Chapter 1

Slavery, the Bilād al-Sūdān, and the Frontiers of the African Diaspora

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The enslavement of Africans in the interior of West Africa produced a far-reaching diaspora that occupied an ambiguous place in the Islamic world. The political and religious issues in the Sūdān (land of the Blacks) underlying the enslavement of people emphasized borders and frontiers – political, religious, ethnic, and commercial. People were enslaved in the wars and military actions of ambitious states vying to expand or otherwise raise taxes from reluctant populations, and hence the frontiers between states and remote communities who wanted to be beyond the reach of the state were dangerous areas. The religious controversy among Muslims over issues of governance was another factor, with people categorized ethnically as belonging or not. Such divisions spawned commercial frontiers that had to be crossed because of political insecurity and ideological disagreement. This emphasis on frontiers suggests a method, that is comparative, for considering the relationship between Islam, slavery and diaspora that explores different types of frontiers – not only Muslim versus non-Muslim but also among Muslims—those who supported Islamic jihad versus those associated with a “quietest” tradition of tolerance. Frontiers can also be observed in the transformation of religious commitment, depending upon whether the enslaved stayed in West Africa, crossed the Sahara, or were taken to the Americas. We can examine internal, personal frontiers, and external, political frontiers. We find enslaved Muslims from West Africa living in non-Muslim, indeed Christian, lands in the Americas, as well as in the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire that were Muslim regimes. And many enslaved Africans stayed in the Sūdān. The book examines the conditions of slavery facing Muslims and converts to Islam both in the Sūdān and the broader diaspora of Africans.

This collection of essays offers a new paradigm, one in which the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic worlds of slavery are brought into focus under the same lens. While slave studies have considered trans-Atlantic slavery and slavery in the world of Islam, there has been little attempt to incorporate both trajectories for
enslaved Africans into the same volume in which many of the same questions are being asked. Both the Saharan and the Atlantic worlds drew upon the western and central Sudan for the enslaved population that was imported, but in general the two markets for slaves are treated in isolation and without reference to the common bond of Islam and the multiple roles that Islam has played in the history of slavery, whether in West Africa itself, the Americas, or the Islamic Mediterranean. Western Africa serves as the point of dispersion across desert and sea, but it was also the final destination of many of those who were enslaved but who were not transported across the Atlantic or the Sahara.

Enslaved Muslims and non-Muslims who were brought into the world of Islam re-enforced or invented cultural features that were central to their identities as people from the central Sudan. In North Africa, the enslaved spoke Hausa or Kanuri, the principal languages of the central lands of Sūdān, and also the languages inevitably spoken by those slaves who remained behind and were not sent into diaspora. The enslaved were incorporated into the Islamic fold, but haphazardly and not always successfully. Spirit possession cults (bori) that derived from the central Sudan spread wherever the enslaved were found. Those of the enslaved who went to the Americas, heavily concentrated in northeastern Brazil, rallied around issues that reflected the jihad movement, but also suggest the presence of bori.

In the Sūdān, people had long been exposed to slavery and enslavement, often justified on religious grounds. Muslims were concerned with issues of legitimate enslavement and the protection of the rights and freedoms of Muslims. Who could be enslaved, when, and why – these were the questions. The Sūdān was a frontier zone of enslavement, in which non-Muslims were subjected to enslavement through raiding, war, and kidnapping. Muslims could lose their religious protection against enslavement, and instead of being ransomed after capture in war might be sold instead. The consolidation of a Muslim theocracy in the form of the Sokoto Caliphate, which emerged as the result of jihad, and the reform of Borno, also an Islamic state, had implications for the place of the enslaved in the history of the Sūdān and the history of the African diaspora and the place of enslaved Muslims in the diaspora. Both Sokoto and Borno were concerned with issues of justified enslavement, protection against sale to Christians, and the enforcement of religious and legal norms for the amelioration of slavery in their own societies.
The essays in this volume examine slavery on the frontiers of Islam, frontiers that were complex because they were layered. On one level there were the slaving frontiers on the edges of the Muslim emirates that reveal the mechanism through which the region was enmeshed in the slave trade, including trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic. These slaving frontiers were the means by which people were forcibly integrated into the Muslim world, inevitably becoming Muslim if not previously so, and adapting various religious practices connected with spirit possession when enslaved in Muslim countries. People crossed the frontier into Dār al-Islām but in a manner that retained religious beliefs that were not Muslim. Dār al-Islām, the world of Islam, and Dār al-ḥarb, the land of Unbelief, was a dichotomy reflected in the ethnic categorization expressed in the writings of Ahmad Bābā in the early 17th century and institutionalized in the jihad of `Uthman dan Fodio after 1804. Who was a Muslim and what was Islamic practice were ongoing subjects of debate.

As a result, Muslims also found themselves being enslaved and experiencing slavery, and they were sometimes thrust into areas that were predominately not Muslim, and indeed across the Atlantic to the Americas. On this level, despite their status as slave or free, Muslims were beyond the frontiers of Islam, Dār al-ḥarb, outside Dār al-Islām. This status as foreigner, religious deviant, and in the minority was not new to many Muslims. In West Africa, Muslims were used to being a minority and living in enclaves in towns along trade routes and at the capitals and main towns of the non-Muslim states near the coast. The efforts of enslaved Muslims in the Americas to sustain the institutions of their faith and reconstitute the Muslim jamā’ā (community) fitted into an existing pattern of group identity and cultural survival, despite the added burden of slavery and the trans-Atlantic voyage. Cultural traits and artefacts survived, in music, in spirituality, and in autonomy. Mementos and symbolic representations of the past provide cultural indicators of a lost era and the gradual demise and transformation of Islamic practice after the ending of slavery in the Americas and the institutionalization of non-Muslim practices in Islamic North Africa. The symbolic importance of tradition connects the present with the past and now has methodological significance for researchers. The historical analysis of "survivals" is essential in connecting the diaspora to African history because what survived depended upon who survived.

It can be assumed that most Muslims in Africa had a clear understanding of the institution of slavery, including considerations of the possibility of enslavement to non-Muslims, even Christians. This was reflected in the ongoing discourse in West Africa among
Muslims about issues relating to slavery and the status of those who were potentially enslaveable. Whether slave or free, Muslims had expectations and a strategy of behaviour for living in the land of unbelief that arose from their faith. The Islamic conception of slavery, both in Islamic West Africa and in North Africa, where enslaved Africans were taken, included a variety of institutions that allowed possibilities for emancipation. The experiences of slaves in Muslim areas, at least, may have encouraged Muslim slaves to seek avenues of freedom within the system. Whether these attitudes crossed the Atlantic is difficult to determine, but in those places in the Americas where Muslims were most visible, there were mechanisms of achieving emancipation, whether or not Muslims temporarily passed themselves off as Christians.¹

MAP OF NORTH AFRICA, SAHARA AND WEST AFRICA

While the situations in West Africa and the Americas were different, the extent to which practices in the Americas conformed to Islamic practices in West Africa has yet to be explored. Islamic practice allowed freeborn Muslims to redeem themselves by paying a ransom price. This concept was applied to Christian slaves in North Africa
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until the early nineteenth century. Islamic practice also allowed slaves to work on their own account under a system, known as murgu in Hausa, which had striking similarities with the contracts between masters and slaves in Bahia that permitted slaves there to work for themselves in return for specified payments enabling them to live on their own and even earn their freedom. In Bahia and Trinidad, at least, Muslims who had achieved emancipation were involved in credit associations aimed at freeing other Muslims. Whether in Africa or the Americas, enslaved Muslims had views on their responsibilities and duties as Muslims, and even in the Americas sometimes appear to have interpreted their condition in terms compatible with what they might have expected in West Africa.

The development of patron-client relationships among Muslims and between Muslims and their masters can be noted, and the frequency of Muslims in supervisory and skilled occupations indicates a tendency towards self-reliance. Bilālī, a Muslim overseer on Sapelo Island, Georgia, was prepared to defend the island and his master's plantation against British invasion during the War of 1812. His Muslim community had made its peace with the plantation owner, and Bilālī wanted to protect its autonomy. Muslims may have obtained leadership positions in the Americas because of literacy and the discipline of the religious instruction, which were associated with class distinctions in West Africa. These distinctions were subordinated to plantation slavery, but the court testimonies following the Malé uprising in Bahia reveal a respect among Yoruba Muslims for Hausa and Fulbe malam that would have been familiar in West Africa, and in the late 1840s, one Fulbe cleric from Kano expressed his superiority to other Muslims in Brazil in terms that evince extreme ethnic and class consciousness. Although solidarity among Muslims often overrode the slave/free division, the Muslim community still retained a series of ethnic/religious layers that demonstrate that the African diaspora was composed of overlapping diasporas. Muslims frequently distinguished themselves from non-Muslims in the Americas. Although literate Muslims were found in many parts of the Americas, we have only glimpses of their writing and hence are not able to determine the extent of West African influence. Qur'ānic quotations and amulets abound, but there is little evidence of jihad literature, although it represented the flowering of Arabic writing in West Africa.

African Muslims confronted issues of race in different ways, depending upon whether they remained in West Africa, crossed the Sahara, or were taken to the Americas. As “Sūdān-” they were
already classified racially within Islam; theirs was the land of the blacks, and they were al-Sūdānī. At times there was disagreement over whether that status in itself constituted unbelief and therefore allowed for the enslavement of people on the basis of that status alone. Ahmad Bābā specifically argued against this interpretation, but in the course of doing so, shifted the debate over the legitimacy of enslavement from race to religion and ethnicity. The racial classification was reformulated in the Americas, where religious background was not significant, and race became all important, and race remained a factor underlying slavery in the Maghreb, although not exclusively so. Only in West Africa was race not a factor, but there ethnic divisions were the underpinning of the institution.

These essays allow us to ask questions about the relationship between slavery, race, and religion keeping in mind that the expectations of people, whether enslaved or free, was shaped by their experiences. What happened to people in North Africa who were designated as Südānī after they had been integrated and where conversion, if necessary, had long since taken place? What was different about the experiences of enslaved Muslims in the Americas, where racial features were more significant than adherence to Islam? Can we compare the racialism of North Africa with the religious persecution experienced by Muslims in the Americas, and the ways in which people in North African relied on bori and zār, while Muslims in the Americas flirted with quasi-“conversion” to Christianity to protect their autonomy as Muslims.

The essays focus on the central Sudan but represent in varying degree the whole Sudanic belt. The dominant political event was the jihad of ‘Uthmān dan Fodio, 1804-08, and the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate and related jihad states in the western Sudan, especially Massina, Segu Toucouleur, Futa Jallon, and Futa Toro. The essays demonstrate common themes that can be traced from West Africa to North Africa and the Americas. Hence Hunwick and Montana look at Black religious practices in diaspora in the Islamic lands of North Africa and the Middle East, while various essays look at the history of enslaved Muslims in the Americas and the context for their survival and ultimately their attempts to return to Africa. The volume examines conversion and resistance to conversion in the context of slavery. The focus is on Muslims in non-Muslim, especially Christian, lands, and slaves, whether Muslim or originally not, brought into Muslim countries. In a sense the regions of origin for the people being studied here are the same, but the fate of enslavement was different depending upon whether individuals were
taken to North Africa or the Americas or whether they remained in West Africa.

The studies examine religious deviance and protest as a means of self expression and community solidification, whether that deviance be defined in terms of the dominance of Christianity, orisha, and vodun in those parts of the Americas where Muslims tended to be taken, or in the expression of spirit possession alongside Islamic rituals and orthodoxy in North Africa, and indeed in the Sudan. Religious expression, both in the Americas and in North Africa, had an ethnic dimension, Islam often being identified with Mandingo in the Americas, and bori usually being associated with Hausa or Borno in North Africa. In the Americas, where race was ultimately the determinant in social relationships, slavery reinforced orthodoxy among Muslims, who tried to maintain an educational system and the Arabic language, while slavery in North Africa reinforced resistance to monotheism and Islamic orthodoxy.

Frontiers and boundaries are internal and external. They are what people cross in establishing an identity with a community, and the means of conforming to the strictures of belonging requires recognition of boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not. In this volume, the frontier is inward and outward, and hence is understandably ambiguous. Muslims, under slavery, extended Dār al-Islām into the Americas. Their path from freedom to slavery was in contrast to many of those in West Africa who passed from freedom into slavery in the Islamic states of the Sudan, the Maghreb, and the Ottoman Porte. Slavery crossed Atlantic and Sahara.

The presence of enslaved Muslims in the Americas indicates a direct and virtually continuous link between diaspora and homeland. Islam was a carefully prescribed way of life that involved identification with a community as well as specific religious beliefs and practices. The Islamic past in Africa mattered to enslaved Muslims, and the five pillars of faith, literacy in Arabic, dietary restrictions, and religiously sanctioned customs of naming, marriage, and death required them to interact within a wider world that drew on a common tradition and experience for believers. While there was nothing static about the history of enslaved Muslims, they brought with them to the Americas the concept of a timeless Dār al-Islām. Moreover, Muslims were slaves elsewhere; when compared with the experiences of enslaved Muslims in West Africa, the Sahara, the Maghreb, and the Ottoman domains, the adjustments to slavery in the Americas take on new meaning.

West African experience shaped the perceptions of slavery held by enslaved Muslims. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and
nineteenth centuries, at least, most Muslims were familiar with the various circumstances in which enslaved Muslims might find themselves, including bondage to Christians. Such matters were discussed in a great number of books and treatises that circulated among the literate Muslim elite and became part of the educational curriculum for Muslims in West Africa during the era of trans-Atlantic slavery. Slavery was perceived as a temporary status, at least for freeborn Muslims and those who could secure their freedom. Hence many Muslims tried to find ways to earn their own freedom, often through self-purchase, or to ransom relatives and spouses. And they applied their understanding of slavery in West Africa in attempts to ameliorate the conditions of slavery in the Americas. Expectations based on their understanding of the institution may help to explain why Muslim slaves stand out in the Americas, holding managerial and other favoured positions out of proportion to their numbers.

I am suggesting that as enslaved Muslims from West Africa in the Americas, they maintained a sense of continuity with the African past that was impervious to the process of “creolization.” The discussion of agency in the emergence of identifiable communities has not always recognized such continuities, focusing instead on the creative adaptability of enslaved Africans to the conditions of slavery in the Americas. I argue that the formulation of culture and identity under slavery involved more than the mixing of European and African cultures. Situations in which people resisted incorporation to such an extent that they developed a separate subculture should be distinguished from those in which people produced "creole" cultures. That conditions in the Americas were different from conditions in Africa is not to be doubted, but the experiences of some Muslim slaves demonstrate that they responded to their bondage on the basis of historical continuities.

The continuity in African traditions provided the context for the reformulation of culture that eventually emerged as "creole." Immigrant communities have demonstrated remarkable variation in the degree to which they maintained their cultural and linguistic autonomy and the intensity of their ties to a homeland or their quest for a reconstituted homeland. Like other immigrants, enslaved Africans adjusted to their new environment, despite the conditions of slavery, through reformulations of ethnic identities and adjustments to new cultural norms. One of the repercussions of the Atlantic slave trade, therefore, was an extension of the views of Islamic West Africa on slavery into the diaspora. While some newly arrived slaves moved quickly into the dominant cultural and ethnic strata that
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developed under slavery, Muslims, as a group at least, tended to resist the assimilation implied by "creolization." Indeed, the Islamic world itself incorporated people through a process, which might also be called "creolization," that inhibited their adoption of features of other cultures.

In examining the proposition that Islam was one African tradition that resisted "creolization," as usually defined in the context of the Americas, I concentrate on the following topics: (1) the debate among Muslims in West Africa over "legitimate" enslavement, which reveals the roles of religion and ethnicity in the evolution of the internal political economy of West Africa, which fully recognized and sanctioned slavery; (2) the relationship of the jihad movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the slave trade, including the generation of an internal population of slaves who themselves were in diaspora; (3) the roles of the Muslim commercial system in the interior of West Africa in the movement of slaves to market and of the acculturation of slaves being delivered to market that itself constituted a form of "creolization"; and (4) the applicability of the concept of Dār al-Islām to the study of slavery and the African diaspora in the Americas.

The argument developed here conflicts with the general thrust of slave studies in the Americas, which emphasize the processes of cultural amalgamation and reformulation which Ortiz called "transculturation" and Mintz and Price have described as "creolization." Although the studies recognize the importance of cultural "survivals," neither the concept of "creolization" nor the concept of "transculturation" allows for continuing links between the diaspora and the African homeland during the slavery era. Enslaved Africans are treated as a "crowd" whose diverse origins undermined most cultural and historical continuities. Despite the historical specificities of religion and culture that tied coastal western Africa to American slave societies, the impact of the African past on the development of the diaspora is usually ignored, generalized, or romanticized.

The approach advocated here draws on the early work of Nina Rodrigues (later developed by Pierre Verger) on the interaction of historical forces across the Atlantic during the era of slavery. Nina Rodrigues represents an old, but often overlooked, literature on Muslims in Brazil that dates back to the end of the 19th century. Rodriguez mistakenly applied a sort of social Darwinism to explain what he considered a hierarchy among Africans, with those from the Sudan superior, and has been criticized as racist, but it is useful to remember the context in which he worked at the end of the
nineteenth century, when his understanding of African history was limited to what he could learn in Brazil. Given the limitations of knowledge, he had a relatively clear idea of the impact of the jihad movement in West Africa and the relationship of that movement to the enforced exile of enslaved Muslims in Brazil. This trans-Atlantic approach demonstrates how enslaved Africans adapted their African background to the setting of slavery. Adjustment to slavery was a dynamic process in which slaves struggled to shape their sense of identity and to establish their place in the slave community. Determining how the African background contributed to this process is the challenge facing scholars. The impressive body of material that can be characterized as "survivals" has to be placed in historical context to identify the components that the slaves themselves brought to the Americas. Moreover, biographical materials that allow analysis of the movement of individuals, especially Muslims, into the diaspora have long been available. African history extended into the diaspora in ways that require further research and reflection, but given the extensive archival materials that have not yet been examined and other data that are widely dispersed, more extensive analysis will be possible in the not too distant future.

Enslaved Muslims in West Africa, and indeed many non-Muslims who had been enslaved by Muslims, lived in a world in which issues of slavery were interpreted through the teaching and practice of Islam. The literate tradition of legal and historical commentary that recognized slavery and described its various conditions was virtually unknown to slave masters in the Americas, of course, but the Muslim view of slavery was still shaped by this Islamic African tradition. The questions facing Muslims, whether slave or free, were common throughout the wider world of Islam; regional and local variations were expected and interpreted accordingly.

For Muslims from West Africa, the long tradition of learned debate over matters of slavery focused on the legitimacy of enslavement. As John Ralph Willis has argued, the Islamic underpinnings of slavery in the West African context date to the medieval period. Indeed, the Muslim intelligentsia of the western Sudan discussed slavery and its relationship to Islam even before the first enslaved Africans reached the Americas. Independent of the Atlantic crossing, the slave trade raised issues of legality, in which grievances of Muslims who claimed to have been wrongly enslaved challenged legal scholars to reflect on a political economy that was preoccupied with the clash between legitimacy and arbitrary rule. The replies of al-Maghīlī to the scholars of Timbuktu in the 1490s
are instructive. He argued that the establishment of a Muslim
government, though achieved through coup d'état, was justified;
jihad was advocated to consolidate and expand Muslim rule.
Inevitably, the issue of "just" enslavement was addressed. This
debate preceded by a few decades the arguments of Las Casas that
the enslavement of Africans was a means of limiting the destructive
impact of Spanish rule on the Amerindian population of the
Americas.18

Aḥmad Bābā, the most important Muslim commentator on
slavery in West Africa before the early nineteenth century, outlined
the categories of people who could be enslaved "legitimately" in the
interior, a subject which had also been addressed in the earlier
writings of al-Maghīlī and other Muslim scholars.19 Aḥmad Bābā's
career coincided with the Moroccan conquest and occupation of
Songhay after 1591.20 As a member of the Timbuktu 'ulamā’, he was
adamantly opposed to the Moroccan invasion, and as a result was
imprisoned and removed to Morocco along with other captives.
Though he was eventually released and returned to Timbuktu, his
experience in captivity in Morocco under conditions of dubious
legality made him uniquely qualified to write on matters of slavery.
Morocco's subjugation of Songhay had pitted Muslim state against
Muslim state, and through captivity Aḥmad Bābā had undoubtedly
come into contact with slaves of many backgrounds, an experience
which must have informed his commentary on the legal and religious
issues dealing with slavery. Aḥmad Bābā was formulating his views
on the problem virtually at the same time that Father Baltasar
Barreira was writing his treatise in Portuguese justifying the
enslavement of Africans on the coast of Sierra Leone.21

In 1615, after returning to Timbuktu as a free man, Aḥmad
Bābā attempted to establish measures for the protection of Muslims
from unjust enslavement and addressed issues of who could be
enslaved and under what conditions. While condemning war
between Muslim states, and specifically such unprovoked invasions
as Morocco's of Songhay, he nonetheless condemned states whose
Muslim rulers were lax in the defence of Islam, tolerating "pagan"
beliefs and relying on slave armies that readily enslaved Muslims. In
his defence of Islam, he set the curriculum on matters of slavery and
ethnicity for subsequent generations. Later criticisms of the militarist
regimes of the Bambara states of Segu and Kaarta and of the Hausa
states of Gobir, Kano, and Katsina focused on their tolerance of non-
Muslim practices while relying on Muslim merchants and seeking
the advice and services of an urban 'ulamā’.22 Such critiques
specifically referred to Aḥmad Bābā.
Ahmad Bamba’s major contribution to the slavery debate was his categorization of ethnic groups whose enslavement he believed was justifiable. The ethnic terms of this discourse - "Bambara," "Yoruba," "Mandinke," "Hausa," and "Fulbe/Fulani" - carried over into the trans-Atlantic trade. The overlap with European terms suggests an influence from this early theoretical discussion, but the significance of this shared terminology has yet to be established. The ethnic terms in Ahmad Bamba’s writings and evident in later texts following his influence recognized a series of dichotomies - between the central and western Sudan, between Muslims and non-Muslims, between Fulbe and Bambara, between Bambara and Mandingo/Malinke, and between Fulani and Habe/Hausa in the central Sudan.

MOSQUE OF JENNE, 1907

The extent to which the enslaved carried these distinctions into the diaspora is unclear, but there is some indication that Muslims sometimes distinguished among themselves on the basis of ethnic categories that conformed to Ahmad Bamba’s terminology.23

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Islamic schools across western Africa taught the principles of slavery that derived from Ahmad Bamba. At Agades, where Jibril b. ‘Umar attained prominence in the last third of the eighteenth century, the Songhay texts were basic to the curriculum. ‘Uthman dan Fodio, Muhammad
Bello, and Abdullahi dan Fodio, who were strongly influenced by this literary tradition, revitalized the arguments of Ahmad Bābā in justifying jihad to protect Muslims from wrongful enslavement and to sanction the enslavement of the enemies of jihad, even those enemies who were Muslims. The many references in the writings of the Sokoto leadership reveal the extent of the intellectual and ideological debt to the tradition of scholarship epitomized by Ahmad Bābā.

This scholarly tradition had profound consequences for later impositions of Islamic rule. Governments that were in fact ruled by Muslims were declared apostate, just as Askia Muhammad had pronounced Sunni Ali's regime in Songhay in 1492-93. Military action was considered justified if it imposed a government that was perceived to be Muslim in its orthodoxy. As Islamic governments were re-established in the western Sudan after the late seventeenth century, it became necessary to justify the results of victories that entailed large-scale enslavement, especially enslavement of freeborn Muslims. The parallel between the invasion of Muslim Songhay by Muslim Morocco and the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in Muslim Borno revealed the contradictions in linking enslavement with religion. In both cases, Muslims attacked Muslim governments. Ahmad Bābā denounced the enslavement of Muslims in the wake of the Moroccan invasion of Songhay, and Muhammad al-Kānimī accused Sokoto of supporting the uprising in Borno and therefore undermining a legitimate Muslim government. Borno had long maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim states; its ‘ulamā’ were fully conversant with the Islamic debate over slavery. The increasing intolerance of non-Muslim practices by the Sokoto leadership was neither universal nor readily accepted. Pressure from Sokoto only succeeded in setting the stage for Islamic reform within Borno and the ouster of the ancient dynasty of the Muslim Sayfawa.

As this brief overview demonstrates, the debate over legitimate enslavement in West Africa began before the abolitionist era in European thought and continued after the end of British involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807. The two traditions, one centred in the Islamic world and the other in the European-dominated Atlantic world, highlight issues of perspective in studying slavery. The Sokoto-Borno discourse was clearly in the tradition of Ahmad Bābā and the scholarship of the western Sudan, but it took place in the context of the larger confrontation between Islam and Christian Europe in the Mediterranean and eastern Europe. Muhammad Bello recognized this confrontation in his most famous
work, *Infāq al-maysūr* (1812), which condemned the sale of slaves to Christians. Although there is no direct evidence that the Sokoto-Borno debate was in any way influenced by European critiques of slavery preceding the abolition of the slave trade to the Americas in the 1820s, Muhammad Bello displayed a knowledge of the slavery debate taking place in the Christian West that was well informed, certainly better informed than European knowledge of the geography of the interior of West Africa at the time.

Although the conditions of slavery prevented the development of a community that could practise its religion in public, Arabic literacy among African Muslims in the Americas was probably much greater than most people would readily believe or even some specialists would find easy to accept. Since the focus of much Islamic scholarship was on commentary, Muslims often read and discussed excerpts from the earlier, classical texts, thereby acquiring a general knowledge of Islamic history and legal opinion as well as of matters directly related to religious worship. The literary tradition was profound and is known to have spread to the Americas from West Africa. The role of literacy in maintaining a sense of community is crucial for understanding the development of the Muslim diaspora. As Hunwick's extensive bibliography of Arabic writing in West Africa demonstrates, literacy was both widespread and sufficiently important in government, religion, education, and trade to have had a major impact on the interaction between the Muslim world and the Atlantic economy in the era of trans-Atlantic slavery. It is unclear, however, to what extent Muslims were able to maintain contact, through writing or oral transmission, across the Atlantic. A full search of archival and published sources on the topic is warranted.

Islam and slavery were linked through jihad, and the correlation became closer over the course of the Atlantic slave trade. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stand out because there were clearly defined surges in exports related to the outbreak of jihad in the Futa Jallon highlands and Senegambia. Very few slaves came from Muslim areas of the central Sudan in this period. In the century after 1650, almost all enslaved Muslims came from the far western Sudan, particularly the Senegambia basin and the upper Niger region. It was there that Muslim reformers again promoted holy war to establish Islamic government. Prisoners of this western jihad movement became an increasingly significant proportion of slave exports from this region. Although the Islamic credentials of many of these enslaved people were called into question, I consider most of the people leaving the far western Sudan by the late seventeenth
century to have been Muslims, more or less. They were often referred to as Mandingo; they were found in Brazil, Jamaica, Louisiana, South Carolina, St. Domingue, and elsewhere before the late eighteenth century. In Louisiana, the designation "Bambara" also included Muslims. Since the term was often used in West Africa to indicate that a person had non-Muslim status and hence was subject to legitimate enslavement, most slaves sold to European merchants in the Senegambia region were classified as non-Muslims by the Muslim merchants selling them. The label did not necessarily mean that someone was not at least nominally Muslim or had become Muslim in the course of enslavement.

In the nineteenth century, by contrast, more and more slaves from the interior of West Africa reached the coast, and increasingly jihad was a factor. Late in the eighteenth century, but especially in the nineteenth century, enslaved Africans from the central Sudan began to be an important component of the enslaved population leaving from the Bight of Benin and to a lesser extent the Gold Coast. Hence the sources of enslaved Muslims came to encompass a broad belt from Senegambia eastward as far as Bagirmi, southeast of Lake Chad, as La Rue demonstrates in this volume. The spread of jihad from the Senegambia eastward to the central Sudan was a major factor in this expansion. While the earliest Muslim slaves were from the western Sudan and were scattered among many colonies in the Americas, the second wave of enslaved Muslims came from the central Sudan, leaving ports in the Bight of Benin, almost always bound for Bahia. In contrast to the dispersal of Muslims from the western Sudan in the earlier period, the second emigration was more concentrated in its impact, tying the central Sudan very specifically to northeastern Brazil, where they were known as Malê.

Enslavement of Muslims was one of the causes of the jihad of 1804-1808 in the central Sudan. 'Uthmān dan Fodio complained about the enslavement of Muslims by the Hausa states, and the increasing numbers of Muslims from the central Sudan who show up in plantation records and inventories in the last two decades of the eighteenth century appear to confirm these complaints. Despite the intentions of the jihad, however, the consolidation of the Sokoto Caliphate only increased the level of enslavement, including large numbers of Muslims, but there was an attempt to limit the sale of slaves to the Americas. The jihad in the Yoruba region, moreover, led to the destruction of Oyo and the consolidation of Muslim government among the northern Yoruba, and in its course it initiated what have often been referred to as the Yoruba wars of the nineteenth century. These wars account for the majority of enslaved
Yoruba deported to the Americas in the nineteenth century, principally to Bahia and Cuba. The interrelationship among these different jihad struggles, the political regimes that were installed, and the intellectual and religious debate over interpretations of Islamic society and government raise questions that are worthy subjects of separate study.

The extension of the Muslim diaspora to the Americas was a consequence of the various divisions of western Africa in time and space (between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and between the western and central Sudan) and the ability and willingness of some Muslims to tolerate religious syncretism while others were committed to jihad and enslavement as a means of conversion and enforcement of orthodoxy. There were at least two cohorts of enslaved Muslims in diaspora, therefore, each reflecting different historical experiences in West Africa. The commitment to peaceful settlement among non-Muslims and the conditions of trading through areas not under Muslim control meant that many Muslims had to display a level of toleration that was strongly opposed by those committed to jihad and the violent extension of the borders of Islamic government. Muslim merchants crisscrossed West Africa, often marrying local women and usually maintaining strong links with distant towns. Because of this network, the issues of accommodation versus militarism were widely discussed, and hence quite naturally were transferred to Bahia, Jamaica and elsewhere in the Americas in the nineteenth century. The debate that emerged in West Africa between quietist toleration of Muslim minority status and sufist advocacy of jihad decidedly affected the attitudes of enslaved Muslims in the Americas, as the 1835 uprising in Bahia demonstrated.

The context of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Muslims is seen in a different perspective when the Islamic world, including Ottoman-dominated North Africa, the Sahara and the Sudan, are examined. As is evident from the scale of the slave trade and the importance of slavery in the history of the Muslim world during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, being Muslim in a large part of the world, not just western Africa, meant having a distinctive view of slavery. Following enslaved Muslims to the Americas, therefore, requires focusing on different types of diaspora. In addition to identifying black Africans as a category of dispersed people and therefore constituting a diaspora, religion was also a means of identification that distinguished people in West Africa, whose pluralistic ethnic setting meant that Muslims were often scattered
among non-Muslims, therefore constituting another type of diaspora that was basically commercial in its structure.

Muslim merchants dominated the interior trade of western Africa during the era of trans-Atlantic slavery. Muslim merchants and scholars were found as far south as the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast in the early eighteenth century, as well as at Sierra Leone. Once the interior became an important source of slaves, the coastal states attempted to restrict the activities of Muslims. Dahomey, a military state, kept Muslims under tight rein, but Asante had a sizeable Muslim population within its empire, and its government periodically experimented with giving Muslims a greater role in the state. In the end, however, Muslims were confined in their movements, just as Europeans were on the coast. Muslims controlled the trade of the interior but were confined to isolated wards in the major towns near the Guinea coast.

This dominance of the interior trade extended a particular worldview on the enslavement of Muslims and their sale into the Atlantic world. The Islamic character of the commercial network is clear: Muslim credit institutions were common; systems of exchange precluded interest but allowed various means of circumventing this restriction; various currencies, especially cowries, gold and silver coins, were widespread; and the merchants worked within ethnic and religious diasporas throughout the Muslim world. The association of this commercial network with intellectual and religious education is also well known. Without the support of the network, it is hard to imagine the spread of sufism, which was closely associated with such centres as Timbuktu, Agades, Kulumbardo, and Katsina. Merchants had judicial recourse in matters relating to transactions; not only were they exposed to the interpretations of Ḥad Bābā on issues of enslavement, but they studied Mālikī law. Islamic legal and commercial scholarship provided the basis for settling disputes in trade and the guidelines for the treatment of the enslaved, including their conversion to Islam.

The role of Islam in slavery and trade was contradictory. The debate among Muslims over just enslavement reveals the tensions of the real world in West Africa during the era. The fact that many Muslim leaders actively opposed the enslavement of Muslims and protected those whom they could, there is little doubt that a significant proportion of slaves from the Senegambia, Sierra Leone and the Bight of Benin had been enslaved and sold by Muslims or were Muslims, either before enslavement or through conversion. The Sudan had long been Muslim, despite the dissatisfaction of the jihad leadership with the practice of Islam and the failure of governments
to implement a more rigorous interpretation of the *shari‘a*. The jihads were intended to correct this situation, and while many individuals were enslaved who were not Muslims, this was not always the case. Trade slaves appear to have converted or otherwise were assigned a nominal Muslim status, reflected in a change in name. In a sense, then, slaves in transit underwent a process of "creolization" through their introduction to Islam. Whether or not the slaves who travelled within the Muslim network were Muslims already or were forced to accept nominal conversion, they were all exposed to Islam and therefore aware of Muslim attitudes towards slavery.

An examination of the commercialized world of Islamic West Africa raises a number of questions: What was the relationship between slavery in Muslim West Africa and the purchase and deportation of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic? To what extent did deportation and exile heighten commitment to Islam? In what ways were enslaved Muslims able to avoid detection under slavery? How were Islamic theories of behaviour for Muslims in a land of Unbelief interpreted and applied in the Americas? Were Muslim slaves treated differently in Bahia than elsewhere in the Americas? How did their experiences compare with those of enslaved Muslims in non-Muslim countries in West Africa and the Islamic lands of the Sahara and North Africa?

The aim of these questions is to trace continuities in history; the innovative direction of the research and analysis is towards following individual Muslims along their itineraries of slavery. To the extent that they and their descendants continued in their observances, subject to the limitations of living in a land of unbelief, they carried their African heritage into the present. They were rooted in the world of Islam, which in the Americas established their cultural and historical autonomy under slavery and sometimes gained them the margins of freedom. For enslaved Muslims, at least, there was an alternate worldview that was maintained through the days of slavery; the relative freedom of movement for those liberated Muslims who returned from the Americas to the Muslim network spanning West Africa suggests that there was more communication among Muslims than we have evidence for at present. Certainly, close scrutiny of primary sources is called for.36

The jihad movement was a reaction, in part, to the enslavement of free Muslims and the mistreatment of Muslims who were already slaves, and consequently many enslaved Muslims in the Americas were acutely aware of slavery issues.37 If African history carried over into the Americas, then jihad as a concept and as
a movement should be evident, particularly since many Muslims were in the diaspora as a result of jihad. It is surprising, therefore, that the jihad phenomenon was not more evident in the Americas, other than in Bahia. Evidence from Jamaica suggests the possibility that Muslims were discussing enslavement in the context of jihad, but Muslims there have not revealed any Arabic texts or letters that would provide proof of such an influence. As Afroz has noted, one document reportedly destroyed in 1831 at the time of the Christmas uprising may have been a jihad document; this "Wathīqah" was a "pastoral letter [which] exhorted all of the followers of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) to be true and faithful if they wished to enter paradise."38

The close association between the 1835 Muslim uprising in Bahia and the Sokoto jihad is hard to deny. Although the relative importance of ethnic and religious factors in the Malé uprising is a subject of dispute, the importance of Muslim influence is not.39 Because the uprising was a conspiracy, its Islamic component was not supposed to be evident, but, as in Jamaica, apparently an Arabic manifesto called for a revolt. The imām in 1835, Malam Abubakar, who was originally from Kano, would have been familiar with the Sokoto jihad, and the arrival of new captives from the central Sudan would have enabled the Muslim community to stay informed of the successful expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate. I suggest that a closer examination of available materials would show a similar influence in the earlier period, but stemming from the western Sudan.

The resistance of enslaved Muslims to their captivity was not peculiar to the Americas. In the Maghreb and the Ottoman domains, where both white Christian and black Muslim slaves were common at least until the early nineteenth century, resistance appears to have taken a variety of forms. For blacks from the central Sudan, the slave subculture expressed its autonomy through bori, a spirit-possession cult of Hausa origin which was described by one Muslim pilgrim from Timbuktu in 1813 as "deviant" religious practice.40 Such spirit cults were common in Islamic West Africa and other parts of the Muslim world, and although often described as "non-Muslim" or even "pre-Islamic," they in fact co-existed with Islam for as long as documentary evidence exists.41 Such practices were and are more or less tolerated within the Islamic community. Many bori initiates appear to have been women, although the cult was associated with the servile population in general.

Tolerance of religious practices that were considered "deviant" were connected in the Islamic world to issues of enslavement, e.g., under what conditions Muslims could be held as
slaves. When the degree of tolerance of supposedly non-Muslim practices was taken into consideration, the contradictions surrounding slavery under Islam became striking for some Muslim reformers in the nineteenth century. The debate within the Islamic world then shifted from a consideration of the legitimacy of enslavement to the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of slaves. The essential question of "legitimacy" remained, but the argument now focused on the difficulty of verifying an individual’s claim that he or she had been wrongly enslaved: since the status of an individual at the time of enslavement could never be known for certain, it was best not to own slaves. This continuing debate among Muslims overlapped with the abolition movement in Europe and the Americas. Some Muslims were freed, and some of them returned to Africa. But while the legitimacy of enslavement became a preoccupation of the jihad movement that exploded in the early nineteenth century, the numbers of people who were enslaved or re-enslaved, whether Muslim or not, was enormous. Islamic reform under ṣūfī tutelage and the primacy of Fulbe leadership transformed the whole region from Senegambia to the Nilotic Sudan. Failure to recognize the relative autonomy of the Islamic world, including western Africa, from the European-dominated Atlantic world distorts the history of slavery and its repercussions on Africa and the Americas.

Identifying the actual historical links between Africa and the diaspora requires more than a good knowledge of African history. Difficulties of specialization aside, part of the problem arises from the failure to perceive diaspora sources as useful in reconstructing African history. For slaves, the Atlantic was a "crossing." For scholars, the Atlantic has been a barrier seldom crossed, and Africa largely remains out of focus when they look back from the Americas. The questions that need to be asked include: Where did enslaved Africans actually come from, when, and why? To what extent did individual slaves find people of similar background and language already living under slavery? To what extent were newly arrived enslaved Africans agents in the formation of their identity and in their cultural regeneration? Were existing slave communities in the Americas able to ease the transition into slavery for new arrivals in the diaspora?

For the slaves who experienced the Atlantic crossing, the issue of survival was paramount. In the early days, weeks, and months of captivity in the Americas, "survival" meant staying alive and establishing a relationship with the existing slave community within an oppressive and strange environment. The Sahara crossing
was no less profound. The study of the first generation of enslaved Africans is obviously important, especially since in most slave colonies before the abolition of the slave trade a majority of slaves had been born in Africa.

For Muslims, the incorporation of newly arrived Muslims into the religious community was a foregone conclusion. Indeed, it seems that enslavement in the Americas intensified beliefs and practices (where reprisals from masters could be avoided). Certainly many Muslims were isolated and unable to develop communal links based on religion, but in Bahia, at least, some Yoruba slaves were drawn into existing Muslim communities and converted to Islam after their arrival. In Jamaica, Louisiana, and elsewhere, Muslims were numerous enough for Islam to take root, but Bahia appears to have had an unusually large concentration of Muslims.

The complexity of cultural and historical transfer under slavery was considerable. The isolation of the Muslim factor identifies a diaspora within the diaspora of enslaved Africans. An examination of the reactions of Muslims in the African diaspora demonstrates the strategies of survival adopted by these slaves and establishes religion as a factor determining group identity. In fact, enslaved Muslims were not representative of all slaves. Quite the contrary: their experience was uniquely tied to Africa. In establishing an identity as Muslims, slaves in the Americas were consciously attaching themselves to African history in Africa. Given this situation, it is difficult to suppose that enslaved Muslims did not interpret their predicament in terms that were an outgrowth of their African experience. In the long run, however, preserving the African connection proved to be a road not taken by the majority of slaves. Islam did not become a rallying point of resisting slaves, except in a few specific situations and most notably in Bahia. An examination of the ultimate failure of Islamization, or the ways in which Islam has been tempered, may prove to be as important in understanding the strategies of the enslaved populations in uncovering the ways the first generation of slaves who identified as Muslims used Islam as a resource for survival.
Notes

1 See, for example, W. B. Hodgson, "The Gospels: Written in the Negro Patois of English, with Arabic Characters by London, a Mandingo Slave" (paper presented at the Ethnological Society, New York, 13 October 1857). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference "West Africa and the Americas: Repercussions of the Slave Trade," University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 20-23 February 1997. I wish to thank Douglas Chambers, Robin Law, and John Hunwick for their comments.


See, for example, Fernando Ortiz, *Los negoros esclavos* (Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975).


See, for example, Philip Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations, and New World Developments" (paper presented at the conference "West Africa and the Americas: Repercussions of the Slave Trade," University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 1977). The literature goes back at least to Philip Curtin, *Two Jamacecas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), where specific concentrations of African-born slaves are identified, but the discussion of culture and historical change is generalized to an ahistorical West Africa.


16 See, for example, the Mālikī legal tradition, as interpreted by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 996) in his Risāla. For a discussion, see John Hunwick, "Wills, Slave Emancipation, and Clientship," in The Global Experience, 2d ed., ed. Philip Riley et al. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 1:189-92, which includes a translation of a section from the Risāla, with the commentary of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Mālikī and the supercommentary of 'Alī al-Sa'idī.


19 The literature on 'Ahmad Bābā is extensive, but see Bernard and Michelle Jacobs, "The Mi'rāj: A Legal Treatise on Slavery by 'Ahmad Bābā," in Slaves and Slavery, 1:125-59. See also Elias N. Saad, Social History of Timbuktu: The Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables 1400-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

20 In addition to the Mi'rāj, his writings included Nayl al-ibtihāj bi-taṭrīz al-diḥāj and Tāj al-dīn fīmā yajib 'alā al-mulūk.


22 As Naṣr al-Dīn, who led the Muslim revolt among the Wolof in the 1670s, wrote: "God does not allow kings to plunder, kill, or make their people captive"; quoted in Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," 678.


24 The literature is extensive, but see 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad dan Fodio's Diyyā' al-suṭṭān wa ghayrīhi min al-ikhwān ŵi ahamm ma yuṭlāb 'ilmuḥu ŵi umūr al-zamān (see Muhammad Sanī Zahraddeen, "Abd Allah ibn Fodio's Contributions to the Fulani Jihad in Nineteenth-Century Hausaland" [Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1976], 13-14), Tazīyīn al-Waraqāt (Ibadan, 1963), and Diyyā' al-Ḥūkūm (see Shehu Yamusa, "The Political Ideas of the Jihad Leaders: Being a Translation, Edition and Analysis of (1) Uṣūl al-Sīyāsa by
slavery, the bilād al-sūdān and the frontiers of the african diaspora


25 The exchange between al-Kanimī and the Sokoto leadership over the justification of the jihad in Borno produced a series of letters, not all of which have survived. See, for example, the letter from al-Kanimī to Goni Mukhtar and others, the Fulani leaders in Borno, University of Ibadan, mss 82/237, 17 Rabī’ al-Awwal 1223 (13 May 1808).


27 John O. Hunwick, The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa (Leiden: Brill, 1995); another volume on the Arabic writings of the western Sudan is being prepared.


33 In the sixteenth century, slaves were imported into the Ottoman Empire from Russia, the Ukraine, and the Balkan states in numbers that made the contemporary Atlantic trade in humans small by comparison. Not until the middle of the seventeenth century were more slaves taken across the Atlantic than across the Black Sea, and of course slaves were also entering the Ottoman domains from sub-Saharan Africa. See Thomas M. Prymak, "Tartar Raids and Turkish Captivity in Ukrainian History and Legend," forthcoming. For Muslim areas even farther east, see Oleg Semininkho, "The Slave Trade of the Caspian Sea" (paper presented at the Harriet Tubman Seminar, York University, Toronto, 1997).


39 See Lovejoy, "Muslims in Bahia"; Reis, Slave Rebellion in Brazil, and Reis and Farias, "Islam and Slave Resistance in Bahia," 41-66. It should be
noted that the additional material discovered by Quiring-Zoche describes the Malé uprising as a war, not specifically a jihad, but the writer was clearly critical of West African Muslims, and his claims have to be interpreted accordingly; see Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, "Glaubenskampf oder Machtkampf? Der Aufstand der Malé von Bahia nach einer islamischen Quelle," *Sudanic Africa* 6 (1995): 115-24.

