

Nineteenth Century Slave Markets

The Moroccan Slave Trade⁽¹⁾

Rahal Boubrik⁽²⁾

Abstract: This study examines the trade of black slaves brought from western Sudan to Morocco during the nineteenth century using statistics from earlier sources and studies. It presents the problems prevalent in using a quantitative approach to the slave trade and the systematic questions it poses. The paper also documents sales techniques and the internal structure of slave markets in Moroccan cities as an institution, reflecting the reality and position of slaves in Moroccan culture. The focus here is on the slave trade, as opposed to slavery, as two separate phenomena. Most societies have hosted various forms of slavery, but not all have actively practiced the trade of slaves, which was banned even as slavery remained prevalent. Thus, the study will explore attitudes opposed to the slave trade in Morocco, including those expressed by Moroccan scholars. The slave trade has gradually receded following the transformations Moroccan society experienced in the first half of the twentieth century.

Slave Market

Slave Trade

History of Slavery

Morocco

Introduction

The Arab states lack significant academic literature on slavery and the slave trade⁽³⁾ in Arabic, in comparison with a great number of articles and books published on slavery in the Islamic world in foreign languages. A cursory bibliographical review of the studies concerned with slavery and the slave trade in the Arab-Islamic world demonstrates the scarcity of writing by Arab/Muslim researchers. Moreover, the discussion of the slave trade in our society remains guarded and subject to subjective censorship and avoidance, often linked to shame and remorse.

This study emphasizes from the outset that the slave trade is not slavery. Most societies have experienced

slavery, but not all have actively taken part in the slave trade. The difference between the two can be clearly understood through the issue of abolishing slavery. Most European states banned the trade of slaves in the early nineteenth century but did not abolish slavery until decades later.⁽⁴⁾ From the beginning of commercial relations via desert caravans between the Maghreb and western Sudan during the Middle Ages, slaves were among the "commodities" that the caravans would import into a society in which slavery was already institutionalized.⁽⁵⁾

The trading of slaves in the Maghreb continued without interruption across the desert from the Middle

1 This study was originally published in Issue 14 (July 2021) of *Ostour*, a semi-annual journal on historical studies, and translated by Nick Lobo.

2 Research professor at the University Institute for African Studies, Université Mohammed V, Rabat.

3 It is worth mentioning that in Arab societies, unlike the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery was not related to black skin; there were white slaves. The peoples of the Middle East continued to bring white servants and slave girls (*al-mawāli wa-l-jawāri*) from Europe, Asia, and North Africa. However, it is undeniable that black people were greater targets for enslavement and the slave trade. This study has focused upon black slaves (*esclaves noirs*) who were forcibly taken from what was known as the lands of Sudan in west Africa, not the trade of white-skinned slaves in Morocco. The term "African slaves" is not used however because there were white slaves taken from other regions in Africa in the Cairo slave market for example; the term "black slaves" is thus used to differentiate the group studied.

4 Roger Botte, "Traite et esclavage, du passé au présent," *Esprit*, vol. 317, no. 8/9 (Août/ Septembre 2005), p. 189.

5 See, for example, toward two exceptional works related to slavery in Morocco: Abdelelah Benmlih, *ar-Riqq fi bilād al-Maghrib wa al-'Andalus khilāl al-Qarnayn al-Khāmis wa-l-Sādis al-Hijriyayn* (Beirut: Institute for Arabic Publication, 2004); Mohamed Ennaji, *Soldats, domestiques et concubines: L'esclavage au Maroc Au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Balland, 1994); see Arabic translation: Mohamed Ennaji, *Jund wa Khadam wa Sarāri: ar-Riqq fi al-Maghrib*, Mohammed al-Gharaieb (trans.) (Beni Mellal: Valia Publications, 2018).

ages until the early-nineteenth century. Starting in the 1830s and 1840s, the trans-Saharan trade witnessed a development in favour of Morocco, to the extent that American researcher John Wright described it as "the last of the great slave markets."⁽⁶⁾ Trade with western Sudan collapsed in the countries in which slavery had been abolished — in Algeria,⁽⁷⁾ then Tunisia,⁽⁸⁾ then Libya⁽⁹⁾ — since the mid-nineteenth century. Morocco remained the sole open market for this business until the beginning of the twentieth century. The slaves brought to Morocco over history were, however, few compared to those taken to the eastern African side

with Libya and Egypt, which formed a transit region through which the markets of the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe were supplied, while the slaves brought to Morocco generally remained in Morocco itself. The Port of Tripoli was a principal hub from which ships loaded with slaves would set off to the states of the Mediterranean, especially the Mashreq. Egypt's land path was a central conduit for supplying the Hejaz, the Gulf, and Mesopotamia with slaves, not to mention the Red Sea region which was quite popular for the trade of slaves coming from the African coast and Zanzibar toward the ports of Yemen and India.

1. Statistical Evidence

The nineteenth century witnessed the import of many slaves to Morocco through trade, to the extent that the French consul in Essaouira at the time considered slaves the most important "commodity" in the commercial activity between Morocco and the Sudan during this century following France's ban on the slave caravans that had once been destined for Algiers.⁽¹⁰⁾ Despite the encouragement and facilitation the French government provided to Algerian traders to reinvigorate the commercial exchange with the Sudan, this trade did not return to its previous vigour due to the abolishment of the slave trade.⁽¹¹⁾ This new situation aided the recuperation of Western trade hubs between Morocco and the Sudan, which had

been active since the Middle Ages. The number of those slaves imported via the commercial caravans from the Sudan varied from one year to another, but pre-nineteenth century sources do not suffice for a quantitative observation of this trade.

The American researcher Ralph Austen is considered among the first to use the quantitative approach with the trans-Saharan slave trade in general, publishing his first study in 1979,⁽¹²⁾ followed by revisions to two articles he published in succession in 1988⁽¹³⁾ and 1992,⁽¹⁴⁾ after which he devoted a book⁽¹⁵⁾ to trans-Saharan trade in world history: a systematic pattern in the field of historical studies that appeared in America.⁽¹⁶⁾ At first, these publications posed the

6 John Wright, "Morocco: The Last Great Slave Market?," *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2002) pp. 53-66. This article was republished in his book (Chapter 11) without the question mark present in the previous title: John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

7 When France occupied Algeria in 1830 it abolished the slave trade but did not abolish slavery until 1848, when a law was passed that outlawed the practice in France.

8 The bey made a decree outlawing the slave trade in Tunisia in 1842, preceded by several measures the Bey took against slavery, including his 1841 issuing of an order whereby the sale or purchase of slaves in public markets was banned.

9 The British consul in Tripoli had an important role in abolishing the slave trade in this country.

10 Auguste Baumier, "Premier établissement des Israélites à Timboktou," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, no. 2 (1870), p. 367.

11 Ibid.

12 Ralph Austen, "The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: A Tentative Census," in: Henry A. Gemery & Jan S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, London, and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 23-76.

13 Ralph Austen, "The 19th Century Islamic Slave Trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea Coasts): A Tentative Census," *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 9 (1988), pp. 21-44.

14 Ralph Austen, "The Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade Out of Africa: A Tentative Census," in: Elizabeth Savage (ed.), *The Human Commodity*, Special Issue of *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1992), pp. 214-248.

15 Ralph Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 31.

16 A movement that emerged in America that studies matters in a way that transcends national history, or that which is governed by national borders. It is a systematic approach within a universal history whose proponents link together isolated national histories, that is interested in the mobility of people, ideas, technologies, and commodities between nations. In this sense, it is an interactive study that shifts the focus of consideration away from the European axis and studies society on different levels.

question of statistics as they relate to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the study of which peaked with the release of Philip Curtin's book on the subject.⁽¹⁷⁾

Quantitative history has distanced the trans-Atlantic slave trade from speculation, keeping in mind that the understanding these statistics related to the trans-Atlantic slave trade offer is insufficient and represents no more than "close estimates."⁽¹⁸⁾ Despite the influence of Curtin's work on Austen in relation to the Atlantic slave trade, the latter was aware of the limitations of his approach vis à vis the number of slaves imported via the slave trade in the Islamic world, acknowledging the difficulty of offering precise statistics.⁽¹⁹⁾ Likewise, this study does not claim to represent a satisfactory statistical venture of quantifying the slave trade in Morocco, due to the systematic and epistemic conviction that it is generally difficult to verify data related to the trans-Saharan slave trade. Moroccans did not keep records of sales, nor were there companies with accounting ledgers like those kept by Europeans engaged in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. All the statistics provided by previous studies are based on speculation, and the veracity of the numbers related to the trans-Saharan slave trade has not been proven. Austen limited himself to a small number of figures that appear in European documents, especially those left by merchants, diplomats, and travellers, and drew from other studies on the slave trade. Quantitative studies on the number of slaves in the trans-Saharan slave trade cannot be compared to those conducted on the Atlantic slave trade because documents and archives related to the latter are available in large quantities.

In addition to the justifiable question on the veracity of the statistics appearing in Austen's work and others', how can one describe a personal, familial, or social tragedy with numbers? Can numbers interpret a human tragedy such as this? The problem of the quantitative approach poses systematic problems, errors, and abundant gaps. There are researchers

who believe it to be useless when, in the absence of precise data, the work of the historian transforms into a mere "beautiful headline for a newspaper looking for a thrill."⁽²⁰⁾

The statistics presented in relation to the number of slaves imported from the Sudan to North Africa are a matter of debate, just like statistics on the total number of slaves brought from sub-Saharan Africa to the Arab-Islamic world. If the statistics presented only in relation to the nineteenth century, for example, which involve slaves imported from West Africa to Morocco, are used as a comparison, then the relativity of those figures is clear. But despite the discrepancy in the figures on the data related to slaves imported annually to Morocco, they provide an approximate idea of the number of slaves sold in Moroccan markets during the nineteenth century. The abundance of this information coincided with the significant expansion of the trans-Saharan trade during this period and with an increase in the arrival of Western merchants to coastal cities following the opening of Morocco to international trade and the subsequent interest of European states, consulates, explorers, and spies in Moroccan trade, dominated by the sale of ostrich feathers, gum, and slaves.

The establishment of anti-slavery organizations in Britain also played a role in the abundance of data on slavery, through focusing their international campaign on Morocco from the 1840s until the beginning of the twentieth century, with the French occupation and the resulting profusion of reports their supporters and delegates prepared and of correspondence between their consulates in Morocco and the sultan about slavery. This provided researchers with archival and source material containing statistics and quantitative reports for the first time.⁽²¹⁾

The slave trade was not directed toward Europe. The records of consulates, companies, and merchants at Moroccan ports include a list of commodities, volume

17 Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1969).

18 Charles Becker, "La SÉNÉGAMBIE dans la traite Atlantique du XVIIes," in: Djibril Samb (ed.), *Gorée et L'esclavage* (Dakar: Université Cheikh Anta Diop, 1997), p. 66.

19 Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History*, p. 31.

20 Jean Mettas, "Pour une histoire de la traite des Noirs française: Sources et problèmes," *Revue Française d'histoire d'outremer*, vol. 62, no. 226/227 (1975), p. 31.

21 See also: Mohmed Ennaji & Khalid Ben Srhir, "La Grande-Bretagne et l'esclavage au Maroc au XIXe siècle," *Hesperis Tamuda*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1991), pp. 249-281; Bernard Lewis, *Race et esclavage au Proche-Orient* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1993); Daniel J. Schroeter, "Slave Markets and Slavery in Moroccan Urban Society," in: Savage (ed.), pp. 185-213.

of trade, and commercial activities at the ports, but does not include slaves. First, this is because the nineteenth century period coincided with the prohibition of the slave trade in European countries. Second, even before the ban, Morocco was not a front line for the trade of black slaves with Europeans. The slave trade was directed toward Moroccans and markets in the interior cities which Europeans had not reached; thus, the numbers and prices of slaves included in the records are approximations not precise facts.⁽²²⁾

Jean-Louis Miège was cautious when presenting statistics on the slave trade: "If there were a product whose significance is difficult to determine in the trans-Saharan trade, it is the trade of black slaves."⁽²³⁾ Many researchers have corroborated the problem of available statistics on slaves in Morocco in comparison to other parts of North Africa. John Wright⁽²⁴⁾ also admitted that data on the Moroccan slave trade in the nineteenth century is something of a rarity, and imprecise. There is nothing in the league of the commercial statistical annals that British consular officials compiled on Libya's ports and oases in the 1840s and 1850s. What is available on Morocco, Wright continues, was provided by consulates, explorers, and foreigners who, at best, offered guesses as to the size of Moroccan commerce in various times and places.⁽²⁵⁾ The available figures are inexact and characterized either by exaggeration or underestimation in the numbers of slaves in Morocco's slave markets. As Daniel Schroeter says, "I maintain that the historians have underestimated the number of slaves in circulation on one hand and exaggerated the total value of the trade on the other. The slave trade in the nineteenth century was an important social institution, not an economic institution of great significance."⁽²⁶⁾ In other words, the slave trade was not a lucrative business like the

ostrich feather, which European merchants sought before its trade collapsed in the nineteenth century.⁽²⁷⁾

The imported slaves were house servants, not an active workforce in agriculture or the crafts business in Morocco, save the maintenance of oases or serving the farmlands for senior leaders and *shaykhs* of the Sufi shrines (*mashāyikh az-zawāyā*).⁽²⁸⁾ It was thus very difficult to track their numbers and impossible to regulate the figures based on the number of slaves imported by caravans annually in the nineteenth century. The number of large caravans that set off from Guelmim in southern Morocco, for example, was twice a year in the direction of Timbuktu, but Guelmim was not the only starting point and destination for caravans. It is unknown precisely how many caravans would set off from Tindouf, Igh, Akka, and other regions. Alongside the large caravans, some used to traverse the desert in small caravans.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the pace of the caravans and the quantity of goods imported from the Sudan varied according to security conditions in the desert and the civil atmosphere in the Sudan, where resistance movements and the accompanying tensions, chaos, and security vacuum were emerging. A broad perspective on the statistics mentioned in different sources, therefore, is sufficient to uncover the divergence in figures. At the end of the eighteenth century, Michel Abitbol indicates between 3,000 and 4,000 slaves who were imported by Morocco from the Sudan: a figure much lower than the number that had been arriving in Morocco before the death of sultan Moulay Ismail (1645-1727).⁽²⁹⁾ Abitbol relied in part of his data upon William Lempriere during his voyage to Morocco, who offered the figure of 4,000 slaves coming from Timbuktu as part of trade with the Sudan. Morocco was not this number's only destination:

22 Schroeter, p. 186.

23 Jean-Louis Miège, *Le Maroc et l'Europe (1830-1894)*, 3^{ème} ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1961), p. 91.

24 Wright, "Morocco," p. 139.

25 Ibid.

26 Schroeter, p. 185.

27 Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Yahūd ft Mahabb ar-Rīsh: Tijārat Rīsh an-Na'am ad-Duwaliyya* (Rabat: College of Literatures and Humanities Publications, 2018).

28 Robert Montagne, *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1930), p. 360.

29 Michel Abitbol, "Le Maroc et le commerce transsaharien du XVIIe au début du XIXe siècle," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 30 (1980), p. 14.

The number of slaves imported annually from Timbuktu is approximately 4,000, a large proportion of whom are going to Mascara in Algeria and to Tunisia. Slave buyers only purchase eunuchs as a personal request to the sultan or some African princes, usually imported from the Bambara Empire. During the reign of the Alawite sultan Moulay Ismail, estimates reached 700 in Morocco; today, there are hardly 100.⁽³⁰⁾

If Jean-Louis Miège was arguing that the number of slaves, who always constituted the most important commodity for the caravans, did not exceed, according to modern estimates, 7,000 to 8,000 persons per year,⁽³¹⁾ he did not specify the period these estimates concern.

Trade in the nineteenth century reached its zenith between 1840 and 1850 due to the influx of a great number of slaves; between 3,500 and 4,000 slaves were imported annually to Morocco. This number was determined retroactively, starting with 1855.⁽³²⁾ During this period, Miège claims that the number began to recede, confirmed by Auguste Baumier, the French consul in Essaouira (1865-1876), to between 3,000 and 4,000 slaves per year between 1865 and 1870.⁽³³⁾ In 1876, the British consul Sir John Drummond Hay estimated the average number of slaves imported to all markets and towns to be 2,000, but could reach as much as 3,000 at times.⁽³⁴⁾ Drummond Hay spent 41 years in Morocco (1844-1885) and was well-versed in its affairs. He engaged in the campaign to abolish slavery in Morocco with the direction of his government. The number he presents appears limited, but in relation to a population estimated in the mid-nineteenth century to be 7 million,⁽³⁵⁾ it is a not an insignificant percentage of people entering Morocco through the trade, keeping in mind that most of these slaves remained in Morocco, contrary to those who were brought to Libya and departed it for other destinations via Egypt and the sea.

By approximately the end of the nineteenth century, the number of slaves imported from Sudan after the 1893 occupation of Timbuktu and the collapse of security conditions in southern Morocco had diminished.

We conclude that the number, despite the difference among sources in relation to the number of slaves imported annually from the Sudan to Moroccan markets in the nineteenth century, varied between 2,000 and 4,000 persons per year, and that the mid-nineteenth century constituted the period in which the greatest number of black slaves were taken to Morocco. Below are the numbers John Wright offered that relate to black slaves taken to Morocco:⁽³⁶⁾

Table 1
Estimates of incoming black slaves to Morocco
(Annual Average)

1700 -1840	3,000
1840-1870	4,000
1870-1890	2,500
1890	500

Source: John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) p. 139.

Khaled Ben Srhir and Mohamed Ennaji argue⁽³⁷⁾ that the slave trade remained very active until the end of the nineteenth century. The two researchers relied upon documents on the taxes imposed upon the urban markets, including the slave markets from which the state used to receive a percentage of the price of every slave sold therein. If the numbers of the slaves who were sold in the markets of the northern cities were on the decline (Fez, Meknes, Rabat, and Salé), the market of Marrakesh in the south remained active; it continued sending them significant numbers of slaves, compared to the markets of the north, from

30 William Lempriere, *Voyage dans l'empire de Maroc et le Royaume de Fez, fait pendant les années 1790 et 1791* (Paris: Tavernier, 1801), pp. 289-290.

31 Miège, p. 151.

32 Ibid., pp. 91-92.

33 Baumier, p. 26.

34 Schroeter, p. 190.

35 Louisa a E D -H Brooks & Alice Emily Drummond-Hay (eds.), *A Memoir of Sir John Drummond Hay* (London: John Murray, 1896), p. 167.

36 Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, p. 139.

37 Ennaji & Ben Srhir, pp. 249-281.

the desert, and merchants in other cities continued to supply themselves with the slaves they needed from it. In the period 1876-1880, the lowest sales of slaves in Marrakesh were recorded at 2,000, but in the 1880s this number increased, peaking in 1889 and 1890, followed by a regression at the end of the reign of the Sultan Hasan I. The two researchers estimate the number of slaves sold between 1890 and 1894 at around 7,000 to 8,000 per year.⁽³⁸⁾

These data do not conflict with Schroeter's estimates, represented by the fact that, from 1870 until 1894, between 4,000 and 7,000 slaves were sold.⁽³⁹⁾ The slave trade in Morocco benefitted from the conditions of its neighbours in the Maghreb, now living in the shadow of French colonies that officially prohibited the slave trade. At that time, Morocco began to supply Algeria with the slaves some of its nobles required. In 1818, for example, a ship from Tangiers between 50 and 60 slaves whom the governor of Algeria had purchased in Morocco.⁽⁴⁰⁾

In 1891, one of the activists in the British abolitionist organization,⁽⁴¹⁾ engineer and trader Donald Mackenzie, wrote that the slave trade in Morocco was flourishing more than ever. The selling process took place in the coastal cities secretly to avoid attracting the attention of an anti-slavery organization, but deep in the interior slaves were being displayed in public markets. Slaves were brought from the Sudan by various means.⁽⁴²⁾ In the same report, Mackenzie wrote about a new route for slaves to reach Morocco by sea from Senegal. During his trip to the Canary

Islands from Essaouira via French ferry, among the passengers was a Moroccan trader heading for Senegal intending to purchase slaves, especially females, for wealthy Moroccans.⁽⁴³⁾

Despite the importance of the markets of the big cities in Morocco, the deserts and villages along the southern border preserved their role in the trade of slaves. Among the most important of these hubs were Iligh, at the heart of the Lesser Atlas, and Sus in the south of Morocco, which discontinued its role in the slave trade during the nineteenth century. The sultan Hasan I bin Mohammed (1833-1894) used to purchase slaves himself from the trading post in Iligh.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Through the commercial registers (*al-kanānīsh*, sing. *kunnāsh*), to the study of which Paul Pascon and Mohammed Ennaji have devoted themselves, related to the Iligh trading post⁽⁴⁵⁾ between 1853 and 1868, the two counted 19 transactions of the sale of slaves, of which there were only three males. The same is true of the three registers Mustapha Naïmi studied,⁽⁴⁶⁾ related to the Bairouk post in Guelmim, which contains 46 transactions of sale.

Naïmi relied upon three registers, the first including commercial transactions for a 22-year period (1833-1855); the second from 1843 to 1860; and the third, belonging to Abdallah wled Bairouk, which includes the period from 1857 to 1872.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In classifying transactions by commodity in the three registers, between 1833 and 1869, the number of slaves sold can be limited to 21 females and 24 males.⁽⁴⁸⁾ This number does not vary greatly from the number

38 Ibid., p. 269.

39 Schroeter, p. 193.

40 Miège, pp. 150-151.

41 British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

42 Henry Gurney & Charles H. Allen, *Tripoli, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. Report to the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1892), pp. 21-22.

43 Ibid.

44 Mohamed Ennaji & Paul Pascon, *Le Makhzen et le Sous al-Aqsa: La correspondance politique de la maison d'Iligh, 1821-1894* (Paris: Editions Toubkal, 1988), p. 140.

45 In addition to the book published with Mohamed Ennaji, Paul Pascon dealt with the commercial registers of the Iligh post in another article: Ennaji & Pascon, p. 140; Paul Pascon, "Le Commerce de la maison d'Iligh d'après le registre comptable de Husayn b. Hachem (Tazerwalt, 1850-1875)," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, no. 3/4 (1980), pp. 700-729.

46 Mustapha Naïmi, "La rive Sud-saharienne de 1842 à 1872 dans les registres comptables de la famille Bayruk: L'apport de trois nouvelles sources," in: *Colloque sur les sources arabes de l'histoire africaine*, Unesco, Commission internationale pour une histoire scientifique et culturelle de l'humanité (1987) Rabat; rééd. dans l'université d'été de Mohammédia, juillet 1987, *Colloque sur le Maroc de l'avènement de Moulay Abdelaziz à 1912*, vol. 3 (1987), pp. 167-193.

47 Ibid., p. 169.

48 Ibid., p. 176.

of slaves sold at the Iligh post according to the post's register; for the period from 1853 to 1868, 15 females and 3 males were sold. The percentages mentioned in the registers of both trading posts remain very small compared to those mentioned in the report of the French consul in Essaouira, who held that half the commercial value of goods coming from the Sudan is made up of slaves. It is also a rate that contradicts the number mentioned in the bulk of the writings of nineteenth century travellers describing Iligh as the largest slave depot and the largest market in Morocco, especially in the Moroccan south.

Nevertheless, is it not possible to infer, first, that these commercial registers included nothing except information regarding sales and debts, that they did not cover all the transactions of sale that were concluded in the market or at the festival, in residences and between tribes throughout the year. Did the registers mentioned not concern a single commercial actor, while the caravan included hundreds of merchants whose registers we have not found? Were they only interested in, or in need of, documenting their commercial undertakings in matters of credit? Furthermore, Paul Pascon and Mustapha Naïmi studied singular registers for a family or for an individual within that family were discovered around a century after being written. It is certain that there were other registers, belonging to the same person and

other family members, which were lost, or which have not yet reached the hands of researchers. I visited Iligh in 2003, and a descendent of the family informed me of the existence of innumerable documents stacked in boxes that were yet to be examined. Thus it is impossible to make final conclusions on a register or a group of registers by relying on statistics not based on comprehensive data.

Despite the importance of these registers in shedding light on the slave trade, they remain insufficient in understanding the scale and activities of this business. Quantitatively, they provide indications, but not a full picture of trans-Saharan commerce and especially the slave trade. The Canadian researcher McDougall previously expressed her doubts that the commercial registers comprehend the "essence" of the trade in the nineteenth century. Pascon and others have placed their hopes in those family commercial registers for our examination of the substance of the trade (loans, goods, and personalities) and the organization (network and social classes) but to little effect. The researcher was not convinced of the potential of those registers on account of her field experience in the Sahara, so she adopted a methodology reliant on oral narrative and other sources. Thus, she resorts to narrative in tracking the course of a "servant": Fatma Barka.⁽⁴⁹⁾

2. Slaves in the Slave Markets

The city of Marrakesh was one of the largest slave markets in Morocco because it is the closest city in the south to the caravan arrival areas and due to the abundance of market conditions attracting customers from several regions. The market was subject to surveillance of the storehouse and to the standards of documenting sales transactions and obtaining taxes for the state coffers. The Makhzen (Royal Court) would receive a tenth from the sale of slaves, bearing in mind that a considerable number of slaves were sold in small markets and festivals in villages and towns in the south of Morocco before reaching Marrakesh.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, texts from consuls and foreign explorers about slaves in Morocco became abundant and their attention was drawn to the existence of black slaves in the country. Some Europeans were also detained as prisoners, servants, and white slaves⁽⁵⁰⁾ after falling into captivity and awaited their liberation by ransom.

Some explorers published their accounts of the slave markets, which were held in major Moroccan cities such as Fez, Marrakesh, Rabat, Essaouira, and Tangiers. But they were not limited to these cities

49 E. Ann McDougall, "A Sense of Self: The Life of Fatma Barka," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1998), pp. 285-315.

50 On explorers and sailors who were imprisoned in the south of Morocco, see: Olivier Vergniot, "De la distance en histoire. Maroc - Sahara occidental: Les Captifs du hasard (XVIIe-XXe siècles)," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 48/49 (1988), pp. 96-125.

and markets to sell slaves existed in deserts and villages in the distant south of Morocco, especially Sous. In this context are available highly important texts on this trade, which for centuries had been prominent, yet neglected by Moroccan historical records and descriptions. Since the Middle Ages, slaves were brought from Sudan, and the slave trade was generally active in North Africa. However, a description of the transactions of sale and how they were conducted in Morocco, for instance, does not exist, bearing in mind that some corpora of cases and some jurisprudential opinions contain questions relating to slaves. The author of the most famous book of cases in the Islamic West, Ahmad bin Yahya al-Wansharisi (d. 1508),⁽⁵¹⁾ devoted entire sections to slavery. His book, *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rib wa al-Jāmi' al-Mughrib 'an Fatāwā 'ahl 'ifrīqiyya wa al-'Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, is considered a principal reference for most Maliki jurists in their fatwas related to slaves.

Except in one type of sale, the public markets were not an open auction, because a class of slave would be offered for sale in special houses far from sight. Slave girls with special characteristics, such as aesthetic features or cooking skills, music, or song, or eunuchs would not be for sale in the market because the demand for them came from the elites. Buyers resorted to traders and middlemen working to provide them with "goods" according to demand, which was for females more often than for males, especially women recently arriving from Sudan, who were preferred to others who had spent a long period passed between the beds of many noblemen. Male slaves in turn were not equivalent in value. Eunuchs were also not for sale in public markets because demand for them came from a specific segment of society: namely the sultan, princes, viziers, and major dignitaries. The demand was greater for black females than for others, as detailed in the following account going back to the beginning of the eighteenth century:

The value of slaves imported with the caravans in the market used to vary according to their beauty and the harmony of their figures and ages with their country of origin: therefore, a Wangari slave is of less value than Hausa slaves because the former is rude and stupid [...] whereas the Hausa are intelligent, beneficial, and clever [...]. Once, during my stay in Morocco, a Hausa girl of incredible beauty was sold for 400 mithqal while the average price of a slave is around 100 mithqal.⁽⁵²⁾

The valuations mentioned in the text are normative and express the views of their author, without that meaning they do not really exist, like value judgments among Moroccan society and in the Islamic world in general. It is sufficient to examine the literature written about black people and the slave trade, such as the letter of ibn Butlan,⁽⁵³⁾ a book by al-Samawal bin Yahya bin 'Abbas al-Maghribi,⁽⁵⁴⁾ and others to grasp the classifications that were dominant in the Islamic world.

The slave markets in Moroccan cities would be held one to three times per week depending on the city, on the understanding that the nature of the markets and the number of slaves for sale varied from city to city. The first markets in which the sale of slaves took place were the first stations at which the commercial caravans coming from the Sudan stopped. From these cities, the slaves were distributed across different regions of Morocco. Among the most important of these cities for Morocco was Sijimasa in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, other cities were added such as Tindouf, Guelmim, Ilich, Akka, Tata, Asrir, and others. These commercial villages, oases, and cities used to live on the slave trade, as markets for sale and purchase and as a trading centre for the sale of materials the caravans required. The source of their wealth was from trade, including the slave trade that built the fame of these centres and attracted merchants looking to buy these human commodities.

51 Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad bin Yahya al-Wansharisi, *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rib wa al-Jāmi' al-Mughrib 'an Fatāwā 'ahl 'ifrīqiyya wa al-'Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, Muhammad Hajji (ed.) (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya lil-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya; and Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmi, 1981).

52 James Grey Jackson, *Relation de l'empire de Maroc: Description du Maroc, de la Côte Ouest Africaine et de Tombouctou, 1789-1805* (Rabat: Institut des études Africaines, 2007), p. 224.

53 Abu al-Hasan al-Mukhtar bin al-Hasan bin 'Abdun al-Baghdadi al-Mutatabbib (ibn Butlan), "Risāla Jāmi'a li-Funūn Nāfi'a fī Shari ar-Raqīq wa Taqlīb al-'Abīd," in: Abdelsalam Haroun (ed.), *Nawādir al-Makhtūtāt*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Company, Library, and Press of Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1973), pp. 332-349.

54 Al-Samawal bin Yahya bin 'Abbas al-Maghribi, *Nuzhat al-'Ashāb fī Mu'āsharat al-'Ahhāb* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2008).

Most markets stretched across the cities of Morocco in the south and the north were called 'yarn market' (*sūq al-ghazl*) in Marrakesh, Fez, and Ksar el-Kebir, a place designated for the sale of clothing or wool, or 'blessing market' (*sūq al-baraka*). Slaves were sold on the street only in some cities, such as Tangiers and Essaouira, or during certain times of year only.

A text published in 1885⁽⁵⁵⁾ from the memoirs of Adolphe Marcet, a French physician who travelled from Tangiers to Marrakesh via El Jadida in 1882 accompanied by an official French delegation on a visit to the sultan Hasan I, describes the slave market in Marrakesh where he observed the process of selling slaves that occurred three days of the week: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, one hour before the sunset:

The slave market is held in one of the city squares bordering the imperial palace (al-qaysariyya). It is a large square-shaped courtyard [...] the square itself is used on other days and at other times to sell various goods, especially wool, and the vacant buildings are now becoming shops [...] traffic in the square is very lively, a large number of people around it, the small adjacent shops teeming with regulars or the curious [...] The brokers begin work and start the bidding, each one of them driving three slave girls, one in front guiding the others who follow behind her, in this way they usually wander the market square unceasingly, displaying their wares and searching for customers, shouting out the requested or suggested price for each slave at the top of their voices. An Arab man squatting motioned to the broker; he was brought the slave girl he indicated. She takes a position in front of him, either standing or kneeling according to the request of the buyer who examines her from the arch of her feet to her head, inspecting her mouth, teeth, eyes, and nose, asking her age and all the details he thinks necessary, after which he makes a bid or leaves her. The slave girl collects her

clothes, the broker pulling her along, resuming his walking and shouting to stop once again at another indication, displaying his ware for the examination and appraisal of a new customer.⁽⁵⁶⁾

For several pages, the explorer continues his precise description of several women, men, and children offered for sale in the slave market. Most of those offered were women in the prime of life. All of them are black save for one white-skinned woman:

One woman with white skin, wearing the garb of the country's women, conceals her face beneath a woolen robe, only to reveal it when someone wishes to inspect her for purchase.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The account demonstrates that the slave market in Morocco was not devoid of the sale of white women who were taken prisoner during wars between tribes or kidnapped and sold to wealthy families in the urban centre. During waves of famine in Morocco, fathers would sell their children, and some would put themselves up for sale, as mentioned in the account of al-Hasan al-Wazzan in the sixteenth century.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The phenomenon of kidnapping children and selling them in the markets was widespread in nineteenth century Morocco, as related by author of *al-'Istiḡsā'* Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad bin Khalid al-Nasiri (d. 1897). Brokers did not distinguish between white and black and would kidnap:

free persons from the tribes of Morocco, its villages, and metropolises and sell them openly in the markets with neither denial of nor resentment for religion. Christians and Jews have begun to purchase and steal them within our sight and earshot.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Some leaders would organize networks specialized in the kidnapping of children and women to be sold in city markets. This phenomenon spread in Sus and continued until the arrival of the armies of the French colonizer. They also found highway robbers whose objective was to obstruct the women and kidnap the children, who were sold in secrecy and became slaves.

55 Adolphe Marcet, *Le Maroc: voyage d'une mission française à la cour du sultan* (Paris: Plon, 1885).

56 Ibid., pp. 207-208.

57 Ibid., p. 209.

58 Al-Hasan bin Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, *Wasf 'Ifriqiyyā*, Muhammad Hajji & Muhammad al-Akhdar (trans.) (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1983), p. 63.

59 Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad bin Khalid al-Nasiri, *al-'Istiḡsā' li-'Akhbār Duwal al-Maghrib al-'Aqsa*, vol. 5 (Casablanca: Dar al-Kitab, 1997), p. 137.

The description of the slave market in Marrakesh is similar to another published in a French newspaper, whose author says that for some time slaves no longer came from the African colonies but, nevertheless, slavery was still prevalent in Morocco. He locates its source in the "human flock" brought via caravan from Sus and Tafilalt. Imported slaves were sold in the markets, in most cases secretly. The author of the article describes the holding of the slave market in Marrakesh, presenting the slaves' condition, the method of sale, and the prices.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In comparison with

the previous description, we notice the decline of slave trade activities in the Marrakesh market after the collapse of trans-Saharan commerce with the occupation of the Sudan, especially Timbuktu in 1894. The same was true for markets of other cities. Another Frenchman who lived in Morocco at the beginning of the twentieth century noted the downturn in the number of slaves that were available in the markets, and the ban which now applied to public markets for the sale of slaves under European pressure.⁽⁶¹⁾

3. Human commodities

The slave market was subject to the same structure known in markets for other goods. It was supervised by trustees (*'umanā'*) who represented the leaders of the slave trade profession, notary witnesses (*'adūl shar'īyyūn*) for authentication, Makhzen officials responsible for levying taxes on sales, and brokers. The slave trade in Morocco was integrated within a local economic structure for the market, and it was an important part of the economic dynamic. The sale and purchase transactions used to occur within the markets via "professionals" who carried out the commercial dealings with human "commodities" at open auction. Most slaves were women who served in the houses of nobles and the well-to-do, and there were young women who would become concubines (*sarāya*, sing. *surriyya*). It was rare for a slaveowner to offer his ware for sale by himself. He had to turn to the services of a "broker" (*dallāl*) who would carry out the task within the market in exchange for a commission. Brokers would subtract their commission from the sale price of a slave at a rate close to 4 percent; if the sale was not completed, it became 2.5 percent.⁽⁶²⁾

The slavers used to distinguish between their "wares" according to demand because they had special

customers whose specific requests they knew. Closed sales transactions were organized parallel to the public markets at the homes of elites, for the display of the "best" goods the slavers had on hand; the rest were displayed for the masses at the weekly markets. Women slaves underwent typification into categories, and some slavers would purchase them at the prime of their lives and supervise their education in music, song, and dance to be sold to a specific class looking for this kind of slave. Demand for slaves was subject to several standards and every buyer searched for the category that suited his desires. In the records of Abdelwahid al-Marrakushi (d. 647 A.H./1250 A.D.) reaching back to the twelfth century A.D., there were classifications such as:

- "Defective slaves" (*wakhsh ar-raqīq*), she-slaves not desired for sex but for service, and their concubine counterparts (*jawāri al-wat'*) who were fit for the taking;⁽⁶³⁾ they were purchased for companionship.
- There were the expressions "elevated slaves" (*al-murtafi'āt min ar-raqīq*)⁽⁶⁴⁾ and "exalted slaves" (*al-'ulliyya min ar-raqīq*),⁽⁶⁵⁾ both of which implied high price; and

60 Archive Institute of Morocco, Rabat, stock no. E968.

61 Abel Brives, *Voyages au Maroc (1901-1907)* (Alger: Adolphe Jourdan, 1909), p. 147.

62 Schroeter, p. 193.

63 Abdelwahid al-Marrakushi, *Wathā'iq al-Murābiṭīn wa al-Muwahhidīn*, Hussein Mounes (ed.) (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqafa al-Diniya, 1997), p. 252.

64 Ibid., p. 330.

65 Ibid.

- "Defective slave-girls priced less than the exalted"⁽⁶⁶⁾ which came as counterpart to the "exalted slaves."

Not all these categories underwent the same sale process. The sale of she-slaves, especially those considered to be concubines was subject to strict standards. The inspection of these women was entrusted to female experts:

If the defect in the slave-girl is interior and men cannot see it, two trusted women among midwives and free shopkeepers inspect and make as complete a description of it as possible, and two trusted male doctors are consulted.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The sale of women poses a legal, religious, statutory, and moral problem. The essence of the issue is that they were nominated to be mothers of the sons of noblemen. The buyer was careful to inspect virginity, pregnancy, and menstrual blood and entrusted a female expert with inspecting the she-slaves.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Virgins were subject to examination of the hymen to verify the matter, which is a very sensitive process because the women were nominated to be concubines, with the resulting pregnancy, recognition of fatherhood, or even the first owner's demand to own the child born after the sale.

The sale process in the markets occurred through a contract drawn up by two notary witnesses or a judge that contained articles related to the slaves' age, gender, skin colour, physical condition, and lack of any illnesses or defects. The buyer stipulated return of the slave to the seller if defects were present, including skin diseases. The document would include the identities of the slave's previous owners, and at times every slave came with a document with information about their shift from one owner to another. Specialists in the sale and purchase of slaves ordered that the owner and slaver take care to mention the enslavement status of imported slaves, as some of them would deny that they were slaves.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Many of the slaves imported from the Sudan were free Muslims who were imprisoned during wars between tribes and ethnic groups or kidnapped from their villages to be sold as slaves. They continued, therefore, to demand their freedom to no avail. This matter sparked controversy in North Africa and the jurist Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti (1556-1627) was consulted and composed a well-known text in the juridical literature on enslavement cases known as *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ūd 'ilā Nīl Majlūb as-Sūdān*, (Ascension of the Slave Brought from Sudan to the Nile), which was published among other interpretations.⁽⁷⁰⁾

In authenticating contracts of sale, which took place at the time of arrival in Morocco, there was an acknowledgement of enslavement status that was usually not attested to begin with, but when they were legally authenticated, they became a legal reality imposed on the imprisoned and the kidnapped. Therefore, slave markets in Morocco were famous for their authentication via notary witnesses in a ledger the seller would give the buyer, which continued to accompany the slave through each transfer between several owners and remained valid after their death. This is because their children would be of enslaved status to his owner, who inherited them as he would not have acknowledged the slave's paternity in the first place; all those born of a male or female slave were the master's property.

Sale and purchase transactions were authenticated with the contracts to affirm the commercial process on one hand, and to guarantee the abundance of physical and ethical conditions for the slave's safety on the other. They included an enumeration of the defects, illnesses, and behaviours that would nullify the sale, and these contracts varied according to region and the degree of trust between seller and buyer. The notarial document was a guarantee of the sale process in place of a deed of ownership. In certain cases, the slave would try to escape, claim freedom, or had some of the illnesses and defects that necessitated his return to his seller.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., p. 331.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., p. 97.

70 Ahmad Bab bin Ahmad Abu al-'Abbas al-Timbukti, *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ūd 'ilā Nīl Majlūb as-Sūdān*, Fatima al-Harraq & John Hunwick (ed. & trans.) (Rabat: Institute for African Studies Publications, 2000).

The process of selling slaves in the Islamic world has been regulated and samples of contracts of sale and legal texts were prepared that indicate the conditions for the sale of slaves and the defects that necessitate its annulment. Juristic cases pay attention to many questions about the sale, its conditions, and cases of disputes that would result from the commercial dealings of the slave markets. Abdelwahid al-Marrakushi marked a chapter of his book titled "Characteristics of Slaves" (*nu'ūt al-'abīd*) and presented examples of the contracts, standards for the sale of slaves, their characteristics, and types.⁽⁷¹⁾

These texts served as proof for the buyer so as not to fall prey to the slavers' deceit regarding the "product." Experts in the slave trade appeared whose task was to examine the slaves closely and subject them to a thorough bodily inspection to ensure they were free of defects and illnesses, and to warn against the tricks to which the slavers would resort at the sale of a slave,

concealing his defects and, for she-slaves, applying make-up or cosmetic materials so they could be displayed looking their best, to earn the greatest profit.

A Moroccan scholar who travelled to the Arab Mashreq, al-Samawal bin Yahya bin 'Abbas al-Maghribi, whose Hebrew name was Shamu'el ben Yehuda ben Abon (d. 575 A.H.),⁽⁷²⁾ composed a book titled *Nuzhat al-'Ashāb fī Mu'āsharat al-'Ahbāb Kitāb fī al-Mu'āshara az-Zawjiyya wa 'Ādābiha wa Muta'alliqātiha*,⁽⁷³⁾ whose tenth chapter he devoted to the slave trade, titled "Commandments Beneficial to Sale and Purchase" (*wasāyā yantaḥī' bihā al-bay' wa ash-shirā'*). The book, in this chapter, is rendered literally from a work by ibn Butlan (1001-1063 AD) titled *Risāla Jāmi' li Funūn Nāfi'a fī Shira ar-Raqīq wa Taqlīb al-'Abīd*,⁽⁷⁴⁾ as well as the Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD) authored *Hidāyat al-Murīd fī Taqlīb al-'Abīd*.⁽⁷⁵⁾

4. The End of the Markets

The nineteenth century laws banning the slave trade had huge repercussions for the centuries-old slave trade between North Africa and the South Sahara. Denmark in 1802 and the United States in 1807 were among the first states to ban the slave trade, yet the British parliament's vote on a law prohibiting it was the beginning of a long path toward abolishing slavery across the world. Slavery was not finally abolished until April 1848 following the international announcement from London. In 1839, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society was established in Britain with the goal of banning the slave trade and slavery in all parts of the world and protecting the rights and interests of the liberated belonging to British colonies, to say nothing of slave prisoners across the world.

The Society exerted pressure on Morocco via the British consul-general Edward Drummond Hay, ambassador to Queen Victoria (1837-1901) who lived in Tangiers, to abolish the slave trade and slavery. The consul sent letters to the sultan Abd al-Rahman bin Hisham (1822-1859) demanding that he abolish the slave trade in the public markets. The sultan refused.⁽⁷⁶⁾ After the consul-general's death, his son John Drummond Hay assumed the position of Britain's consul-general in Morocco (spending 40 years in Morocco as his country's consul).⁽⁷⁷⁾ John Drummond Hay mediated on behalf of Morocco in several disputes with foreign states (Denmark, Sweden, Spain, and others). He received the approval of the sultan Abd al-Rahman bin Hisham of a new trade agreement, signed in 1856, and took on a central

71 Al-Marrakushi, p. 328.

72 A scholar of mathematics and physician who belonged to a Jewish family. He was born in Fez, then his father emigrated to Baghdad where he grew up and converted to Islam. He spent the rest of his life in Iran.

73 Al-Maghribi.

74 Ibn Butlan.

75 Muhammad al-Ghazali, "*Hidāyat al-Murīd fī Taqlīb al-'Abīd*," in: *Nawādir al-Makhtūāt*, pp. 393-410.

76 Samples of the correspondence between the consul and the sultan were published by Bernard Lewis in the appendix of his book.

77 He was a contemporary of three sultans: Moulay Abd al-Rahman bin Hisham, Sidi Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman (1859-1873), and Moulay al-Hasan (1873-1894).

role in convincing the Makhzen to incorporate reforms into its system.⁽⁷⁸⁾ The matter of slaves was present in those reforms the British consul called for, and John Drummond Hay⁽⁷⁹⁾ sent letters to the sultan requesting that he ban the sale of slaves in markets, as if to appoint himself the jealous guardian of Morocco's interests and reputation abroad. The sultan responded, through the vizier Mohammad Bargache, in the negative and justified not banning the slave trade and slavery by the fact that it conflicts with the precepts of religious law, and that it is a position which scholars and citizens oppose. The only concession he offered, after pressure from Britain and European states, was embodied in the prohibition of the public sale of slaves in the coastal cities where European consulates and business dealings were located, followed by the inland cities where Europeans also resided. These states were reminded of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with the horrific exploitation and harsh treatment to which the Africans who were brought to work on the farms of the Caribbean and America were subject, and some representatives compared it to the ancient style of slavery that was prevalent in Athens.

The slave trade was not a phenomenon condemned by Western associations, Christian lobbying groups, and European states alone. Rather, men from within Moroccan society set out to condemn the slave trade and slavery, their rancour having been provoked by the phenomenon of markets in the cities and the sale of black people. Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad bin Khalid al-Nasiri, author of the book *al-'Istiqsā'* was among those who strongly denounced the enslavement, importation, and sale of the people from Sudan in Morocco's markets on charges of unbelief, despite their being among "the most virtuous nations in terms of submission to Islam and piety"⁽⁸⁰⁾ describing the phenomenon of their enslavement as a "disaster":

And hereby, the hideousness of what the disaster has wrought upon the lands of Maghreb appears clearly to you: the enslavement of the people

of the Sudan, without doubt; the importation of flocks of them every year; and their sale in the markets of Morocco. Through it, they act as brokers as they do with draft animals—more indecent, in fact. People have assisted each other with that across generations in succession until much of the masses began to understand that the legal motive for enslavement is to be black and imported from that region. This, I swear to God, is among the greatest and obscenest atrocities in religion, for the people of the Sudan are a Muslim people. What is ours is theirs, and what we must do they must do. If we supposed that among them were idolaters or followers of a religion other than Islam, the majority among them today and far in the past is Islam, and majority rules. If we supposed that it were not the majority, and that unbelief and Islam were evenly distributed among them, who is to say then that the imported among them is of the unbelievers, not the Muslims?⁽⁸¹⁾

Al-Nasiri attacks the slavers who justified their selling of slaves with the presumption that the people of the Sudan are non-Muslim unbelievers whose sale is permitted and accuses the procurers and dealers of lying, because those who deal in these people brought from the Sudan were untruthful in their claim that they were non-Muslims. Deceit and immorality to promote his product are in the slaver's nature.⁽⁸²⁾

Al-Nasiri defends the end of the sale of slaves in the markets he once observed himself, having worked in Marrakesh, Fez, and other Moroccan cities hosting slave markets. He offers strong religious arguments to confront both the seller and the buyer, explaining his position with texts from the Qur'an, Sunna, and the books of the imams (i.e., Malik bin Anas), calling for independent judgment according to the Maliki school of jurisprudence on "blocking the means," and clarifying that the reason for legal slavery, which existed in the time of the Prophet, is lost today. Even if a person were confused by this matter, al-Nasiri

78 See: Khalid Ben Srhir, *al-Maghrib fī al-'Arshīf al-Barīāni: Murāsālāt Jūn Drāmūd Hāy ma'a al-Makhzin* (1846-1886), 2nd ed. (Rabat: Dar Abi Raqraq for Printing and Publishing, 2009).

79 Samples of the correspondence are in the appendix of Khalid Ben Srhir and Mohamed Ennaji's article: Ennaji & Ben Srhir, pp. 276-281.

80 Al-Nasiri vol. 5, p. 136.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., pp. 136-138.

commands him, relying upon the prophetic tradition: "Consult your heart [...] even though people have repeatedly given their legal opinion."⁽⁸³⁾ Even in the event that a people of the Sudan were unbelievers, the enslavement of and trading in human beings is not warranted, because "the foundation of the human species is freedom and the absence of a motive for enslavement, and he who argues for something other than freedom argues for something other than the foundation."⁽⁸⁴⁾

Nearly half a century after this text was written, the French colonial authorities depended on it when waging their campaign against the slave trade and slavery in Morocco. Édouard Michaux-Bellaire translated it into French in 1928 and presented it as an argument to the administration of the French protectorate in facing some religious circles in Morocco that were refusing to ban slavery on religious pretexts. In a report he wrote the same year on slavery in Morocco, Michaux-Bellaire praised Ahmad bin Khalid al-Nasiri as a model for the enlightened world.⁽⁸⁵⁾ The French translation of his position on slavery was published in 1936 titled *Legal considerations on slavery in Morocco (Considérations juridiques sur l'esclavage au Maroc)*.⁽⁸⁶⁾

During the second half of the nineteenth century, pressures mounted on the Moroccan sultan to abolish

the slave trade. Despite the sultans' use of religion as justification for the practice of slavery, some made decisions attempted to limit it, such as the initiative of sultan Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman (1859-1873) who, in 1863, decided that every slave to flee to the Makhzen seeking protection would not be returned to his master, to whom the sultan would pay compensation.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The reality is that slaves did not obtain their freedom with this protection and were instead integrated into the army of the Makhzen; it was thus a secret transaction, as was the case of the the Black Guard (*jaysh al-bukhāri*). The Makhzen purchased slaves from their masters indirectly via this compensation, and the former became slaves of the Makhzen. What is notable is that this same initiative did not meet with wide implementation, and it was generally limited to leaders and shaykhs. The slaves taking refuge in the palace were not returned, as these masters were themselves servants of the Makhzen, which could take away their wealth at any time. These "servants" of the sultan were no different from other servants in the view of the Makhzen.

In 1905, the sultan Moulay Abdelaziz banned the public slave markets in cities, especially the coastal ones, but the markets in desert and inland regions remained active until French colonization.

Conclusion

Slavery was a major issue for Western public opinion and the consuls of European states, especially Britain and France, laid pressure on the Moroccan Makhzen to abolish the slave trade. But the announcement of the French protectorate in Morocco in 1912 proved an opportunity for France to successfully abolish both the open and clandestine slave trade, and slavery in general. It becomes clear, through tracing the custodial French state's policy, that France tended to its present political interests before all else in dealing

with the issue of slavery in Morocco, and it adopted a pragmatic policy reflecting the dissonance between discourse and practice. In the regions occupied by France, public sale was prohibited at a time when a secret trade flourished under the Makhzen's protection: conducted by the pashas, leaders, and nobles.

The slave trade and slavery slowly disappeared in Morocco. This slow death, as is the case in other

83 Ibid., p. 138.

84 Ibid., p. 136.

85 Édouard Michaux-Bellaire, *Note sur le commerce des esclaves* (Salé: 20/10/1928); Archives du Maroc, Rabat, F155.

86 Ahmed Ibn Khaled En-Naciri, "Considérations juridiques sur l'esclavage au Maroc," *Archives Marocaines*, vol. 34 (1936), pp. 129-236.

87 Ennaji & Ben Srhir, p. 251.

African countries,⁽⁸⁸⁾ was the result of the evolution of Moroccan society over the twentieth century, when the place for slave markets and traditional enslavement practices disappeared in the modern state.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The end of slavery in Morocco was imposed by the reality of social transformations, the proof of which is that till today no law officially banning slaver exists in Morocco, save for the fifth section of the 1962 constitution, stipulating that all Moroccan citizens are equal before the law and Moroccan accession of international agreements against slavery.

88 Paul Lovejoy & Jan Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

89 On the path to abolishing slavery in Morocco, see: Roger Botte, *Esclavages et abolitions en terres d'Islam* (Bruxelles: André Versailles Éditeur, 2010), pp. 145-175.

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