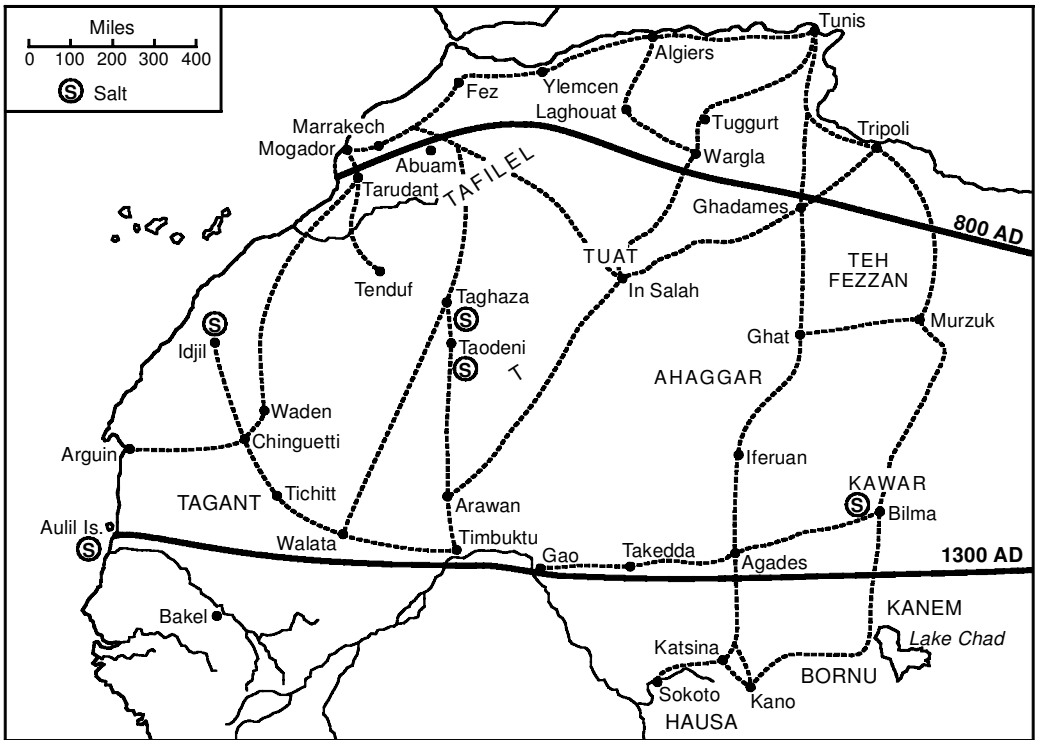


Figure 1 North Africa: The routes of the slave trade and the approximate boundary of the Dar el Islam and the Dar el Harb.

the ways of obtaining them and the effect they had on different parts of the Dar el Islam (Fig. 1) at different periods.

*Types of slave required*

*Domestic service*

The social organization of the Islamic family led to an increase in the number of slave women and children in households. The richer household might now include up to four wives and their children, slave concubines and their children and many slave servants for the more onerous duties of cereal-grinding, water-carrying, cooking, etc. (Klein and Robertson 1983). As in earlier times, male slave attendants and guards in large numbers added to the prestige of the male householder. The house plans of the sedentary populations demonstrate this through to the present date, with the Hoch (enclosed courtyard) containing the Diwan (male entertaining rooms) and the Harim (private and women's quarters). Quranic injunction required that domestic slaves be kindly treated, their children recognized as legitimate and their eventual manumission encouraged. Although their acceptance of Islam was permitted, that did not remove their chattel-slave status.

Among the Muslim nomads and sub-Saharan indigenous sedentary societies, who from the tenth century increasingly accepted Islam, the rigorous enforcement of full religious (Shari'a) law was long, if passively resisted, women remaining freer and unveiled and polygamy widespread.

### *Agriculture*

Large numbers of chattel-slaves (as opposed to various kinds of semi-slavery) were used in cultivation and in animal husbandry. The kind of employment varied through time and place. In the northern coastal plains the sedentary communities used slaves both in small-holdings and on larger estates; here men, preferably strong young men, were required. More were probably required therefore since the Arab/nomadic disdain for agricultural work became widespread. From the fifteenth century AD onwards, plantation agriculture can be recognized north and south of the Sahara, while in the north more slaves were obtained to export to plantations in Southern Europe and the Levant. A special development in the Islamic period was the cultivation, particularly of date palms and cereals, in the oases of the Sahara made available by camel pastoralism and essential both for nomad diet and for feeding caravans, especially slave caravans. Controlled by nomad tribes, whose males especially despised manual work, the oases were dependent upon slave labour, requiring agile and strong young men. They were also used in animal husbandry, especially small stock but also camels. Another development was in plantation agriculture in the north plains, especially sugar cane for export in the fifteenth century.

### *Mineral extraction*

While free men might take part in mining/quarrying, especially in the eastern deserts for gold and precious stones, the bulk of the work was done by chattel-slaves in both state enterprises and private ones. Here too active males were required. More were employed, in the Sahara, in salt extraction, especially at sites like Taghata and Bilma where slave colonies provided salt for the extensive trade through the sub-Saharan savannah populations, especially in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries AD (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981).

### *Soldiers and sailors*

Slave soldiers became a particular characteristic of the armies of some Islamic rulers and took various forms (Pipes 1981). In North Africa the use of chattel-slaves must be distinguished from client relationships established with Arab and Berber nomads and their employment as mercenaries. Small numbers of chattel-slaves (al Sudani) from south of the Sahara seem to have been employed from the eighth century AD, but in the tenth to eleventh centuries AD the Fatimid dynasty developed a large slave infantry force used in Egypt, and in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries AD they were used in the Mahgreb (Johnson 1992). The development of the Mamluk Turkish system of recruitment in Western Asia in the tenth century AD was a modified form of chattel slavery as was the Devsirme system of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries in the Ottoman Turkish sultanate, but, since neither system recruited in Africa, no trade in sub-Saharan males for soldiers took place in the Ottoman Turkish eyalets before the nineteenth century. The attempt of Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt in 1823–40 AD to recruit a chattel-slave army

by conquering in the Fung Sultanate in the Middle Nile Valley and reaching the slaving grounds of the Dar el Harb failed, although, until the 1880s AD, it resulted in a greatly increased private slave trade. Muslim fleets in the Mediterranean, like Christian ones, relied mainly on oars and required numbers of galley slaves. While criminals and war captives were used, chattel-slaves, active males, white or black, were also used (Abun-Nasr 1987).

#### *Industry and commerce*

Continuing earlier practices, chattel-slaves were trained and used in artisan workshops, males in metalworking, woodworking and potteries, females in textile ones. Males were also employed as agents and assistants in commerce.

#### *Administration*

Male slaves, including eunuchs, were used after training in many states as officials although the numbers were never large.

### **Muslim slavery in North and West Africa**

#### *The recruitment of chattel-slaves for N.W. Africa*

The acceptance of Islam, however incomplete, by Saharan nomads in the eighth to ninth centuries AD took the boundaries of the Dar el Harb to the sub-Saharan sahel and gave access to the sedentary non-Muslim populations of the savannahs. Three phases in the trade in slaves northwards can be recognized.

From the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, although raids by Muslim nomads for slaves took place, more were obtained by trade with the indigenous kingdoms of the savannahs, notably the long-established Ghana and the subsequent Malian Empires. Captives taken in their local wars were marched to the markets like Gao or Aghordat or the capital of Ghana in or near the borders of the sahel where they were bought by Muslim merchants from the north. The situation is best reported on by Ibn Battuta (1962) in the ninth century AD and Ibn Khaldun (1986), the well-built Muslim settlements excavated at Kumbek Saleh (Berthier 1997) and Al Bakri (1913) showing the northern connection (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981).

An increasing acceptance of Islam in the indigenous states, culminating in conversion in the Songhay Empire (eleventh to fifteenth centuries AD), led to an increasing use of chattel-slaves in the savannahs.

The Moroccan invasion of the Songhay Empire in 1583 and its success led to an increased trade northwards in slaves with new routes being opened across the deserts. This seems to have maintained for some two hundred years and even increased in the nineteenth century when European and American fleets first reduced and then put an end to North African piracy in the Mediterranean (Hogendorn 1993). This stopped the supply of white slaves, captured or kidnapped from the Dar el Harb of Southern Europe, which had long supplemented the black slaves.

Slaves sold in the markets of the sub-Saharan sahel now faced a 1,000km march northwards through deserts in which there were few watering places or food sources, an ordeal

quite as traumatic as the sea passage from West Africa to the Americas and causing a similar mortality rate (Devisse 1988). No statistics are available before the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, and then only partial ones, but a 50 per cent death rate, more in the case of women and children, seems to have been normal (Fisher 1975; Baet 1967) and whole caravans could be lost by miscalculation or a sandstorm (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981).

Control of travelling across the deserts was in the hands of Berber and Arab camel pastoralists for whom raiding or protecting caravans was one of their few sources of income. The oases were under their control and agriculture at them carried out by their slaves, depending on the security of routes at different times, those from Darfur, Kanem and Bornu to Egypt (O'Fahey 1973) and Cyrenaica in the east, through Awjila to the Fezzan and Bilma, and from Timbuctu, Gao and the Middle Niger Valley to Morocco and the Mahgreb via Ghar and Tuat (Bovill 1958) in the west. The routes remained in use into the nineteenth century (Cordell 1985).

### *The recruitment of chattel-slaves for N.E. Africa*

At the coming of the Muslim Arab army in the seventh century AD slavery certainly existed in the Roman province of Egypt and in the independent Christian kingdoms of Nobātia-Ma Qurra and Alodia (Alw'a) in the Middle Nile Valley. There is no evidence of their numbers but the small annual tribute of 350 slaves demanded of Ma Qurra in the Baqt treaty of that century suggests that it was considered as Dar al-Mu'haā (compromise), or Dar al-Sulh as it is often called in the Sudan, and not the Dar al-Harb. Slaves were probably obtained from Alodia, which with its capital near modern Khartoum would have been able to raid among the sedentary agricultural 'pagans' of the savannahs. The position was very different from that in North West Africa for a direct link with the savannahs was already well established before camel nomadism opened up the desert routes, although the same problem of a 1,000km-long journey, at least forty days of travelling, divided the sources of slaves from the Egyptian markets.

The first Muslim rulers of Egypt preserved this situation by concluding, after a failure to conquer it, a non-aggression treaty with Nobatia-Ma Qurra. Its name, the Baqt (Pactum) suggests a continuation of the Roman policy of client-kingdoms and in effect admitted the kingdom into the Dar el Islam without insisting on submission. The legality of this decision was much debated by later Muslim jurists (Spaulding 1995). Since this meant that the Dar el Harb lay far to the south and depended on trade with and through one, perhaps two Christian kingdoms, the Baqt tribute of 350 slaves must have been, by the tenth century, supplemented by private trade, for black slave troops were by then a power in Egypt and in the eleventh century Al Mustansir reported 30,000 Fatimid 'black' troops in Cairo. These probably included the mercenary Berber (Katama) cavalry from the Mahgreb, but the infantry were described as 'al Nuba' or 'el Sudani' and must have come from the Middle Nile Basin savannahs since they were said to 'have come from a region south of Nubia with large pastures and strong people' (Hrbek 1977: 70). The presence of Muslim merchant quarters in the capitals of both Ma Qurra and Alodia (Alw'a) probably meant a private slave trade existed during the Fatimid dynasty (973–1090) in Egypt (Brett 1978), although the commercial correspondence of this period found at Qasr Ibrim (Sartain pers. com.) contained no mention of it.

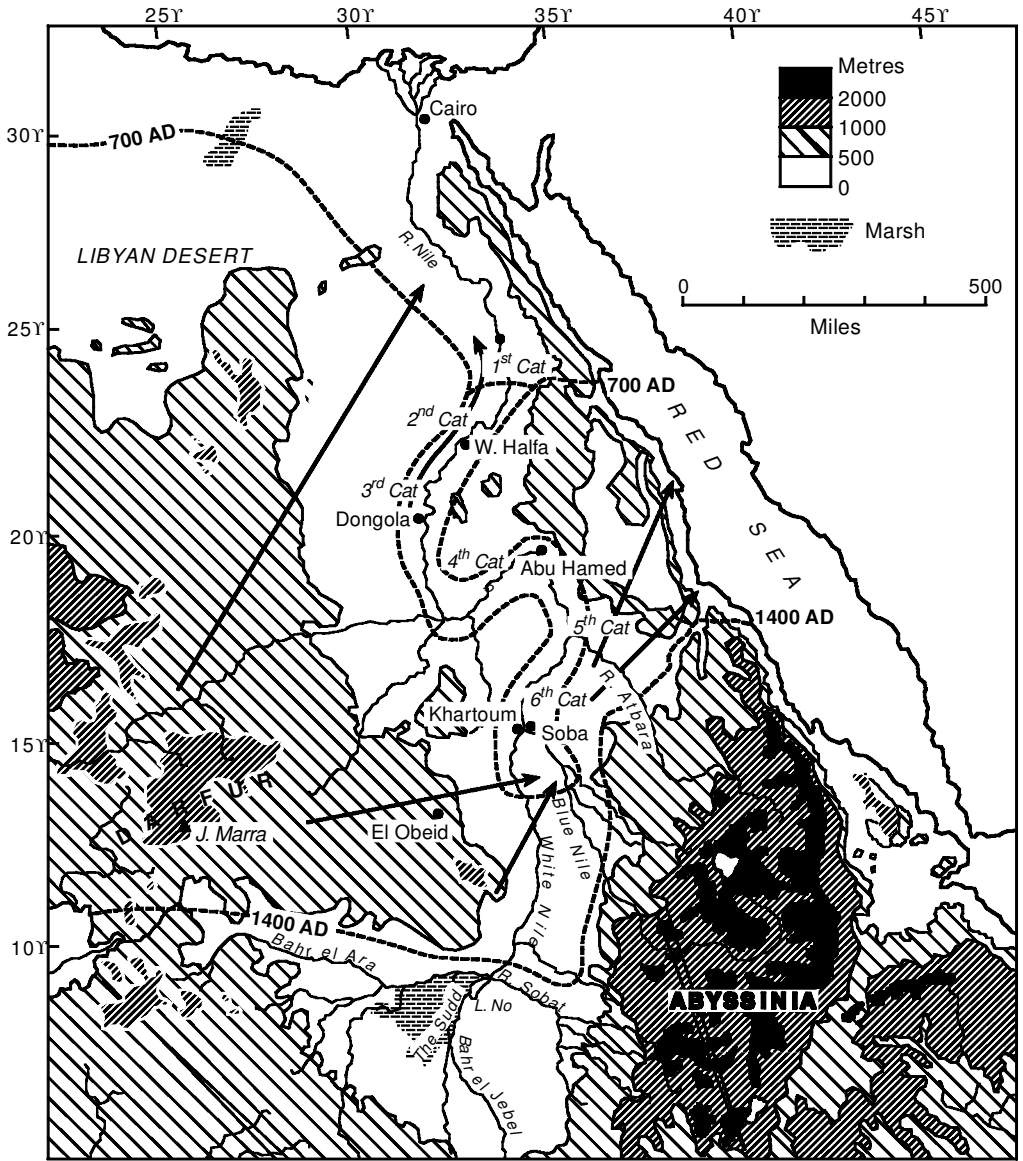


Figure 2 The Nile Valley: the routes of the slave trade and the approximate boundaries of the Dar el Islam, Dar el Mu'haa and the Dar el Harb.

Chattel-slaves were needed, especially from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, in the gold and emerald (carbuncle) mines of the Wadi Allaqi in the deserts east of the Nile's 2nd Cataract. After the ninth-century AD victories of al-Umari over Beja nomads and their acceptance of Islam, the mines were exploited by Muslim entrepreneurs (Castiglioni 1998). Slave labour was used and little could be obtained locally, especially as nomadic migration southwards in search of pastures was taking place (Paul 1954). These migrations took

camel-keeping Muslim pastoralists through the Christian Kingdom of Alodia (Al'wa), perhaps itself now part of the Dar el Harb, into the sahel and savannahs of Kordofan and Darfur. Here sedentary Nubian-speaking inhabitants could be enslaved and marched for forty days through the desert or river routes to Egypt. An alternative route, the 'Tariq el Sudan' which ran west-east to the Red Sea coast through the savannahs, was much used by pilgrims to Mekka after the fifteenth century AD and also by slave caravans, especially from Ethiopia which also lay in the Dar el Harb (Abir 1985). From the coast slaves could be shipped to Egypt, Arabia and beyond. The Nile Valley route seems to have been little used after the thirteenth-century AD disintegration of Maqurra into a series of small Muslim mekdoms (kingdoms) until the sixteenth century AD.

Political and technological changes in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries AD brought substantial changes to slave trading in the Nile Basin. For two hundred and fifty years the Nile valley as far south as 3rd Cataract (600km north of present-day Khartoum) was part of the Ottoman-Turkish sultanate and the region south of it the indigenous Fung sultanate with its capital at Sennar on the Blue Nile (Alexander 2000). The Dar el Harb was now, as in Western Africa, in the southern savannahs of Kordofan and Darfur, and slave traders did not, before the mid-nineteenth century, penetrate the great swamps of the Sudd and Lake No and reach the forests of Uganda.

Ottoman and Fung demand for slaves differed greatly. Ottoman/Mamluk military recruitment policy forbade the enlistment of Africans, a prohibition which lasted into the nineteenth century AD. As a result, the trade was in those suitable for domestic service, mainly young females and children and males for agricultural work. In the Fung sultanate, on whose borders the raiding for slaves mostly took place, an army of slaves was maintained for use in local wars and slaves were settled in villages to undertake food production (Bruce 1798). A trade to the north also continued. Although firearms were known, their use was restricted before 1823 AD when Mohammed Ali Pasha, the virtually independent governor of Ottoman Egypt, sent an army well-equipped with firearms to conquer the Fung sultanate, its main aim being to obtain young male chattel-slaves from Dar el Harb for his army (Prunier 1992). For the first time firearms appeared in large numbers in the eastern savannahs and in the next thirty years many thousands of men were obtained for the state and private slave-raiding increased (O'Fahey 1973). In the 1840s the swamps of the south were penetrated and the vast region between them and the forests of Uganda opened up to slave raiding; it was in Uganda that Muslim slave-raiders from North and East Africa met in the later nineteenth century (Grey 1961). The export of slaves to the north was limited by the increased difficulties of transportation and ended with the suppression of the trade between 1880 and 1930 (Spaulding 1988; Toledano 1982).

### **Muslim slavery in East Africa**

This existed through the same centuries as in North Africa but served different markets in the Dar el Islam and had to be organized in different ways at different times (Alpers 1975; Chaudhuri 1990; Chittick and Rotberg 1980). There was no land connection between the north and the east, unless a dubious ninth-century traveller's tale is to be

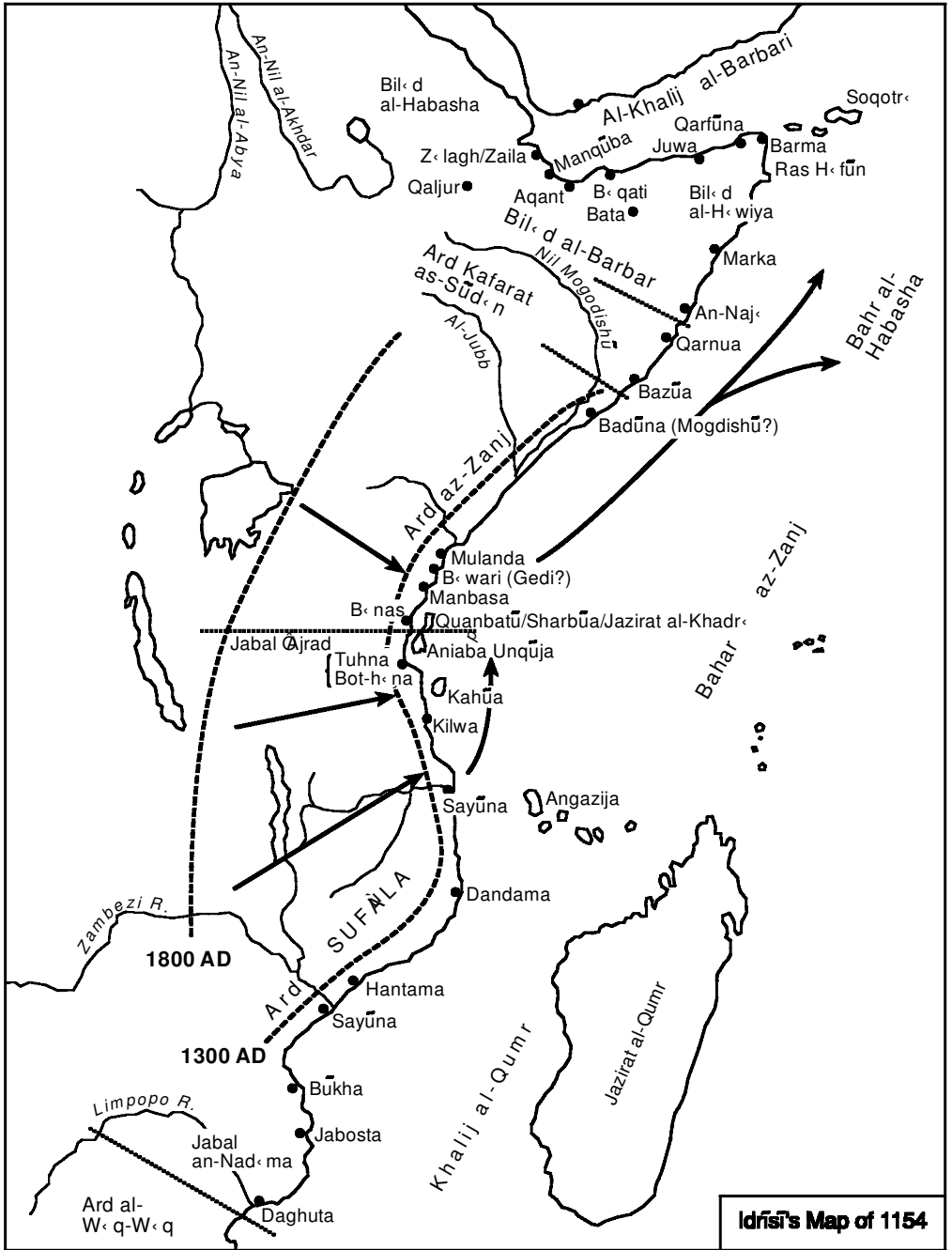


Figure 3 East Africa: the routes of the slave trade and the approximate boundaries of the Dar el Islam and the Dar el Harb.

believed (Bugury ibn Sharriar, quoted in Lewis 1977), no Christian states to subdue and incorporate into the Dar el Islam, no camel pastures south of Somalia suitable for migrating Arab nomads and, instead of immediate contact with the Dar el Harb called Zanj, it could be reached only by long sea journeys, utilizing the monsoon winds, from the Red Sea and the east Arabian coasts and the Persian Gulf. The inhabitants of Zanj were sedentary negro animists who could, under Shar'ia law, be enslaved, as Al Idrisi's twelfth-century account describes (quoted by Lewis 1977: 117–20).

Maritime trade with the coast had existed for many centuries (Chittick and Rotberg 1980; Galaal 1980), but Muslim merchants appear to have been the first to establish, from the eighth century AD onwards, permanent trading posts which soon developed into towns with mosques, law courts and the palaces of small sultanates (Horton 1996). Their strongest links were with Muscat, Oman and the Persian Gulf. The trading pattern in the ninth century AD included slaves taken from Sofala at the mouth of the Zambesi River to Pemba and the Lamu archipelago (Sirajal at Muluk, quoted by Lewis 1977: 212–13). The most powerful state was Kilwa, large numbers of male slaves being shipped to Basra to work in the irrigation projects in southern Iraq, their revolt there causing much destruction (Wright 1993). Others, mainly women and children, were taken there and to Arabia for domestic service. They appear to have been brought to the coast by indigenous rulers in the immediate hinterland and to have been obtained in local wars. There is no mention of long-distance Muslim penetration of the interior (Sperling 2000), but on the coast a series of mixed Arab-Zanj communities speaking Ki-swahili, an Arabic/Bantu language, developed, the language becoming the lingua franca of the whole coast and the Indian Ocean (Prinz 1968). They, rather than the Arabs, became the merchants and agents bring slaves to the coast and selling them. This state of affairs lasted until c.1500 AD but was abruptly interrupted and reduced by the arrival in 1543 of the Portuguese, who, with their superior ships and firearms, established their control of the whole coast and destroyed or occupied many towns (Duffy 1963). Slave employment and trading continued, the Muslim trade being concentrated on the Kenyan/Tanzanian coast, especially on the Lamu archipelago. Portuguese power weakened in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, the whole Kenyan-Tanzanian coast and Zanzibar gradually coming under Omani control, and this culminated in the fall of Fort Jesus at Mombassa in 1837 (de Cardi 1970). The transfer of the capital of the Omani sultanate to Zanzibar Stone Town (Abdul Sherrif 1997) in 1832 led to a big increase in demand for chattel-slaves. On Zanzibar, plantation developments for growing spices, especially cloves, rested on slave labour and there was an increased export of slaves to Arabia and beyond (Cooper 1977).

The trade in slaves and ivory was now supplied by Muslim raiding/trading parties, well supplied with firearms, who penetrated far into the interior of the continent (Abungo and Matturo 1993), Arabs from Tabora in the south reaching Buganda in the 1820s (Posnansky 1977: 218) and Rwanda in the 1870s. Those captured were first used as porters to carry ivory to the coast and then sold on in the urban markets there; a contemporary Arab proverb claimed that 'when you play the flute in Zanzibar, Africa as far as the Lakes dances' (Lodhi 1974). British anti-slavery naval patrols reduced the sea-borne trade from the 1840s onwards and it was formally ended in the later nineteenth century AD (Abdul Sherrif 1990).



Figure 4a Slave caravan, East Africa

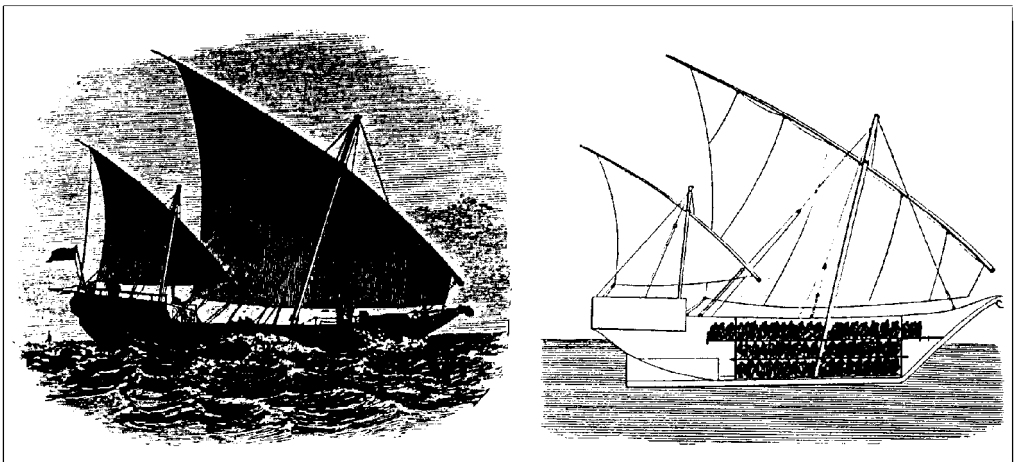


Figure 4b Slave dhow, East Africa

## The recognition of Islamic chattel-slavery from archaeological evidence

The near-impossibility, in the present state of field techniques, of recognizing chattel-slavery from material remains unassociated with documentary evidence has already been commented on and can be summarized as follows.

### *The archaeological evidence for Islamic slavery*

#### *In the Dar el Harb*

##### *Proof of slave taking or raiding?*

##### *Arguments against*

Destruction of indigenous settlements.	Possibly due to other reasons.
Reduction of density of settlement in region.	" " " "
Increased fortification of settlements or change to defensive sites.	" " " "
Possible camps/slave collection points with Islamic artefacts.	Not firmly attributable to slavers.
Discovery of Muslim artefacts in indigenous sites.	Not firmly attributable to slave trade. Even neck, hands, waist and ankle irons could be for war captives or criminals.

#### *In Dar el Islam*

##### *Proofs of slave-trading or employment?*

Slave caravans: nightly camps or enclosures, possible with human remains.	Might be recognized in North West Africa if datable.
Slave quarters and markets in towns north of the Sahara or on East Africa coast.	Not likely to be recognizable archaeologically
More elaborate quarters in seaports.	Not archaeologically recognizable or distinguishable from prisons.
Domestic employment of slaves.	Archaeologically unrecognizable.
Military employment of slaves.	" "
Industrial/mining employment of slaves.	" "
Slave cemeteries.	Those who become Muslims buried in Muslim cemeteries, others casually buried. No way of distinguishing free migrants from slaves.

This means that major problems in the study of the three cultural concepts of slavery in Africa (indigenous, Muslim and Christian) have yet to be solved. In the case of indigenous slavery this is particularly difficult since it is known to have existed in many regions when Muslims and Christians made their first contacts with the inhabitants. But, since in sub-Saharan Africa these were non-literate, only archaeologically unsubstantiated oral traditions suggests that slavery had long existed. Since the interaction with such a tradition by the incoming Muslim and Christian concepts of chattel-slavery is essential to understanding later developments, it can only be solved by improvements in archaeological field techniques.

The importance of indigenous chattel-slavery in the Dar el Harb in Africa lies in the part it played in supplying the Dar el Islam with slaves. State formation long preceded the

arrival of the Arab armies in North Africa or Muslim merchants in East Africa. Beyond the Roman Christian provinces of the former and the Muslim towns and Ki-swahili communities of the latter lay the states whose wars or Muslim raids could provide the non-Muslim slaves required.

The failure of archaeological evidence at present to recognize this relationship or to identify chattel-slavery within the Dar el Islam has been analysed above and means that, while in the Dar el Harb the export of small numbers of men, women and children may well always pass unnoticed, large-scale extraction might be recognized in the future from the widespread and contemporary destruction of settlements; without documentary evidence this cannot at present be confirmed. The assembling of caravans and their march to Muslim slave markets at the boundaries of the Dar el Islam, even when the routes are well known, cannot at present be linked to slavery, although they could be to trade of some kind. The finding of artefacts from the Islamic world might also indicate trade, or conversion, but no evidence of slavery.

Inside the Dar el Islam routes taken by slave caravans and the location of slave markets are known from literary sources but cannot be supported from archaeological ones, although dhows designed for transport might be recognized from wrecks and desert routes by the concentrations of human bones along them.

The same insufficiency of archaeological evidence to recognize slavery, especially the uses made of chattel-slaves in the Dar el Islam, must be accepted. Slave soldiers cannot be distinguished from free ones, agricultural or building projects could not be linked to slave labour without documentary evidence, while domestic slavery will probably never be identified from house plans or artefacts. Even the use of cemetery evidence, which has been so successful in American contexts, is not available in the Dar el Islam since excavation is, quite naturally, forbidden for Muslim graves and there is no evidence of non-Muslim slave cemeteries. New evidence is most likely to come from more study of the Ottoman government archives in Istanbul, Egypt and Tunisia, and the many private family archives known to exist, especially in the Republic of Sudan.

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