

Islam, slavery, and political transformation in West Africa : constraints on the trans-Atlantic slave trade

Paul E. Lovejoy

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Lovejoy Paul E. Islam, slavery, and political transformation in West Africa : constraints on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In: Outre-mers, tome 89, n°336-337, 2e semestre 2002. traites et esclavages : vieux problèmes, nouvelles perspectives ? pp. 247-282;

doi : <https://doi.org/10.3406/outre.2002.3992>

https://www.persee.fr/doc/outre_1631-0438_2002_num_89_336_3992

Fichier pdf généré le 25/04/2018

Résumé

Cet article examine l'importance relative des marchands musulmans dans la traite négrière en Afrique occidentale, incluant à la fois le monde transatlantique et les centres moteurs que constituent les régions islamiques trans-sahariennes. On y soutient l'idée selon laquelle l'implication des Musulmans dans la traite limita l'essor de l'économie atlantique, tout en renforçant un monde islamique demeurant largement autonome. En d'autres termes, l'activité commerciale musulmane pesa sur l'exportation des esclaves par l'Atlantique. Le facteur islamique, et notamment les transformations politiques associées à la jihad, explique le niveau comparativement bas des exportations de captifs vers les Amériques à partir des régions musulmanes et des régions où les marchands musulmans étaient présents. Un nombre moins important d'esclaves que celui auquel on aurait pu s'attendre provint ainsi des espaces dominés et influencés par l'Islam, du fait même de la large diffusion de l'esclavage dans ces régions et de l'existence d'un "mode de production" intégrant réduction en esclavage, traite et usage d'esclaves sur une grande échelle. Du fait de l'existence de ce système intégré, l'Afrique occidentale intérieure ne devint pas une source d'esclaves majeure pour les Amériques ; défait, elle semble plutôt avoir emprunté des voies conduisant à résister à l'incorporation au sein d'un monde atlantique déplus en plus dominé par les Européens au XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle. Cette résistance se mesure : à l'échelle de l'esclavage dans les économies de l'espace musulman d'Afrique occidentale, par comparaison avec le nombre des Africains réduits en esclavage qui furent conduits aux Amériques avec celui qui aurait pu effectivement l'être à partir des régions musulmanes d'Afrique occidentale, enfin par comparaison avec l'importance des activités de la classe commerçante musulmane qui y dominait le commerce (traite incluse) avec les côtes atlantiques de l'Afrique occidentale. Des facteurs culturels, religieux et politiques expliquent les restrictions apportées au commerce avec le monde atlantique. Il en résulte que les transformations de l'esclavage en pays musulman furent largement impulsées de l'intérieur.

Abstract

This article examines the relative importance of Muslim merchants in the slave trade of West Africa, including both the trans-Atlantic world and the trans-Saharan Islamic heartlands. It is argued that Muslim involvement in the slave trade limited the development of the Atlantic economy and reinforced an Islamic world that remained largely autonomous. That is, Muslim commercial activity actually constrained the export of slaves across the Atlantic. The Islamic factor, and particularly the political transformations associated with jihad, explains the comparatively low levels of exports to the Americas from Muslim areas, or areas where Muslim merchants were present. Fewer slaves came from areas of Muslim dominance and influence than might otherwise have been expected, since slavery was widespread in these areas, constituting a "mode of production" that integrated enslavement, slave trade and slave use on a large scale. Since this integrated system, the interior of West Africa did not become a major source of slaves for the Americas, and indeed seems to have behaved in ways that resisted incorporation into the European-dominated Atlantic world as it evolved in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This resistance is measured by the scale of slavery in the economies of the Muslim areas of West Africa, by comparing the numbers of enslaved Africans who were taken to the Americas with those who could have come from the Muslim areas of West Africa, and by the activities of the Muslim commercial class that dominated trade, including the slave trade, with the Atlantic coast of West Africa. Cultural, religious, and political factors explain the restrictions on trade with the Atlantic world. Hence, the transformations in slavery in Muslim areas were largely directed internally.

Islam, Slavery, and Political Transformation in West Africa: Constraints on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade ¹

Paul E. LOVEJOY

Abstract: *This article examines the relative importance of Muslim merchants in the slave trade of West Africa, including both the trans-Atlantic world and the trans-Saharan Islamic heartlands. It is argued that Muslim involvement in the slave trade limited the development of the Atlantic economy and reinforced an Islamic world that remained largely autonomous. That is, Muslim commercial activity actually constrained the export of slaves across the Atlantic. The Islamic factor, and particularly the political transformations associated with jihad, explains the comparatively low levels of exports to the Americas from Muslim areas, or areas where Muslim merchants were present. Fewer slaves came from areas of Muslim dominance and influence than might otherwise have been expected, since slavery was widespread in these areas, constituting a “mode of production” that integrated enslavement, slave trade and slave use on a large scale. Since this integrated system, the interior of West Africa did not become a major source of slaves for the Americas, and indeed seems to have behaved in ways that resisted incorporation into the European-dominated Atlantic world as it evolved in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This resistance is measured by the scale of slavery in the economies of the Muslim areas of West Africa, by comparing the numbers of enslaved Africans who were taken to the Americas with those who could have come from the Muslim areas of West Africa, and by the activities of the Muslim commercial class that dominated trade, including the slave trade, with the Atlantic coast of West Africa. Cultural, religious, and political factors explain the restrictions on trade with the Atlantic world. Hence, the transformations in slavery in Muslim areas were largely directed internally.*

Key words: *Islam, slavery, slave trade, commerce, Atlantic world, trans-Saharan trade, jihad, Muslims*

1. The research has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History, to whom I am grateful. I would like to thank Mariza de Carvalho Soares, Renée Soulodre-La France, Jennifer Lofkrantz, Muhammad Salau, Brenda McComb, and Olivier Pêtré-Grenouilleau for their comments on this paper.

Résumé : *Cet article examine l'importance relative des marchands musulmans dans la traite négrière en Afrique occidentale, incluant à la fois le monde transatlantique et les centres moteurs que constituent les régions islamiques transsahariennes. On y soutient l'idée selon laquelle l'implication des Musulmans dans la traite limita l'essor de l'économie atlantique, tout en renforçant un monde islamique demeurant largement autonome. En d'autres termes, l'activité commerciale musulmane pesa sur l'exportation des esclaves par l'Atlantique. Le facteur islamique, et notamment les transformations politiques associées à la jihad, explique le niveau comparativement bas des exportations de captifs vers les Amériques à partir des régions musulmanes et des régions où les marchands musulmans étaient présents. Un nombre moins important d'esclaves que celui auquel on aurait pu s'attendre provint ainsi des espaces dominés et influencés par l'Islam, du fait même de la large diffusion de l'esclavage dans ces régions et de l'existence d'un "mode de production" intégrant réduction en esclavage, traite et usage d'esclaves sur une grande échelle. Du fait de l'existence de ce système intégré, l'Afrique occidentale intérieure ne devint pas une source d'esclaves majeure pour les Amériques; de fait, elle semble plutôt avoir emprunté des voies conduisant à résister à l'incorporation au sein d'un monde atlantique de plus en plus dominé par les Européens au XVIII^e et au début du XIX^e siècle. Cette résistance se mesure: à l'échelle de l'esclavage dans les économies de l'espace musulman d'Afrique occidentale, par comparaison avec le nombre des Africains réduits en esclavage qui furent conduits aux Amériques avec celui qui aurait pu effectivement l'être à partir des régions musulmanes d'Afrique occidentale, enfin par comparaison avec l'importance des activités de la classe commerçante musulmane qui y dominait le commerce (traite incluse) avec les côtes atlantiques de l'Afrique occidentale. Des facteurs culturels, religieux et politiques expliquent les restrictions apportées au commerce avec le monde atlantique. Il en résulte que les transformations de l'esclavage en pays musulman furent largement impulsées de l'intérieur.*

Mots clés: *Islam, esclavage, traite négrière, commerce, monde atlantique, traite trans-saharienne, jihad, Musulmans.*

Introduction: Constraints on the Slave Trade

This article re-examines the organization and structure of the slave trade in West Africa, focusing specifically on the relative importance and location of Muslim merchants. It is argued here that the Islamic factor in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which is poorly understood, involved interconnections with the Atlantic world and the trans-Saharan Islamic heartlands in ways that limited the development of the Atlantic economy and reinforced an Islamic world that wanted to retain its autonomy. A reconsideration of the historiography of the trans-Atlantic slave trade raises the intriguing possibility that Muslim commercial activity was actually a constraint on the export of slaves across the Atlantic. This Islamic factor has not been given due attention as a possible explanation for the comparatively low levels of exports to the Americas from Muslim areas, or areas where Muslim merchants were present. After examining the possibility of such an historical reality, which is one matter on the theoretical level, I want to demonstrate more concretely how and why this possibility should be seriously considered.

It is argued here that fewer slaves came from the areas of Muslim dominance and influence than might otherwise have been expected, since slavery was widespread in these areas, constituting as I have presented elsewhere, a “mode of production” that integrated enslavement, slave trade and slave use on a large scale. The concept “mode of production” has been employed to “emphasize the relationship between social organization and the productive process, on the one hand, and the means by which this relationship is maintained, on the other.”² Despite the consolidation of an integrated system of enslavement, slave trade and domestic use of slaves, the interior of West Africa did not become a major source of slaves for the Americas, and indeed seems to have behaved in economic ways that resisted incorporation into the European-dominated Atlantic world as it evolved in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

This resistance can be measured in several ways, including: first, by examining the scale of slavery in the economies of the Muslim areas of West Africa; secondly, by estimating the numbers of enslaved Africans who were taken to the Americas who could have come from the Muslim areas of West Africa; thirdly, by demonstrating the existence of a Muslim commercial class that dominated trade, including the slave trade, with the Atlantic coast of West Africa; and finally, by considering the cultural, religious, and political factors that may have restricted the trade with the Atlantic world. First, however, it is necessary to situate Islamic West Africa in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and African history more generally.

The article addresses the apparent confrontation between market forces from the Atlantic and the influence of an Islamic fundamentalism that delimited policies and ideologies that highlighted the uniqueness of the Islamic areas of West Africa in resisting incorporation into the Atlantic world. The extent of this resistance is reflected in the apparent divergence in prices for male and female slaves, wherein male slaves fetched higher prices on the coast for export to the Americas, while females commanded higher prices in the interior,³ and the oft-repeated belief that the proportions of males and females in the Atlantic and Saharan trades mirrored each other, with more males crossing the Atlantic and more females crossing the

2. Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2000), 10.

3. See, for example, Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, “Women’s Importance in African Slave System,” in Robertson and Klein (eds.), *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1983), 5; Fisher, Allan G. B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade* (London, 1970), 164; David Tambo, “The Sokoto Caliphate slave trade in the nineteenth century,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 9:2 (1976), 187-217; Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975), vol. 1, 176; Martin Klein, “Women in Slavery in the Western Sudan,” in Robertson and Klein, *Women and Slavery in Africa*, 72, 80. For a discussion of gender and price differentials between the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan trades, see Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “Competing Markets for Male and Female Slaves: Slave Prices in the Interior of West Africa, 1780-1850,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28:2 (1995).

Sahara.⁴ Did prices diverge in fact, and were the gender preferences of the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan trades interrelated?

The questions being addressed here focus on the role of Muslim merchants and governments in shaping the direction and flow of the slave trade, both within Africa and across the Atlantic, and the implications that can be drawn from the presence of enslaved Muslims in the Americas on our understanding of trade in West Africa. It is argued here that Muslims were involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, both as actors and as victims, but that in general Muslims are under-represented in the trade, in both capacities. By implication, it is further argued, the areas of West Africa where Muslims were influential in trade could have supplied a much larger number of enslaved people than actually was the case. Hence the political transformations that occurred in West Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade have to be examined in the context of a possible Islamic policy to limit involvement in trans-Atlantic slavery, while at the same time relying on a system of slave production that was tied to an ideology for social and cultural change that was tragically perceived as being compatible with enslavement and social oppression.

Situating Islamic West Africa in the Slave Trade

It is argued here that the Muslim factor has not adequately been situated in the discussion of the determination of the movement of slaves in the formation of the African diaspora, whether in the Americas or the Islamic lands of the Sahara and beyond, although the presence of Muslims in the Americas and in North Africa and Middle East has become an important topic of research.⁵ Clearly, there is a major discrepancy between economic

4. Robertson and Klein state that the "European export market purchased male slaves by a margin of at least two to one... [while] the somewhat smaller Muslim market of the Arab world absorbed primarily female slaves;" see "Women in African Slave System," 4. Also see Ralph Austen, "The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: A Tentative Census," in H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1979), 23-76; I.B. Kaké, "la traite négrière et le mouvement de populations entre l'Afrique noire, l'Afrique du Nord et le Moyen-Orient," in *La Traite Négrière du XV^e au XIX^e Siècle* (Paris, 1979), 183; and Joseph E. Inikori, "Export Versus Domestic Demand: The Determinants of Sex Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Research in Economic History*, 14 (1992), 118-9, 128.

5. There is now a considerable literature on enslaved Muslims in the Americas; see Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *The Journal of Southern History*, 60:4 (1994), 671-710; Allen Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*; Austin, "Islamic Identities in Africans in North America in the Days of Slavery (1731-1865)," *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara*, 7 (1993), 205-19; João Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (trans., Arthur Brakel, Baltimore, 1993); Reis, "Slave Resistance in Brazil: Bahia, 1807-1835," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 25, 1 (1988), 111-44; Reis and Paulo F. de Moraes Farias, "Islam and Slave Resistance in Bahia, Brazil," *Islam and sociétés au sud du Sahara*, 3 (1989), 41-66; Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the 17th to 19th Century* (Ibadan, 1976); Lovejoy, "Jihad e Escravidão: As Origens dos Escravos Muculma-

behavior on the coast of West Africa and in the interior, but the problem of perspective can confuse cause and effect in attempting to explain and situate Islamic West Africa within the Atlantic world. Were the aims and intentions of European slave traders and Muslim merchants in the interior the same, or were there other factors that affected commerce, not prohibiting or restricting trade in principle, but effectively doing so with respect to the trade in slaves? ⁶

As has been apparent for some time, the Atlantic world in which the slave trade played such a prominent role from the sixteenth to the mid nineteenth century intersected with an Islamic world that included large parts of West Africa and was closely linked with Saharan communities, the Maghreb, the Ottoman domains, and the Hijraz. Moreover in West Africa, Muslim merchants were ubiquitous in many places, and the areas of their activity expanded in discernable patterns and eras. They legally traded in slaves within a framework derived from the Shari'a and customary practice that had become acceptable in local Islamic courts. Although slavery was legal, enslaving free-born Muslims was not, and this was a subject that was of major concern since at least the fall of Songhay in the 1590s. This distinction between who was enslaveable and who was not in Islamic jurisprudence led to many ambiguities and contradictions that can be correlated with West African history, but despite the reality, the theoretical, moral and political commitment to the protection of Muslims nonetheless needs to be stressed. In reconsidering the role of Muslim merchants in the development and operation of the slave trade, and the links with the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, I want to refocus the issue of the relative importance of Islam and slavery in the political transformations that occurred in many parts of western Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Muslim merchant networks and the commercial class dominated trade with much of the Atlantic coast of West Africa.

Ironically, as many historians have noted, the period from 1600-1800 was one of important state development along the coast of West Africa. Sometimes these states are described as empires, which seems exaggerated if geography and population are indicators, since these states were not as large as

nos de Bahia," *Topoi* (Rio de Janeiro), 1 (2000); Lovejoy, "Background to Rebellion: The Origins of Muslim Slaves in Bahia", *Slavery and Abolition*, 15 (1994), 151-80; Stuart B. Schwartz, "Cantos e Quilombos Numa Conspiração de Escravos Haussás, Bahia, 1814," in João Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, eds., *Liberdade por um Fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil* (Salvador, 1996), 373-406; Sultana Afroz, "The Unsung Slaves: Islam in Plantation Jamaica," *Caribbean Quarterly*, 41:3/4 (1995), 30-44; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington, 1997); and Rosemarie Quring-Zoche, "Glaubenskampf oder Machtkampf? Der Aufstand der Malé von Bahia nach einer islamischen Quelle," *Sudanic Africa*, 6, 1995, 115-24. Also see the essays in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, forthcoming), especially my "The Muslim Factor in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." For North Africa and other parts of the Muslim world, see Elizabeth Savage (ed.), *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 1992).

6. For a discussion of the problem of perspective, see Lovejoy, "Corner les identités au sein de la diaspora africaine, l'islam et l'esclavage aux Amériques," *Cahiers des Anneaux de la Mémoire*, 1, 1999, 249-78.

the modern countries of which they are apart. Nonetheless, the consolidation of these states was important in expanding the mechanisms of slave supply resulting from the degeneration of West Africa into warlordism that followed the collapse of Songhay. Oyo and Asante, for example, have been considered "empires," when in fact they were relatively small, militarized states that did not expand far beyond their capital districts. By 1800 Asante and Oyo were not much larger than the Bambara states of Segou or Kaarta. The confederation that was organized by the Aro in the interior of the Bight of Biafra, which is virtually unrecognized as a state by historians who see states only where there are kings and courts, was a complex network of political/religious/commercial structures that straddled ethnic frontiers, but the bilateral arrangements upon which the confederation was based failed to evolve into a major political entity. The foundation of Futa Bondu, Futa Jallon and Futa Toro foreshadowed the Islamic revolutions of the nineteenth century, but these states were not very big, being not larger than Katsina or Gobir in the central Sudan. Only Borno was sufficiently grand to claim imperial status, but at least since the middle of the eighteenth century, Borno experienced a period of decline related to drought, desert warfare, and political mismanagement that left it seriously weakened by 1800.

Political fragmentation was an essential dimension of the slave mode of production in these two centuries. The reasons for that fragmentation are as much internal to western Africa as the demands of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that fed off that fragmentation and in turn promoted such insecurity. Fragmentation enabled the enslavement of large numbers of people, many of who were sent from West Africa either across the Atlantic or across the Sahara, but many slaves were retained in Africa, some even being moved considerable distances from their homes. This fragmentation is sometimes perceived as "segmentary" societies, whose relative importance as active agents in the trade has recently been re-examined by Martin Klein,⁷ and in a particular locality, by Walter Hawthorne.⁸ The focus on small-scale societies has the danger of distorting the historical record because the reason that societies may have been "small scale" may have related to the imperialism of West African Islam. The parallel with the so-called "middle belt" of Nigeria is worth considering. The areas near the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers, which constitute this "region," were in fact heavily disrupted through invasions and raids from the north, especially after the *jihād* of 1804-1808.⁹ As in the case of the so-called "middle belt" the association

7. Martin Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *Journal of African History*, 42, 1, 2001, 49-66.

8. Walter Hawthorne, "Nourishing a Stateless Society during the Slave Trade: The Rise of Balanta Paddy-Rice Producing in Guinea-Bissau," *Journal of African History*, 42, 1, 2001, 1-24, explores one such society on the upper Guinea coast, although it should be noted that the area studied by Hawthorne is wedged between the sea and the Futa Jallon highlands, and its autonomy as "small-scale" society had to do with geography; the area was for all intents and purposes a place of refuge from expanding Islamic influence.

9. See James Femi Kolapo, "Military Turbulence, Population Displacement and Commerce on a Slaving Frontier of the Sokoto Caliphate: The Nupe Emirates, c. 1800-57" (Ph.D. thesis,

between political insecurity and the expansion and consolidation of Muslim governments through *jihad* should not be under-estimated.

Because of the growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the second half of the seventeenth century and its unprecedented scale as a human migration in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, the impact on western Africa was varied and regional, with the savanna and coast experiencing different transformations, although both were ultimately interrelated and both witnessing an increase in the incidence of slavery.

The longer and more profound tradition of slavery in the savanna underwent a great expansion in the context of Islamic holy war, while the coast remained largely beyond the influence of Islam, except for the presence of some Muslim merchants, at least until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the spread of Islam led to the increase in the number of slaves in West Africa, threatening to impinge on the autonomous developments along the West African coast. However, the growth of trade in palm oil, peanuts, logwood, ivory, and gold received an impetus with the embargo on the export of slaves after 1807, although slave exports did not cease until the 1860s. Nonetheless, the combined influences of "legitimate" trade on the coast and the *jihad* movement in the interior distinguished the nineteenth century from the two previous centuries, when political fragmentation, reflected in the growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, were the characteristic features of the period. By contrast, the nineteenth century was an era of political expansion and economic growth, most especially in the savanna. Unfortunately, by the nineteenth century West Africa had little possibility of overcoming its relative disadvantages with respect to Europe. Indeed relatively speaking, West Africa fell further behind in terms of real wealth, and the political consolidation that occurred was not based on the major technological changes of the era or tied to the major world markets. The era of the "Scramble" revealed these weaknesses; although real growth had occurred in West Africa, this growth was dependent on slavery, and the "Scramble" demonstrated this vulnerability. The shift to "legitimate" exports (gum Arabic, groundnuts, logwood, palm oil, kernels, etc.) added a new dynamism to the coastal economies, although the importance of these commodities and their role in international trade was increasingly marginal relative to the tropical exports of other parts of the world.¹⁰

York University, 1998); Michael Mason, 1969. "Population Density and 'Slave Raiding' – The case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria," *Journal of African History*, 10:4 (1969), 551-64; and Mason, "The *jihad* in the South: An Outline of the Nineteenth Century Nupe Hegemony in North-Eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5:2 (1970), 193-208.

10. For the relatively marginal position of West Africa, see Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (Paris, 2001); and P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* (Harlow, Essex, 1993). For the impact of abolition in the nineteenth century, see Robin Law (ed.), *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge, 1995); and Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1998).

Claude Meillassoux's anthropological model of slavery, largely based on West African data, re-enforces the transformation thesis and adheres to a Marxist framework, first articulated by Emmanuel Terray, that identifies the origins and evolution of a slave mode of production.¹¹ Meillassoux's contribution examines the mechanisms by which slavery was reproduced under conditions of warfare and the dependent nature of commerce. His examination of the "mode of reproduction" in slave societies supplements earlier theoretical discussions of slavery. Unfortunately, in constructing his model of slavery, Meillassoux holds the external slave trade constant. While he fully appreciates the significance of the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan trades and their impact on political transformation, he subsumes these influences within his category of merchant slavery. In terms of the study of how slavery reproduces itself and therefore how a slave mode of production functions, it does not matter that some slaves, even a lot of slaves, are exported out of the system. The more that market demand accentuates merchant slavery, the more aristocratic, warrior slavery is pushed to supply slaves. The implications are that with increased trans-Atlantic demand, the warrior slavery of West Africa was ready to respond. The fact that the warrior elites did not is the factor that is being analyzed here.

Critics of the Transformation Thesis

The basic division in West Africa was between the coastal states and societies that were most actively involved in the trans-Atlantic trade and the savanna states and societies that were increasingly within an Islamic world that interacted with both the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan trades. There is a clearer demarcation at the delta of the Niger River, where to the west Muslim merchants were to be found, but to the east from the Bight of Biafra southward along the Loango coast, Kongo, and Angola, there were no Muslims, and no significant, if any, links with Muslim merchants in the interior, at least not before the middle of the nineteenth century when trans-Atlantic markets had been closed. My discussion is informed by this basic division between the area east and south of the lower Niger River, and the recognition that there was a further division in West Africa west of the Niger delta between the coastal states and ports with resident Muslim merchants and the interior Muslim states of the savanna.

How important were slavery and the slave trade in the transformation of West Africa in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? The

11. Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage*; Meillassoux, "Modalités historiques de l'exploitation et de la surexploitation de travail," *Connaissance du Tiers Monde*, 10 (1977), 135-53; Meillassoux, "Correspondence on Slavery," *Economy and Society*, 7, 3 (1978), 321-31; Meillassoux, "Rôle de l'esclavage dans l'histoire de l'Afrique occidentale," *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 2,1 (1978), 117-48; Emmanuel Terray, "Long-Distance Exchange and the Formation of the State: The Case of the Abbron Kingdom of Gyaman," *Economy and Society*, 3 (1974), 315-45; Terray, "La Captivité dans le royaume abron du Gyaman," in Meillassoux, *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, 389-454.

topic has been subjected to considerable debate, with the centrality of slavery and the significance of the trans-Atlantic trade sometimes questioned. The focus of these criticisms has centered on small-scale societies, extending the approach of Miers and Kopytoff in emphasizing incorporation and accommodation rather than resistance and struggle. These relatively marginal societies and states tended not to be Muslim, the core of the western and central Sudan.¹² Although Eltis has greatly refined the demographic profile of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, particularly for the nineteenth century, showing the importance of the coastal zone, he does not explain what transformations occurred or relate the expansion of the slave trade to the Muslim factor. Eltis has argued that neither the scale nor the value of the Atlantic slave trade was sufficiently large to have had more than a marginal influence on the course of West African history.¹³ Miller has followed up this challenging argument by insisting that merchants only invested in slave production in special cases and mostly in the nineteenth century, and for that reason slavery in the Western Sudan was “unusual, even for West Africa.”¹⁴ For Miller, slavery was similar to other types of exploitative relationships in Africa and hence was significantly different from the slavery of the Americas. It would appear that slavery was *not* the pervasive institution that Meillassoux, Lovejoy, Manning, and many others have argued. This debate has implications in studying the influence of slavery on the political transformation of West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which can benefit from a re-evaluation of the neo-Marxist approach in light of recent criticisms.

Eltis has made the provocative argument that the export trade in slaves, despite its scale, had virtually no impact on slavery and society in West Africa.¹⁵ He bases this argument on his analysis of the value of exports and imports on a per capita basis. His argument is applicable to the coast, and not the interior, but considering the smaller scale of the trans-Saharan slave trade, the inference is that the trans-Saharan trade would have had even less an impact on West Africa than the trans-Saharan trade. The problem with Eltis's argument is that it ignores the empirical evidence within West Africa, where many scholars have independently demonstrated the pervasive and increasing importance of slavery from the medieval period through the end of the nineteenth century. Eltis reaches the correct conclusion about the marginal impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on the interior of West Africa, but for the wrong reasons; the engine of control was in the interior, and it was Muslim, but this does not mean that slavery was unimportant, only that there were effective restrictions on the export of slaves to the coast.

12. Klein, *Journal of African History*; Hawthorne, *Journal of African History*

13. David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987), 77. Also see David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, “Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era,” *American Historical Review*, 43, 4 (1988), 936-59.

14. Joseph C. Miller, “The World According to Meillassoux: A Challenging but Limited Vision,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22, 3 (1989).

15. David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000).

Miller has claimed that the western Sudan was unusual in African history, and thereby underestimates the importance of the region and its influence over the slave trade. Again there is failure to distinguish the significance of the Muslim sector. According to Miller, the western Sudan was “only one, and a relatively unusual, historical case” of slavery in Africa.¹⁶ Miller considers “most of the studies in the Miers and Kopytoff volume” to be more typical of slavery in Africa, the frame of reference for Miller’s conclusion misses the issue of relative scale.¹⁷ The Islamic areas of Africa and the regions bordering on the Islamic zone covered a major part of Africa and are reflected today in the extensive influence of Islam in many African countries. Miller exaggerates the importance of ecological factors, and specifically the role of famine and disease in “producing” slaves, overlooking the fact that such developments can result from military dominance; indeed disease and famine can increase the effectiveness of military-induced enslavement or the consequences of such military activity.

The term “domestic slavery” deserves comment, because “domestic” has different meanings in the study of slavery, depending upon context. In the Americas, “domestic” refers to those enslaved individuals who performed household services, but in Africa the term refers to those slaves who were not exported. There is confusion over the relative importance of these enslaved populations, as well as the actual work and conditions of labour. In using the term “domestic,” I am commenting upon the way the term is often used in the sources on slavery in West Africa, and as a consequence, in the analysis of slavery. “Domestic” does not necessarily mean “in households,” although the stereotype has it that enslaved people kept in West Africa were mainly servants and concubines in the houses of their masters. “Domestic” usually means, however, only that slaves were not exported to North Africa or the Americas. This ambiguity highlights the peculiar status of slaves, since enslaved individuals were separated from their original “domestic” situation, and they were not necessarily incorporated into households. Whether or not they were was a matter of considerable variation.¹⁸ Most importantly, the ambi-

16. Miller, “World According to Meillassoux,” 479, 494.

17. Miller, “World According to Meillassoux.” Miller’s perspective on Islamic regions of Africa is revealed in his highly useful *Slavery and Slaving in World History. A Bibliography, 1900-1996*. Armon NY, 2nd ed., 1999). 2 vols. The bibliography divides slavery topics in a manner in which entries on Islamic West Africa are difficult to locate. The area/topic does not exist is a category for Miller, which informs his assessment of the relative importance of Muslim areas on the history of slavery in Africa. Miller is an authority on the Angolan slave trade, which supplied something on the order of 40 per cent of all slaves exported from Africa to the Americas. This focus may explain his approach to the far less important trade across the Atlantic from Muslim areas. Also see Joseph C. Miller, “Muslim Slavery and Slaving: A Bibliography,” in Savage, *Human Commodity*, 249-71. Similarly, John Thornton’s treatment of slavery in Muslim areas is perfunctory, and he even uses the archaic form “Moslem” to describe these areas, again reflecting his lack of familiarity with the issues addressed here; see *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 1998).

18. On the use of the term “domestic” see Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l’esclavage*; and Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, “African ‘slavery’ as an institution of marginality,” in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977), 3-81; John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa* (New York, 1975); Jack Goody,

guity of the term “domestic slavery” disguises and even denies the development of a “mode of production” that integrated a productive system based on slavery with the means of replenishing the supply of slaves through enslavement and trade. In West Africa, slaves were also exported out of the region, both across the Sahara and across the Atlantic, which thereby integrated West Africa into an intercontinental network of slavery, although the point here is that the degree of integration was limited by cultural and political factors related to Islam. Because West Africa was a crucial source of slaves for American and trans-Saharan markets, there was an added dimension to the slave mode of production as it evolved within West Africa. The supply factor was important in generating numbers of slaves that exceeded the actual size of the slave population that was subjected to exploitation in the “domestic” economy of West Africa, at least before the nineteenth century. As the major source of supply in both trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic markets, the political fragmentation of West Africa after the 1590s and the spread of a movement that was intended to establish a new unity on the basis of Islam, which became increasingly effective from the early nineteenth century, so that slave supply was directed inward, rather than towards the Atlantic.

Slavery in Muslim West Africa

The debate over slavery and its influence on political transformation in West Africa has focused on the demography of the slave trade, and the relative importance of slavery in relation to other commodities and economic spheres.¹⁹ The numbers of enslaved Africans taken to the Americas who could have come from the Muslim areas of West Africa was considerable, and there were many slaves taken across the Sahara in the same period. The scale of slavery in the economies of the Muslim areas of West Africa led me to develop the transformation thesis; population estimates show the importance of slavery. *Transformations in Slavery* provides an overview of the expansion of slavery in Africa and provides a chronological framework for the consolidation of a “slave mode of production” in the context of the export trade in slaves. In different ways other studies reveal the relationship between internal African developments and the external trade in slaves. Meillassoux, providing a book-length “introduction” to his earlier collection of essays on slavery, constructs a theoretical argument that deciphers the process whereby this “mode of production” regenerates itself. Similarly, Manning uses demographic theory to explore the likely parameters of the impact of slavery and enslavement on

“Slavery in Time and Space,” in James L. Watson (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford, 1980), 16-42; Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *L’Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris, 1975).

19. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*.

Africa.²⁰ His conclusions suggest that there were heavy costs as every stage of the "enslavement process," from the actual act of enslavement itself, through the perils of being traded and traveling great distances, to the exploitation in the types of jobs slaves had to perform. For me these arguments are powerful and demonstrate the extent to which the external trade, first in slaves and then other goods, promoted the transformation of West Africa. As a mode of production, slavery required the enslavement of people, their distribution through the market or other mechanisms, and ultimately the exploitation of slave labor. The large-scale use of slaves on plantations in the savanna, common since at least the medieval period, was a major factor in sustaining the relative autonomy of the region from the Atlantic world.

As Meillassoux has demonstrated, the "slave mode of production" reproduces itself not through natural increase but through the acquisition of newly enslaved individuals. Meillassoux consciously employs Marxist terminology and theory to expand Marxist analysis. His research is grounded in West Africa, first in the area of kola production where the Gouro live, which draws attention to the supply mechanism that transferred kola from the non-Muslim producing areas to the Muslim savanna. His work on the Muslim sahel and its relationship with the savanna and desert jumped the savanna but the link is clear. There was in fact a Muslim factor in both cases, which informs his work. For Meillassoux, production is central, and the need to replenish the population through enslavement was crucial. Meillassoux studies slavery because slaves are units of work. Of course slaves are more than that, but the exploitation of slaves that arises from violence and their labor power was at the complete disposal of their master. There was no alienation between the individual and his or her labor, unlike all other forms of exploitation. Furthermore, Miller fails to recognize the crucial distinction between this line of argument and that of himself, Miers and Kopytoff and others: slaves were objects, that is property, and slavery involved ownership that allowed constituted "rights in persons." The societies of West Africa were not "capitalist" perhaps but they had merchants and slavery was essential to production. Because Meillassoux looks at savanna-sahel regions where Islam has been important, his analysis stretches the breadth of the continent. Moreover, the influence of states that conformed to his model stretched southward to the borders of the forest and indeed to the Guinea coast.

The reliance on slave labor in production, as continued in West Africa between 1600-1800, has to be explained in the context of the political transformations that occurred in the areas that were Muslim or wherever Muslims were active in trade. Slavery was an established institution before 1600, and in some places it is possible to discern a mode of production based on slavery already in existence. In Songhay, for example, slaves were used extensively in production along the Niger River from above Timbuktu to below Gao, and

20. Besides my *Transformations in Slavery*, see Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage. Le ventre de fer et d'argent* (Paris, 1986); and Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990).

while some scholars have chosen to identify these slaves as “serfs,” in fact the system of slavery was an outgrowth of Islamic history and thought and should not be confused with medieval Europe.²¹ The collapse of Songhay in the 1590s undermined the slave system along the Niger; nonetheless, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stand out because insecurity and warfare resulted in a remarkable expansion in slavery, and the possibilities for export were considerable. There were sudden increases in the numbers of enslaved Africans leaving the river ports along the upper Guinea coast and in the greater Senegambia region to the north that correspond with the most intense period of *jihad* activity, but it is difficult to know if the increase was a result of anti-Muslim activity. While there is no question that the number of enslaved increased during the periods of intense *jihad*, it is not clear if the increase in exports across the Atlantic was proportional to the increase in the number of slaves. The conscious policy seems to have kept as many slaves within the *jihad* states, not exporting them but rather employing them in rural development. That expansion continued through the nineteenth century, so that by the 1890s West Africa had a slave population that was unparalleled in modern times. Not even the Americas in either the eighteenth or nineteenth century, during the height of slavery there, appear to have had more slaves than there were in West Africa at the time of the European scramble in the 1880s and 1890s. Probably a majority of these slaves were in Muslim areas or owned by Muslims in the towns along trade routes in non-Muslim areas.

The transformations that consolidated slavery as a mode of production in West Africa related to changes in military technology, access to external markets, and the ideological importance of Islam provided the possibilities for political consolidation, including a reliance on slavery.²² These factors generated centralizing influences to counteract warlordism and climatic disaster, especially in the nineteenth century. The general level of poverty, technological backwardness, the low population density, and ethnic distinctions undermined the possibility of centralization. These conditions suggest

21. John Hunwick, “Notes on Slavery in the Songhay Empire,” in J. R. Willis (ed.), *Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London, 1985), vol. II; Sekene Mody Cissoko, *Tombouctou et l’Empire Songhay* (Paris, 1975); and Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*. Some scholars have suggested that slavery in this period was more akin to serfdom; see Marian Malowist, “Les Débuts du système de plantations dans la période des grandes découvertes,” *Africana Bulletin*, 10 (1969), 9-30. Also see Joseph E. Inikori, “Slavery in Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” in Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (eds.), *The African Diaspora* (Arlington, Tex., 1996), 39-72. It is difficult to accept Inikori’s arguments that “slavery” is an inaccurate description of these social relationships because of this legal tradition recognizing slavery and the extent to which the issue was discussed in Arabic sources indigenous to West Africa. For the legal tradition on slavery, see John Hunwick, “Ahmad Baba on Slavery,” *Sudanic Africa*, 11 (2000), 131-40; *Mi‘raj al-Su‘ud: Ahmad Baba’s Replies on Slavery*, annotated and translated by John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak (Rabat, 2000).

22. On warfare and military technology in West Africa, see Robin Law, *The Horse in West African History* (Oxford, 1980); Law, “Horses, Firearms and Political Power in Pre-colonial West Africa,” *Past and Present*, 72 (1976), 112-32; J.E. Inikori, “The Import of Firearms into West Africa, 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis,” *Journal of African History*, 18, 3 (1977), 339-68; Robert S. Smith, *Warfare & Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 2nd ed., 1989); and Jean Bazin and Emmanuel Terray (eds.), *Guerres de lignages et guerres d’États en Afrique* (Paris, 1982).

that as a supply region for the trans-Atlantic slave trade as well as the trans-Saharan trade, the western Sudan, as far as Lake Chad at least, was a prime area from where slaves could have come. Hence, the question: why was it not more important?

For Islamic West Africa, five developments stand out as key influences on the extension of slavery as a mode of production. First, the disintegration of Songhay in the 1590s set the stage for two centuries dominated by warlords in the savanna and sahel, which were the areas of Muslim dominance. Second, the rapid expansion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade after 1650 created a market for new slaves and strongly shaped political developments along the Guinea coast, from the rise of states to their collapse or conquest, which provided many slaves for the Americas. Muslim merchants traded to these states and dominated the caravan routes inland, but they were not major suppliers of slaves for the trans-Atlantic trade. Third, the severity of the Great Drought of the mid-eighteenth century, which hit the region from Senegambia as far as Lake Chad, further weakened the social and political fabric of the savanna/sahel corridor, thereby continuing the decentralizing tendencies there.²³ Fourth, the *jihad* movement that began in the Senegambia region in the late seventeenth century and resulted in the formation of Futa Bundu, Futa Jallon and Futa Toro revealed a new demand for slaves and led to political consolidation that was unknown since the medieval period, particularly after the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate after 1804. Finally, the export of agricultural exports from Africa created a domestic market for slaves along the West Africa coast that was unprecedented and this demand was particularly important in areas that were politically dominated by non-Muslim states and governments.

It is argued here that Muslim areas were relatively speaking important in the history of slavery in Africa, with the incidence of slavery very high from the medieval period to the early twentieth century, and yet involvement in the trans-Atlantic slavery market was constrained. While it may well be that there was an international system of slavery that included the Americas, the Islamic world, and many parts of Africa, it also appears that there were severe limitations on the integration of this system into a global market for enslaved labor. The question addressed here is the reason for the disjuncture in slave prices, which seems to reflect a difference in preference for males and females but does not explain why market forces did not overcome this discrepancy. I am suggesting that the Sahara/Atlantic divide may have had less to do with market forces and gender preferences than with other factors, which Philip Curtin one time simplified into a dichotomy between political and economic factors.²⁴

23. S. Cissoko, "Famines et épidémies à Tombouctou et dans la Boucle du Niger du xvi^e au xviii^e siècle," *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, 30, 3 (1968), 806-21; Stephen Baier and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Desert-Side Economy of the Central Sudan," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 8:4 (1975), 551-81.

24. Philip D. Curtin has suggested that enslavement fell on a continuum between political and economic factors, enslavement often being a "byproduct" of war; see "The slave trade and

The outstanding political contradiction that shaped the course of slavery was this effort to expand and consolidate large states but the failure to achieve that consolidation. The increased number of enslaved people demonstrates that the slave mode of production expanded between 1600-1800, but political fragmentation shaped the particular contours of slavery during this era. Of the three components of the mode of production, enslavement over shadowed the distribution of slaves and exploitation of slave labor within West Africa. Only in the nineteenth century, in part because of the collapse of the trans-Atlantic market and in part because of the *jihād* movement, did the balance among these components shift. Then slaves were used far more extensively in production within West Africa. During the period after 1650, West Africa exported more and more of its most valuable resource – people. A region that was poor by contemporary standards became poorer still. The cost of participating in international trade included the loss of potential output from the exported population, the death and destruction of enslavement, and the losses from disease and other factors in moving enslaved populations to their destinations. As I have argued elsewhere, the increased incidence of slavery within West Africa varied considerably, with concentrations of slaves around towns, in the central regions of the *jihād* states, and in the states near the coast. The transformations that occurred were not necessarily “progressive” but they were cyclical; some people who were already enslaved found themselves seized and re-enslaved, and despite the consolidation of small areas of political centralization and economic security, the trend for western Africa was relative stagnation in comparison with Europe.²⁵

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the process of enslavement and the export of slaves loom especially large in the extension of slavery. Distributive mechanisms existed that allowed the export of slaves, particularly via the Atlantic, where there is considerable evidence of enslaved Muslims ending up in the Americas.²⁶ Other, internal trade continued to move enslaved people to market, and slaves were incorporated into the domestic

the Atlantic basin: intercontinental perspectives,” in N.I. Huggins, M. Kilson, and D.M. Fox (eds.), *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (New York, 1971), vol. 1, 74-93, and *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975), 2 vols. However, I am suggesting much more than war, in which war is really only an expression and implementation of an ideology that constrained the trade in slaves to the coast and henceforth onto the slave ships destined for the Americas.

25. For a recent argument of this relative stagnation, see Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, “Long-Distance Trade and Economic Development in Europe and Black Africa (Mid-Fifteenth Century to Nineteenth Century): Some Pointers for Further Comparative Study,” *African Economic History*, 29 (2001).

26. For Muslims taken to the Americas, see the accounts in Philip D. Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered: Narratives of West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1967); Allan Austin (ed.), *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1984); Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publisher, 2001); Lovejoy, “The Muslim Factor in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,” in Lovejoy, (ed.), *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*; and Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, “Creating the Community of Believers: African Muslims in Trinidad, c. 1800-1850,” in Lovejoy, *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*.

economy as in earlier periods. Since there were more slaves, moreover, the use of slaves within West Africa clearly increased in scale as well. Nonetheless, the political fragmentation of the era retarded the development of slave-based production. Political structures were distorted so that enslaved populations were generated, in the first instance because military elites wanted to consolidate territory and control people but in the final analysis because no states were able to overcome the centrifugal forces of the period.

The size of the slave population of West Africa was considerable, and appears to have increased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To provide some idea of the scale of slavery, it is possible to look at estimates made at the end of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century (Table I). The areas of the western Sudan that included Futa Jallon, Futa Toro, the Umarian state, and other areas of Muslim concentration reportedly had an estimated slave population in excess of 1,700,000 in c. 1900, while the Sokoto Caliphate probably had a slave population well in excess of 1,000,000 and probably approaching 2,500,000. These populations are a general indication of the size of the market for slaves, which continued after the termination of trans-Atlantic slave trading; I think it is reasonable to suggest that the scale of slavery was comparable in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the time the trade to the Americas was in its last years. The Sokoto Caliphate, the largest state at the time, both in geographical area and in population, probably had a slave population that matched that of Brazil, and perhaps half the size of that of the United States in 1860.²⁷ The Islamic areas of the western and central Sudan had slave populations that were roughly the same as the total number of slaves in the Americas at the end of the eighteenth century, and more than the total number of slaves in the Caribbean at any time (Table II). Hence in terms of sheer numbers, the enslaved population of Islamic West Africa was of major proportions.

Furthermore, there were Muslims who had been enslaved in the Yoruba states, Asante, and Dahomey. In northern Asante, Muslims owned slaves, often settled in villages under plantation conditions. The Muslim merchants in the ports of the Bight of Benin certainly dealt in slaves and owned slaves whom they did not sell. This "northern factor" in Oyo, Dahomey, Asante and the ports of the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast has to be taken into consideration in discussing the transformations that occurred between 1600-1850. Muslim merchants had knowledge of and were involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade along half the western African coast indicates the possibility of tapping the large, internal trade in slaves and the promotion of enslavement in an atmosphere already politicized in terms of belief/unbelief

27. For a discussion of the relative scale of slave populations, see Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge, 1993). For the size of the slave population in the area that became A.O.F., see Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*. Cambridge, 1998), 252-56, basing his estimates largely on the reports of colonial officials, summarized in the reports of E. Poulet and E. Deherme; see A.S. Kanya-Forstner and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *Slavery and its Abolition in French West Africa* (Madison, 1994).

TABLE I

Slave Populations of the Western and Central Sudan, c. 1900

Region	Estimated Slave Population	Percentage of Total Population
Haut-Sénégal-Niger	821,639	21
Guinée	686,762	51
Sénégal	330,082	31
Sokoto Caliphate	1,000,000- 2,500,000	25-50
Total	2,837,000- 4,337,000	25-50

Sources: Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998), 252-56; and Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge, 1993), 1, 305n.

TABLE II

Slave and Free Colored Population of the Americas

Region/Colony	Late 18 th century Slave	Late 18 th century Free Colored	1860s/1872 Slave	1860s/1872 Free Colored
Caribbean	1,122,000	212,000	412,000	473,000
<i>French</i>	<i>575,000</i>	<i>30,000</i>	–	–
<i>British</i>	<i>467,000</i>	<i>13,000</i>	–	–
<i>Spanish</i>	<i>80,000</i>	<i>169,000</i>	<i>412,000</i>	<i>473,000</i>
Brazil	1,000,000	399,000	1,510,000	4,245,000
U.S.A.	575,000	32,000	3,953,000	488,000
Hispanic Mainland	271,000	650,000	–	–
TOTAL	2,968,000	1,293,000	5,875,000	5,206,000

Source: Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford, 1986), 295.

and the justification for enslavement on the basis of Islam. Hence it becomes important to identify when and where Muslim merchants were operating in West Africa, and what role they played in the export trade in slaves. The argument here is that this vast and sophisticated network of commerce was not a major source of slaves for the Atlantic market.

Although the *jihads* were internal, African political movements, they intersected with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Assessing the resulting influence, and in what ways this was manifested, can be determined if there was an increase in the numbers of enslaved who were being exported, or if the numbers were well below what could have been expected. There appears to have been an increase in the number of enslaved Muslims crossing the Atlantic at precisely the times when *jihads* were in full force, suggesting a link between the rise in exports and political change in West Africa, but Eltis and Miller are not necessarily correct in arguing that these apparent links establish little more than a peripheral connection with the demand for slaves. Rather, that demand was constrained and channeled internally to avoid the trans-Atlantic trade. Despite policies that could not be fully enforced, it was possible for Muslim governments to influence the course and direction of the slave trade. The scale of slavery in West Africa was comparable to the size of the slave population in the Americas, and hence it is conceivable that the West African slave regimes, whose servile populations were not self-sustaining through natural increase, required a trade in new slaves as large as the trans-Atlantic traffic to sustain the slave population.

Scale of the Slave Trade

While the exact proportions of external exports and internal trade cannot be known, the scale of the trade rose substantially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Manning's efforts to approximate the size of the enslaved population, including those who died before reaching their destinations or who succumbed soon thereafter, have reinforced my own conclusions about the impact of slavery between 1600-1800: the demographic impact was enormous.²⁸ The census for the Atlantic trade, which derives from quantifiable data, combined with the parameters of impact that follow from demographic theory establish that the West African population did not grow in this period and may well have actually declined. Furthermore, the ratio of slave to free appears to have shifted towards a larger servile population that rivaled in scale the size of slave societies in other times and other places. Moreover, from the scale of the trans-Saharan trade and the size of caravans in the interior of West Africa both suggest that it would have been possible for Muslim merchants to move many more slaves to the coast than they did. Muslim merchants had the ability to provide a larger number of slaves for reasons to be explored, but they did not do so.

28. Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990).

Enslaved Africans who were Muslims or who came from areas where there were Muslims, whether or not they themselves were influenced accordingly, could have come only from the area west of the Niger delta. According to my calculations, they came from an area that supplied approximately 38 per cent (3,555,000 people) of the enslaved Africans sent to the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not all of whom were Muslims or were from areas under Islamic influence.²⁹ The exported population that could have been Muslim, under Muslim influence or enslaved by Muslims has been estimated as shown in Table III, with all of those from Senegambia included in these categories, and while it could be well argued that only a portion of those from the upper Guinea coast should be included, I am calculating that all persons from this region should be included, recognizing that this estimate exaggerates the proportion of Muslims or those enslaved by Muslims. Nonetheless, the impact of Futa Jallon suggests that the majority should be included, at least. The proportions for the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast are arbitrary. Previously, I have estimated the number of individuals from the far interior of the Bight of Benin who went to Bahia, and I am allowing that most of those enslaved in the Yoruba wars of the nineteenth century were directly or indirectly related to the *jihad*.³⁰ I am allowing that 25 per cent of those leaving from the Bight of Benin either came from the central Sudan or were a product of the nineteenth-century wars. I am allowing a smaller proportion for the Gold Coast, 10 per cent, which may well be too high. Nonetheless, even these generous estimates of the proportion of individuals who were Muslims, enslaved by Muslims or enslaved as a result of wars related to the *jihad* movement could not have been more than 15 per cent of all enslaved Africans destined for the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³¹ Even if allowance is made for the British blockade of West Africa after 1810, the relatively small proportion of people coming from Muslim Africa and adjoining areas is striking.³²

A similar conclusion is reached by examining the voyage database developed by Eltis, Behrendt, Richardson and Klein (Table III-IV). In this

29. Enslaved Africans shipped from Mozambique and the region of modern Liberia and Côte-d'Ivoire account for the rest.

30. For an estimate of the number of enslaved Africans who were sent to the Americas, primarily to Bahia, from the Bight of Benin, see Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Central Sudan and the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David C. Newbury, and Michelle D. Wagner (eds.), *Paths to the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina* (Atlanta, 1994), 345-70. The voyage database has a built in bias in that the Bahian trade is not well represented and hence the movement of Muslims or those enslaved as a result of *jihad* is partially disguised; see David Eltis, et al, *The Atlantic Slave Trade. A Database on CD-Rom* (Cambridge, 2000).

31. For these estimates, see Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 51, 146, Tables 3.4 and 7.4.

32. Southeast Africa was also tied to Muslim networks, which reached into the far interior of Angola by the late nineteenth century, after the ending of the trans-Atlantic trade. For my purposes here, the Muslim influence in southeastern Africa is not considered, although the connection between West Africa and southeast Africa should not be dismissed; Heinrich Barth collected an itinerary in the Sokoto Caliphate in the early 1850s from a merchant in Kano who had traveled in the interior of Mozambique, apparently in the 1840s, if not earlier. See Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* (New York: Harper & Row, 1857-59).

TABLE III
Regional Origins of Enslaved Africans Destined for the Americas
(Sample size: 7,911,688)

Region	1651-1700	1701-50	1751-1800	1801-50	1851-67
Senegambia	17,836	54,714	139,977	30,440	–
Sierra Leone	2,834	4,962	132,378	66,076	898
Windward Coast	180	9,092	135,653	16,454	–
Gold Coast	35,478	155,631	345,886	80,597	–
Bight of Benin	134,219	374,509	399,630	209,612	12,795
Bight of Biafra	48,897	92,854	581,187	217,488	295
West Central	45,343	310,203	696,868	898,272	54,665
South East Africa	7,289	8,991	38,032	225,947	10,557
Origin Not known	106,959	771,812	557,010	691,281	117,747
Total Sample	399,242	1,781,305	3,027,302	2,436,321	196,957

Source: David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

TABLE IV
Areas of Possible Muslim Origin, 1651-1867

Region	1651-1700	1701-50	1751-1800	1801-50	1851-67
Senegambia	17,836	54,714	139,977	30,440	–
Sierra Leone	2,834	4,962	132,378	66,076	898
Gold Coast	35,478	155,631	345,886	80,597	–
Bight of Benin	134,219	374,509	399,630	209,612	12,795
Sub-Total	190,367	589,816	1,017,871	386,725	13,693
Per Cent Known	65 %	58 %	41 %	22 %	17 %
Total Known	292,282	1,009,493	2,470,292	1,745,040	79,210
Origin Not known	106,959	771,812	557,010	691,281	117,747
Total Sample	399,242	1,781,305	3,027,302	2,436,321	196,957

Source: David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

database, Senegambia is defined as anywhere north of the Rio Nunez, while Sierra Leone comprises the Rio Nunez to just west of Cape Mount inclusive; the Windward Coast is defined as the area from Cape Mount up to and including the Assini Rive, while the Gold Coast is defined as the areas east to the Volta River. The upper Guinea coast ceases to exist as a category but instead is divided between "Senegambia" and "Sierra Leone," with an apparently arbitrary boundary that is remarkable in the coincidence with the boundary between Guinea and Guinee-Bissau, although historically this boundary makes little sense.³³ Nonetheless, the areas of Senegambia and Sierra Leone touched an Islamic interior that supplied most of the enslaved population of this coast, and for our purposes, we can consider that virtually everyone from these regions were Muslims or had some contact with Muslims. The proportions of enslaved individuals from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin who were Muslims or who had had some contact with Muslims was certainly small, although the size of the unspecified category may disguise more people leaving from the Bight of Benin, and this may have included a greater number of people from the interior. In any event, as indicated in Table V, even if adjustments are made for these ambiguous factors, it is highly unlikely that more than about 15 per cent of those leaving Africa were Muslims or had any contact with Islam, and the proportion could well have been as low as 6-10 per cent before the era of *jihad* and the spread of Islam.

At the same time, the trans-Saharan slave trade from the central and western Sudan was also considerable. According to Ralph Austen, almost 1.5 million people were sent across the Sahara as slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the central and western Sudan, a figure that does not include those slaves who were retained within the Sahara.³⁴ His calculations are projections from estimates of the numbers of slaves arriving in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. I have modified these figures for the central Sudan for the nineteenth century, suggesting that Austen underestimated the importance of the region as a source of slaves.³⁵ Nonetheless, relying on his more conservative figures, it is still possible to suggest that the scale of the trans-Saharan trade from the western and central Sudan was greater than the size of the trade to the Atlantic coast for shipment to the

33. The region known as Windward Coast has no African reality and confuses important distinctions identified in *Transformations in Slavery* in 1983, and initially pointed out by Curtin and Manning, but resolved by Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History*, 22, 4 (1982), establishing that the "Windward Coast" can be dissected reasonably accurately, demonstrating that the eastern portion in fact part of the Gold Coast region, connecting with the Akan dominated interior, while the western portions more properly belong to the upper Guinea coast or Sierra Leone, depending upon definition. There were portions of the Liberian and Cote d'Ivoire that were not important in the slave trade, and had no or little connection with the distant Muslim interior.

34. Ralph Austen, "The Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa: A Tentative Census," in Savage, *Human Commodity*, 214-48.

35. Paul E. Lovejoy, "Commercial Sectors in the Economy of the Nineteenth-Century Central Sudan: The Trans-Saharan Trade and the Desert-Side Salt Trade," *African Economic History*, 13 (1984), 85-116.

TABLE V
Regional Origins: Weighted for Muslim Factor

Region	1651-1700	1701-50	1751-1800	1801-50	1851-67
Senegambia	17,836	54,714	139,977	30,440	–
Sierra Leone	2,834	4,962	132,378	66,076	898
Gold Coast	35,478 (10 %)	155,631 (10 %)	345,886 (10 %)	80,597 (10 %)	–
Bight of Benin	134,219 (0 %)	374,509 (10 %)	399,630 (20 %)	209,612 (60 %)	12,795 (80 %)
Sub-Total	24,218	112,690	386,870	230,342	11,134
Per Cent Known	8 %	9 %	16 %	13 %	14 %
Total Known	292,282	1,009,493	2,470,292	1,745,040	79,210
Origin Not known	106,959	771,812	557,010	691,281	117,747
Total Sample	399,242	1,781,305	3,027,302	2,436,321	196,957

Source: David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Americas from the interior of West Africa in the same period.³⁶ Presumably, some of these slaves, at least, could have been directed to the coast for shipment to the Americas, other factors being equal.

The impact of the slave trade on the Muslim interior of West Africa was considerable as well, although it is difficult to estimate, and then really only for the end of the nineteenth century, after the ending of the trans-Atlantic trade in slaves. Nonetheless, the scale had to have been considerable, if reports from the Sokoto Caliphate on the movement of caravans and tribute payments in the form of slaves are examined, or if the French reports on caravan movements in the western Sudan are to be trusted as an indication of probable levels.³⁷ As with the Saharan trade, the internal West African trade appears to have been on a scale that could have made it possible to divert slaves to the Atlantic coast, if had been desirable to do so.

Hence it appears that the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was restricted, and consequently, it may appear that Eltis's claim that there was relatively little impact on the interior of West Africa is accurate. However, such a conclusion misses the political context which appears to have consciously attempted to limit the potential impact by attempting to outlaw sales of slaves to Europeans, at least in certain cases. Certainly in terms of the

36. See, for example, E. Ann McDougall, "Salt, Saharans, and the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: Nineteenth Century Developments," in Savage, *Human Commodity*, 76-80.

37. See Tambo, "Sokoto Caliphate Slave Trade;" Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Central Sudan and the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David C. Newbury, and Michelle D. Wagner (eds.), *Paths to the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina* (Atlanta, 1994), 345-70; and Martin Klein, "The Slave Trade in the Western Sudan during the Nineteenth Century," in Savage, *Human Commodity*, 39-60.

potential impact, the export figures seem to bear out a marginal role in comparison with other areas of Africa from where slaves came. Nonetheless, there is an apparent contradiction that is revealed in the data that affects the analysis of the relative impact of the slave trade on the interior of West Africa. That factor is the incidence of “domestic” slavery. Eltis interprets the relative importance of the slave trade and the African trade more generally as another, but not particularly outstanding, contribution to the economic growth of northwestern Europe after the middle of the seventeenth century, but he credits the trade with marginal impact on Africa, much less than the total “domestic” product.³⁸ This analysis only makes sense to me if it is assumed that there was a conscious attempt by Muslims to stay out of the Atlantic web of slavery. I am arguing here that the relative unimportance of Muslim areas and Muslim networks as suppliers of slaves for the trans-Atlantic trade does not indicate a relatively minimal impact but rather an ideological and political commitment, based on religion, *not* to supply slaves, while at the same time servicing a very large internal market that if conditions had been otherwise could have supplied the trans-Atlantic market. Instead, the internal demand and use for slaves overshadowed the external demand, so that slaves were kept within West Africa in Muslim areas, rather than being sold to Christians for export to the Americas.

Despite the marginal involvement of Muslim merchants in supplying the trans-Atlantic slave trade, it seems likely, as Patrick Manning has argued, that there was

a clear intercontinental market for slaves, beginning with the seventeenth century increase in the volume and prices of slaves in the Occidental [trans-Atlantic] trade, expanding across Africa and into the Orient [including North Africa] by the end of the eighteenth century, and then gradually undergoing restriction to Africa and portions of the Orient in the nineteenth century.³⁹

I share this view that we need a conception of slavery that incorporates the Americas, Muslim North Africa, the Middle East, and indeed large parts of Africa, as Manning suggests. These areas should be seen as interlocking parts of an international system of slavery that has a long and difficult history. What distinguished slavery in Africa from the other parts of this international system was the interconnection between enslavement, the slave trade and the productive exploitation of slaves – often within a single political state. Manning has constructed a demographic model that attempts to provide parameters within which this slave mode of production can be measured in terms of its demographic impact. By dividing a hypothetical West African population into those raided for slaves, those taken as slaves, those doing the raiding and trading, and those who died as a consequence of enslavement,

38. For the argument for the relative unimportance of the slave trade on African economic growth, see Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*; and Eltis and Jennings, “Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World.” This argument fails to address the autonomy of the Muslim interior.

39. Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990), 102-103.

Manning has been able to use sophisticated demographic analysis to establish the severe impact of slavery on West Africa.⁴⁰

However, the possible imperfections of this intercontinental slave market, as reflected in price structure, is the apparent disjuncture in prices between the European-dominated Atlantic coast of Africa and the interior and Saharan markets. Emmanuel Terray has argued that the price differential between the coast and the interior demonstrated that the trans-Atlantic trade had little influence on the internal trade of West Africa, that

les deux marchés sont largement indépendants l'un de l'autre; les partenaires qui s'y présentent ne sont pas les mêmes sources, ni de la même manière, le commerce intérieur des esclaves et la traite transatlantique forment deux réseaux parallèles séparés par une cloison qui, à notre avis, est à peu près étanche.⁴¹

By contrast, Lovejoy and Richardson have concluded that interior prices were related to coastal prices and to prices in North Africa, with prices at export points shadowing interior prices. The relative importance of the internal and external trades cannot be determined on the basis of the price data at hand, but there is reason to assume that the internal market for slaves was a significant factor, and perhaps even the dominant factor, in the determination of prices. Trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan demand influenced the decisions to export certain categories of slaves from the interior, but it seems unlikely that external factors were the dominant ones in determining the composition of the slave populations of the price structure for the slave trade within the various economies and societies in West Africa.⁴² It is suggested here that the price differential was less important than previously thought and that legal, religious and cultural factors were more important in limiting the pull of the trans-Atlantic market.

Consider the gender composition of slave trading and the assumed Sahara/Atlantic divide that affected the price structure and determined gender ratios. While it is generally recognized that the trans-Atlantic trade tended to favor males by a factor as high as two to one, across the Sahara, the preference is alleged to have been for women, apparently the demand being each the inverse of the other.⁴³ Whether or not such ratios were achieved between Islamic West Africa and the Atlantic and Saharan markets is in fact debatable.⁴⁴ Moreover, the development that is often missed is the importance of slavery within the societies and economies of West Africa, especially in Muslim areas. Price differentials between males and females may not have been as significant, however. Hence whether the interior market and the

40. Manning, *Slavery and African Life*.

41. Emmanuel Terray, "Reflexions sur la Formation du Prix des Esclaves à l'Intérieur de l'Afrique de l'Ouest Précoloniale", *Journal des Africanistes*, 52 (1982), 120.

42. Lovejoy and Richardson, "Competing Markets for Male and Female Slaves."

43. On the argument that the Saharan market wanted women, rather than men, see Claire Robertson and Martin Klein (eds.), *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1986).

44. See, for example, the studies in Savage, *Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, which demonstrate that the composition of the trans-Saharan trade varied greatly in gender makeup, depending upon time, route, and the political and economic needs of the market.

Saharan trade actually valued women over men has not been demonstrated satisfactorily. The Atlantic trade paid more for men, but as I demonstrate elsewhere, the apparent differential is misleading, since the value of males in the interior was much higher than the market price.⁴⁵ Males were often ransomed and therefore freed from slavery but at a cost that was considerably higher than the recorded market prices and the apparent differential with the prices of females. When the ransom factor is taken into consideration, the price differential between the interior and the Atlantic coast and the pull of the Americas was much less than has been recognized previously. It is suggested here that such a re-interpretation highlights the major features of slavery in Muslim areas of West Africa, first that there was an intense involvement in slavery and the slave trade during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in which many slaves were retained within West Africa, especially in Muslim areas. Secondly, these developments in Muslim areas served as constraints on the supply of enslaved individuals for the Atlantic trade, and that specifically that there is evidence that this consistent with a policy that attempted to prevent the sale of slaves to European and Christian countries. What explains the apparent contradiction between a high proportion of slaves retained internally and a relatively low level of exports to the Atlantic coast appears to be a disregard for the practice of ransoming, which was also a factor in determining the price of slaves. My intention here is to examine the political and ideological factors that underpinned this apparent price differential between the interior and the coast.

Muslim Commercial Structures

In his reevaluation of the relationship between the development of a commercial class and the basis of political power in Africa, Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau has argued that the nascent class of African merchants failed to usurp the political process or otherwise reach an accommodation with the military elites that could have resulted in the consolidation of capitalist relations of production, similar to those in Europe in the same period.⁴⁶ While he considers African merchants to have been as “capitalist” as their European counterparts and therefore having the potential to gain the political power that is sometimes considered essential for sustained economic development, they instead were constantly pitted against the military elites who dominated the political structures of most states in Africa. Pétré-Grenouilleau may be correct that African merchants did not gain political power but in the jihad states it could be claimed that they shared it with other social and political orders, specifically Fulbe clerics and clan chiefs. Despite tensions, the relationship between the Muslim merchant class and the new aristocracy can hardly be described as a situation of “conflicting solidarity”

45. The issue is discussed further in my “Ransoming and the Price of Slaves in the Interior of West Africa” (forthcoming).

46. Pétré-Grenouilleau, “Long-Distance Trade and Economic Development.”

between merchants and military elites. However valid Pétré-Grenouilleau's argument may appear for other parts of Africa, it does not adequately distinguish between areas dominated by Muslim merchants and areas where Muslims operated but at risks because of the need for protection from non-Muslim governments. Nor does this approach distinguish areas where there were Muslims, whether in political control or as minorities, with other parts of Africa where there were no Muslims.

During the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, much of West Africa remained under the control of Muslim merchants – despite the collapse of Songhay as a large Islamic state that protected and promoted long-distance trade. Muslim-dominated trade routes continued to tie West Africa and the Central Sudan together in an overlapping series of commercial networks. Muslims dominated trade, especially long-distance trade, in the Senegambia region, and inland throughout the savanna, sahel and desert. Muslims were the major traders on the routes that connected to the rivers of Rio Nunez and Rio Pongo on the upper Guinea coast, as well as at Sierra Leone. Known as Juula (Djula), Jakhanke, Yarse, Wangara, they had a corporate identity as merchants and Muslims, living in their own communities and in separate wards in non-Muslim towns.⁴⁷ They were found on the coast in the Akan region of the Gold Coast, although restricted in their movements after the consolidation of the Asante state in the early eighteenth century.

Muslim merchants are also reported at the ports of the Bight of Benin as early as c. 1700, although the rise of Dahomey, particularly its conquest of Allada and Ouidah in the 1720s, seems to have ended direct Muslim trade to the coast at Ouidah, at least. Muslims were found at Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, but not at Ouidah again until the 1830s.⁴⁸ However, from the second half of the eighteenth century, the rival ports at Porto Novo and then Lagos did welcome Muslims. The leading merchant at Porto Novo in the late 1780s and early 1790s, Pierra Tamata, was Hausa in origin, although educated in France.⁴⁹ Porto Novo became the principal outlet for Oyo, thereby bypassing Dahomey and Ouidah. Oyo policy specifically promoted trade between the coast and the central Sudan, and this trade inevitably involved Muslim merchants.⁵⁰ By the early nineteenth century, the direct trade between the Bight of Benin and Bahia assumed overwhelming proportions,

47. For the various Muslim commercial networks, see, for example, Philip D. Curtin, "Pre-colonial trading networks and traders: the Diakhanke," in Claude Meillassoux ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London, 1971), 228-39; Bary, *Senegambie du X^{vi}^e au XIX^e siècle*; Yves Person, *Samori: une révolution Dyula* (Dakar, 1968), vol. 1; Allen M. Howard, "Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th to 20th Centuries," in Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner (eds.), *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton NJ, 1997), 21-63; Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914* (Stanford, 1987).

48. Robin Law, *History of Ouidah* (forthcoming). I wish to thank Professor Law for allowing me to consult his manuscript.

49. On Pierre Tamata, see Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations*.

50. See Peter Morton-Williams, "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic slave trade, 1670-1830," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3, 1, 1964, 25-45; Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600 – c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford, 1977).

although links with the interior were still through the medium of Oyo, at least through the 1820s. Thereafter, Muslims were more active at all the ports in the Bight of Benin, especially after the return of Muslims from Brazil, following the abortive Malês uprising in Bahia in 1835. Muslims also returned from Cuba and Trinidad, and thereafter Muslim quarters existed in all the coastal towns. Hence, the presence of Islamic factor in the Bight of Benin can be traced most especially to the late eighteenth century, and at the ports of Porto Novo and Lagos, not Ouidah. In the last years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the 1830s, the Muslim presence was more pronounced, both as victims of the trade and merchants of the trade.

The merchants who were Muslim had specific characteristics which included literacy in Arabic that drew on an educational system that was widespread in West Africa.⁵¹ This system can be defined in terms of the concept of commercial diaspora, as developed by Curtin and others.⁵² In this context, and little appreciated by historians of Africa, is the evidence from enslaved Muslims in the Americas, whose testimonies reveal the close connection between education and commerce, religion and literacy, and kinship and agency. Evidence of entrepreneurial skills, the rational allocation of resources and capital, and the use of literacy for contracts were common. An assessment of the literature on the relative importance of the slave trade as it connected with trans-Atlantic markets has indicated that there was an important influence, but there has not been sufficient consideration of the possibility that there was a conscious attempt to limit the impact of the "Christian" demand for slaves and the diversion of slave supplies into "domestic" production, retaining a connection with trans-Saharan markets that reinforced preferences and ideological direction.

A consideration of Hausa commercial networks demonstrates the dynamic force of Muslim commercial structures in West Africa and the potential economic weight of the entrepreneurial abilities unleashed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As I have demonstrated elsewhere with respect to the trade in kola, salt, textiles, slaves and other commodities, the commercial networks radiating outward from the central Sudan, which underpinned the economy of the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century, were organized along guide-like lines. Merchants were organized into corporate groups that recognized common origins, which either reflected a geographical homeland or immigrant status, the principal groups in the eighteenth century being

51. For an overview of Islamic education, including education in Islamic commercial law, in the centuries of the slave trade, see Ivor Wilks, "The Transmission of Learning in the Western Sudan", in J.R. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), 162-97; Wilks, "The Growth of Islamic Learning in Ghana," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2:4 (1963), 409-17.

52. See, for example, Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, 1984); and Curtin, "External Trade to 1800," in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa* (3rd ed.) London (1985); Lovejoy, *Hausa Kola Trade*; Lovejoy, *Salt of the Desert Sun*; and Lovejoy, "The internal trade of West Africa before 1800," in Ajayi and Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, (3rd ed.), vol. I, 648-90; and Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914* (Stanford, 1987).

merchants from Borno, the southern Sahara, and the trade routes to the western Sudan. Merchant groups tended to dominate the trade in particular commodities, the Wangara controlling trade to the west in kola nuts, textiles and the redistribution of salt to the west from the market centers of Hausaland. The merchants from Borno controlled the sources of the various salts of Borno as well as the textile trade. The reorganization of trade and production after the jihad of 1804-1809 and the consolidation of the Sokoto Caliphate was considerable, as analyzed elsewhere. The reasons why West Africa, and particularly the Islamic states of the interior, did not generate a "capitalist" solution to development relate more to opportunities and constraints. The opportunities were calculated in terms of the larger Islamic world, while constraints were initiated to protect society and state from European incursion.⁵³

Hausa merchants were closely integrated with the local aristocracy after the *jihad* in the early nineteenth century. While there were times when relations between the merchant community and the state were strained, merchants were usually accorded various incentives to conduct business, including tax breaks, land concessions, and gifts, in return for which the merchants were expected to seek specific protection and sponsorship from officials. Such practices were also common in other parts of West Africa affected by the *jihad* movement, and hence the distinction between those areas of strong Muslim influence and other parts of Africa is in fact important. It is important to note the close association between the class of Muslim merchants and the Islamic educational system; scholars and merchants could be from the same families, and individuals might shift the focus of their careers between commerce and scholarship in the course of their lives. Whether or not the Wangarawa, Agalawa and Kambarin Beriberi were capitalists or "proto-capitalists" is difficult to answer, but the same merchant associations and clans have dominated the twentieth century economy, although their identities are often not recognized by outsiders as being anything other than Hausa. What were their ancestors? Whether or not these Muslim merchants could have emulated the rising capitalists of Europe is debatable, but the reasons why these merchant and would-be capitalists failed to generate "capitalism" may well have involved unusual risks arising from slavery. The risks were proven when some merchants ended up in slavery in the Americas. Muhammad Kaba Saghanaghu, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, Abubakar al-Siddiq can serve as examples, but there were other merchants, intellectuals, and religious leaders who were subjected to enslavement which robbed society of their potential.⁵⁴ The Muslim attempt to find

53. Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola. The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700-1900*. Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press; and Ibadan, University Press Ltd., 1970); Paul E. Lovejoy and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (eds.), *The Workers of African Trade*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1985); and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Salt of the Desert Sun. A History of Salt Production and Trade in the Central Sudan*, Cambridge University Press, 1986).

54. Yacine Daddi Addoun and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Arabic Manuscript of Muhammad Kaba Saghanaghu of Jamaica, c. 1820," in Verene Shepherd (ed.), *Reassessing Creoleedom:*

a solution to the problems arising from the demand for slaves did not work, at least not in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The aim was to protect Muslims from enslavement, but this proved to be impossible to achieve.

Hence commercial institutions were well developed for credit, currency, agency, legal recourse, extraterritoriality, and insurance that had evolved in the context of the era of trans-Atlantic slavery and which have continued to evolve in the modern period, as reflected in the business practices and scale of operation of Middle Eastern firms in Arabia or Muslim companies in Nigeria, which have interconnections that are pan-Islamic, from the streets of New York to the Philippines. Muslims were involved in the slave trade in various ways; first as traders, and where and when they were involved can be documented, as well as their relative importance in the trade.⁵⁵ Second, Muslims were also victims of the trade, as enslaved individuals, and this included some Muslim traders who had actually dealt in slaves themselves. We have to disentangle enslaved Muslims, who may themselves have engaged in slave trading or otherwise owning slaves before their own enslavement, from the actual buying and selling of slaves and the relationship of trade to Islam. Such a distinction is important because of the crucial role *jihād* played in the history of West Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There was a quietest tradition of Islam, opposed in principle to *jihād* that nonetheless tried to co-exist with the revolutionary thrust of an expansive Islam, but sometimes these traditions clashed in ways that produced slaves.⁵⁶

Whether Muslims were virtually the only long-distance merchants, as in much of the interior of West Africa, or whether they traveled in caravans through non-Muslim areas and required the protection of local governments, Muslim law and commercial institutions were developed along lines that were closely associated with practices in Morocco and the Ottoman domains. Beyond areas of dominant Muslim control, as in the ports on the coast and along the routes to them that passed through non-Muslim states, Muslim

Essays in Honour of Kamau Brathwaite (Kingston, Jamaica, 2002); Law and Lovejoy, *Biography of Baquaqua*; Ivor Wilks, "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of Timbuktu," in Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered*, 152-69.

55. John Hunwick, "Islamic Financial Institutions: Theoretical Structures and Some of the Practical Applications in Sub-Saharan Africa," in Jane Guyer and Endre Stiansen (eds.), *Currencies, Credit and Culture: African Financial Institutions in Historical Perspective* (Uppsala, 2001); and Hunwick, *West Africa and the Arab World: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Accra, 1991).

56. See, for example, the Maliki legal tradition, as interpreted by Abu Zayd al-Qarawini (d. 996) in his *Risalat*. For a discussion, see John Hunwick, "Wills, Slave Emancipation, and Clientship," in Philip Riley et al. (eds.), *The Global Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 2nd ed., 1992), vol. 1, 189-92, which includes a translation of a section from the *Risala* of Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, with the commentary of Abu'l-Hasan al-Maliki and the supercommentary of 'Ali al-Sa'idi. Also see John Ralph Willis, "Islamic Africa: Reflections on the Servile Estate," *Studia Islamica*, 52 (1980), 183-97; John Ralph Willis, "Preface," in Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery*, vol. 1, vii-xi; Willis, "Introduction: The Ideology of Enslavement in Islam," in *Slaves and Slavery*, vol. 1, 1-15; and Willis, "Jihad and the Ideology of Enslavement," in *Slaves and Slavery*, 1:16-26. Also see Lovejoy, introduction to *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1981); John Hunwick, *Shari'a in Songhay: The Replies of al-Maghili to the Questions of Askia Al-Hajj Muhammad* (Oxford, 1985).

traders were exposed to restrictions by non-Muslim governments, but they were still present and they were often substantial merchants or craftsmen and professionals who were closely associated with merchants. The areas of Muslim government and places where there were non-Muslim states and societies but where Muslim merchants were still allowed to operate means that virtually all of the enslaved Africans who left West Africa, from the area west of the Niger delta, and including the Bight of Benin, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, the upper Guinea coast, and Senegambia, came through ports where Muslim merchants were known and which connected to Muslim-dominated trade routes into the interior at one time or another.⁵⁷ The boundary beyond which this was not the case was the delta of the Niger River. The Bight of Biafra and the areas to the south along the Loango, Kongo and Angola coasts were different from the coastal areas of western Africa because there were no Muslims present, and the routes into the interior did not connect with Muslim-dominated trade routes, at least not before the middle of the nineteenth century. Hence there is a sharp distinction between the area west of the Niger delta, and the Bight of Biafra and west-central Africa.⁵⁸ This important distinction in the regional origins of enslaved Africans is significant because the two regions where there was no Muslim influence accounted for 56 per cent of all enslaved Africans taken to the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Table III).

Muslim Restrictions on the Slave Trade

Cultural, religious, and political factors relating to Islam restricted the trade with the Atlantic world, but only in slaves. Other commodities, including gum Arabic, beeswax, ostrich feathers, and gold, were sold to Europeans on the Senegambia coast or indirectly via trans-Saharan routes – the amounts exported varying with market conditions and levels of production but without religious or political implications in terms of the specific commodities, except with respect to slaves and alcohol, which was prohibited by law. It is claimed here that there were restrictions on the export of slaves who came from the regions of the western and central Sudan, and that there were efforts to limit access to potential sources of slaves who might be Muslims or a product of Muslim expansion. And it is precisely in the areas experiencing the first jihads that led into the interior and therefore indicating the attempts to limit the impact of the trans-Atlantic trade. The corridor of jihad stretched inward from Senegambia through Futa Toro to Massina, where opposition to the sale of Muslims or slaves held by Muslims was strong. Enslaved

57. See Mahdi Adamu, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria and Ibadan, 1978); Adamu, "The delivery of slaves from the central Sudan to the Bight of Benin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," in Gemery and Hogendorn, *Uncommon Market*.

58. Much of the region of present-day Liberia and Côte-d'Ivoire was beyond the influence of Muslims, and these areas were marginal to the trans-Atlantic movement of enslaved Africans; see Leonhard Harding and Pierre Kipré (eds.), *Commerce et Commerçants en Afrique de l'Ouest. La Côte-d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1992).

Muslims and the enemies of Muslim governments were exported, but not in any sustained way that responded clearly to market forces from the Atlantic. Opportunism and political revenge can be credited with the export of enslaved people from the interior, not conscious political intent.

Restrictions on the export of Muslims who had been enslaved seem to have been a common policy of the *jihad* states. Indeed one of the stated objectives of the *jihad*s was the prevention of such sales. The inability to achieve this protection was part of the crisis in West Africa relating to the slave trade that clearly influenced the timing and direction of religious and political reform associated with *jihad*, although demonstrating this is not easy.⁵⁹ On the one hand, the incidence of slave exports from the upper Guinea coast in the eighteenth century seems to correspond with the *jihad* in Futa Jallon, although government policy is not clear. On the other hand, Futa Toro attempted to protect domestic slaves from being exported.⁶⁰ Moreover, the Sokoto *jihad* was on record as opposing the sale of slaves to “Christians.” How slavery policy evolved in the *jihad* states is therefore a subject of research and reflection. There may have been economic factors that hindered further Muslim involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but the limiting factors seem to have been ideological and cultural. Certainly, there was no uniformity, and it was relatively easy for individual merchants or government officials to circumvent policies that can be described as “Muslim.” Such discrepancy reflected differences in interpretation of Islamic customs and practices as well as difficulties of enforcement. Admittedly, the connection between *jihad* and slavery is ambiguous and contradictory, but it is argued here that on balance, *jihad* led to increased enslavement that was not matched by a proportionate increase in the slave shipped across the Atlantic from Muslim areas.

This ambiguity between Muslim intentions and the fact that enslaved Muslims were sent to the Americas is clearest for the Yoruba, who became a significant ethnic component of the exported population from the Bight of Benin in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. In this case, the presence or absence of Muslims in the deported population has

59. Humphrey John Fisher, “A Muslim Wilberforce? The Sokoto Jihad as Anti-Slavery Crusade: An Enquiry into Historical Causes,” in S. Daget, ed. *De la traite à l’esclavage du V^e au XIX^e siècle; Actes du Colloque International sur la traite des Noirs, Nantes 1985* (Nantes and Paris, 1988), II, 537-55; Muhammad A. Al-Hajj and Murray Last, “Attempts at defining a Muslim in 19th century Hausaland and Bornu.” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3 (1965): 231-240. Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Clapperton-Bello Exchange: the Sokoto Jihad and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1804-1837,” in Christopher Wise (ed.), *The Desert Shore: Literatures of the African Sahel* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 201-28; Constance Hilliard, “Zuhur al-Basatin and Ta’rikh al-Turubbe: Some Legal and Ethical Aspects of Slavery in the Sudan as Seen in the Works of Shaykh Musa Kamara,” in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery*, 1:160-81.

60. According to Walter Rodney and Boubakar Bary, Futa Jallon relied on slave exports to the coast; see Boubakar Bary, *La Senegambie du X^{ve} au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1988); and Walter Rodney, “Jihad and social revolution in Futa Jallon in the eighteenth century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4:2 (1968), 269-84. For Futa Toro and the effort to limit the slave trade along the Senegal River, see Omar Kane, “Les Maures et Fouta Toro au xviii^e siècle,” *Cahier d’études africaines*, 14 (1974), 237-52; and David Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics. Abdul Bokar Kan and Fouta Toro, 1853-1891* (Oxford, 1975), 22.

significance in terms of reflecting and measuring the course of the *jihad* in the interior. Of course war led to export of Muslims and those caught up in resistance to the *jihad*, but whether or not the actual number of people being sent across the Atlantic was less than it might otherwise have been needs to be explored. In Asante, for example, where it was possible for Muslims to be exported to the Americas, the arrangements between the Asante government and the resident population of Muslim merchants and intellectuals apparently included protection of Muslims in the northern provinces, suggesting that the export of enslaved Muslims would have been restricted. Slaves from the north, known as *odonko*, were recognized in Asante as distinct, which may have been a factor in identifying and protecting enslaved Muslims.

Muslim leaders were actively opposed to the sale of slaves to Europeans, as Muhammad Bello, the son and successor to Shaikh Usman dan Fodio of Sokoto, made clear to the British diplomats who visited the Sokoto Caliphate in the 1820s.⁶¹ The Caliphate specifically banned the sale of slaves to Christians, and this law predated any possible direct influence from the British abolition movement or the European Enlightenment more generally. In *Infaq al-maysur* (1812), Muhammad Bello condemned the “Yoruba,” that is, Oyo for selling slaves to Christians: “The people of this land would get captured slaves from our land here and they would sell them to the Christians.... I have mentioned this so that you should not purchase a Muslim slave if someone captures such a slave and brings him to you.”⁶² Moreover, Abdullahi dan Fodio interpreted the commercial law on slave sales through verse in order to reach the rank and file of the *jihad* movement.⁶³ In 1824, Bello told British diplomat, Hugh Clapperton, that “their own Law... forbids them to sell their Slaves to Christians.”⁶⁴ Bello insisted that “a total stop should be put to the Traffic immediately.”⁶⁵ He expressed his views in an official letter to King George IV, dated 1 Ramadan, 1239 (18 April 1824). In desiring to promote a “friendly relation,” Sokoto would henceforth “prohibit the exportation of slaves by our merchants to Atagher [Atagara, i.e. Idah, on the Niger], Dahomi [Dahomey], and Ashantee.” Bello informed King George IV that there had been an agreement “on account of the good which will result from it, both to you and to us.”⁶⁶ In Clapperton’s assessment, “With regard to the Foreign Slave Trade, I should think that through our intercourse with Bello there is a fair opportunity of cramping, if not totally abolishing, this nefarious traffic.”⁶⁷

61. Lovejoy, “Clapperton-Bello Exchange.”

62. Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-maysur fi ta'rikh bilad al-takrur* (ed. and trans., Bahija Chadli, Rabat, 1996).

63. Abdullahi dan Fodio on commercial law and slavery

64. Clapperton to R. Wilmot Horton, 6 June 1825, in E. W. Bovill, ed., *Missions to the Niger, IV. The Bornu Mission, 1822-25, Part 3* (London, 1966), vol. IV, 775.

65. Clapperton to Horton, 6 June 1825, in Bovill, *Missions*, vol. IV, 775.

66. Dixon Denham, Hugh Clapperton, and Walter Oudney, *Narratives of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823, and 1824* (London, 1826), vol. II, 420.

67. Clapperton to Horton, 6 June 1825, in Bovill, *Mission*, 775.

In fact, slaves were sold south from the Sokoto Caliphate, and hence slave sales cannot be credited to the enemies of the Caliphate, at least not in all cases, but the situations in which slaves were consciously sold south, with the likelihood of ending up in the Americas, are instructive. According to Clapperton, only “refractory slaves” were sold, all others being retained within the Caliphate or sold north to other Islamic areas. The few women who were sent to the Americas included slaves suspected of murder, as Clapperton learned in Kano in 1824. According to what he was told, several concubines accused of the strangulation of their master, a merchant from Ghadames, were deported to the coast, for sale to the Americas. According to Clapperton, the merchant’s

...female slaves were suspected of being guilty of the murder, as two or three cases had happened before. The governor of Kano [Emir Ibrahim Dabo] sent to Hadje Salah, as chief of the Arabs, to know what he would have done on the occasion; whether the slaves should be sold out of the country, or whether they should be put to death. It had been customary, in cases of this kind, to send the perpetrators of similar crimes to the sea-coast, to be sold to the slave-dealers.⁶⁸

This account is important because it is virtually the only reference to adult females, clearly prime females because they were concubines, who were sold to the coast. Most female slaves who were exported went north across the Sahara, but “criminals” were clearly a separate category, along with other “refractory and intractable” slaves.⁶⁹ Along the routes to the north, at least, the Caliphate maintained custom posts where slaves were examined to determine whether or not they were free-born Muslims, which usually could be decided on the basis of their knowledge of the appropriate Arabic prayers.

Despite these efforts at protection of freeborn Muslims and otherwise restricting the trade, it was impossible to fully enforce government policy. Hence al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal, who consolidated the Tijiniyya *tariqa* over much of the western Sudan in his *jihad*, declared in the mid 1830s that “To sell Muslim slaves to the Europeans or to others, is totally prohibited.”⁷⁰ At the time of his criticism, the slave trade was still a significant factor in the Bight of Benin, and hence the comments also reveal the awareness of this trade in the highest circles in Sokoto. After returning from pilgrimage and settling in Sokoto in the early 1830s, ‘Umar issued a condemning report on the external slave trade of the Caliphate. In *Risalat shawa al-habib ila Ibrahim al-labib*, he described improper practices that resulted in the enslavement of people through so-called “legal” proclamations. In his view, “no one can be more ignorant and arrogant than sinful and criminal people who legalize enslavement of free people by an act of *fatwa*.” ‘Umar specifically condem-

68. Hugh Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1829), 171.

69. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition*, 95.

70. *Risalat Sawq al-Habib*, Ms Arabe BNP, No. 5724, as cited in Omar Jah, “The Effect of Pilgrimage on the Jihad of Al-Hajj ‘Umar al-Futi 1794-1864,” in Yusuf Fadl Hasan and Paul Doornbos, eds., *The Central Bilad al Sudan: Tradition and Adaptation* (Khartoum, 1977), 239.

ned the continuation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, though “totally prohibited,”

but despite this prohibition, people who pretend to be knowledgeable, let alone the ignorant, are still competing in this hated transaction.... [And] worse still we do not see anyone condemning it, nor is there any one from among the ‘ulama’ or the amirs, trying to put an end to this illegal practice. They act as if it were no longer obligatory upon them to do so.⁷¹

The biographies of various Muslims who were taken to Jamaica and Brazil in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as slaves attest to the accuracy of these charges of complicity in the sale of people to “Christians.”⁷² Despite these exceptions and considering the scale of the slave trade in the central Sudan in the first half of the nineteenth century, relatively few people were actually sold south, and almost none of these were women. Instead, those who were newly enslaved were generally settled within the Sokoto Caliphate.⁷³ It is possible to suggest these conclusion, even though it is difficult to distinguish the sale of slaves by Muslims from the sale of enslaved Muslims by the enemies of the *jihad*. It is instructive that the issue was important enough that the Caliphate attempted to do so.

Conclusion

Islam was associated with resistance to European expansion and the maintenance of autonomous communities beyond the Atlantic world. There were attempts to limit that influence, and the attempts to protect freeborn Muslims amounted to policies of partial abolition to protect Muslims, while still countenancing slavery. It is suggested that the spread of Muslim abolitionist propaganda was associated with the *jihad* movement, and hence we can examine the presence of Muslims in the Americas as a reflection of the concern behind this ideology. We can also examine the numbers of enslaved Africans that came from areas that were dominated by Muslims or where Muslim merchants played or could have played a major role in the sale of slaves for export. We have already demonstrated that there was a developed commercial network, and institutions of commercial law and protection, that were well in place and therefore were able to supply slaves, since this same network did precisely that internally and with respect to the trans-Saharan trade.

The evidence seems to suggest that the areas where Muslim merchants were involved in the trade in slaves were relatively less important than might otherwise have been the case. It is suggested that Muslim involvement in the slave trade may have retarded African participation in the trans-Atlantic slave

71. *Ibid.*, 239.

72. Lovejoy, “Jihad e Escravidao: As Origens dos Escravos Muculmanos de Bahia,” *Topoi* (Rio de Janeiro), 1 (2000), 11-44.

73. Kolapo, “Slaving Frontier of the Sokoto Caliphate.”

trade; perhaps setting limits and restrictions that were legal, religious, and cultural that correspondingly undermined economic forces. This does not mean that there were fewer slaves or a lessening of the scale of enslavement, but that trade was directed inward and into the Islamic world, rather than out of it. While there was some “seepage” of enslaved Muslims from the *jihad* era, relatively few enslaved Muslims or people enslaved by Muslims were sold to the Atlantic coast, it appears. Slavery was seen in Islamic areas as part of economic and social development, sanctioned by Islam, as reflected in the jihads, but how slavery policy changed in Futa Jallon, Futa Toro, Sokoto, and Umar’s state is not clear, especially with respect to the possible progression in policy with respect to the Atlantic slave trade.

In my opinion, recent research reinforces the recognition that there was a division between Islamic and non-Muslim areas of western Africa that affected servile institutions and the corresponding transformations in society. Slavery in Islamic areas was directed inwards, within the world of Islam, but still was expansive despite the relatively small role in Atlantic trade. The presence of Muslims at major Atlantic ports and their domination of certain routes indicate that a more active role in supply slave was theoretically possible. Geographical factors and demography do not explain this relatively restricted involvement of the West African interior in the trans-Atlantic market. In terms of population and proximity to ports that served the Atlantic, the West African interior suffered no disadvantages with the interior of Angola, for example. Although the Atlantic market for slaves had a relatively limited impact on Muslim areas of West Africa in terms of the numbers of enslaved people, this does not mean that the Atlantic did not have a profound influence in the interior, especially in relation to the *jihad* movement, and hence the transformations in the interior were in fact affected by the Atlantic market, but with a conscious decision to withdraw as much as possible from it and redirect slaves inward or across the Sahara.

Although Muslims presided over a large trade in slaves, ties to the Atlantic were limited in comparison with areas where other, non-Muslim merchants dominated the supply mechanisms for the trans-Atlantic trade. Many Muslim merchants bought and sold slaves, indeed employed them and whose productive importance was long standing, dating back to the medieval period, but there appears to have been some reluctance at involvement in the trans-Atlantic trade that is difficult to assess in economic terms. Muslim merchants dealing in slaves referred to the *shari’a*, which outlined legalities relating to concubines, and popular culture understood the role of slaves in the military, and direct observation establishes their importance for other uses. Muslims in diaspora as often as not show up as victims of trade gone wrong, in societies with legal systems that were designed to protect them. Caught in war, especially *jihad*, or along trade routes that were subjected to brigandage, Muslim merchants appear to have discriminated in trade, exporting males but not females, if they were involved in exporting slaves to the coast at all. It could be argued that distance from the coast and the availability of alternate

markets were crucial factors in this restricted involvement, except that slaves came from the distant interior of Angola as well, and the availability of alternate markets would suggest that merchants would move back and forth between them, depending upon the profits that were likely. Consequently, it is to the types of political transformation that occurred that have to be considered, and in this regard the different traditions within West African Islam were important in helping to shape trade and society, but imperfectly. As Pétré-Grenouilleau has demonstrated, the merchant groups were in general unsuccessful in transforming their commercial position into political power that might have led to more intensive development, but in the *jihad* areas at least, they did achieve such linkages with the Muslim elites of the new states, but in doing so, their aims were not to become more like Europe or the Atlantic world, but rather to become more like the rest of the Islamic world.⁷⁴

It is not easy to distinguish between religious and non-religious factors. As noted above, political factors sometimes determined that Muslims sold their political opponents to merchants involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which cannot be explained simply in terms of market forces or cultural norms. In fact, numerous factors explain why areas under the control of Muslims limited the involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, including distance from the coast, but it is my contention that religious issues were paramount. Economic factors (the need for slaves within the Muslim world, including areas south of the Sahara that were Muslim) were justified in religious terms, which served as an excuse for keeping slaves who were clearly needed within the Muslim areas of Africa, which in turn reinforced a more general pattern of slave use within Africa, even in non-Muslim areas.⁷⁵

74. Pétré-Grenouilleau, "Long-Distance Trade and Economic Development," but see Lovejoy, "Cerner les identités au sein de la diaspora africaine, l'islam et l'esclavage aux Amériques."

75. See, for example, the essays in Bazin and Terray, *Guerres de lignages et guerres d'États en Afrique*.