

BLACK MOROCCO

A History of Slavery,
Race, and Islam

CHOUKI EL HAMEL



Black Morocco

A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

CHOUKI EL HAMEL

Arizona State University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107025776

© Chouki El Hamel 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

El Hamel, Chouki.

Black Morocco : a history of slavery, race, and Islam / Chouki El Hamel.

p. cm. – (African studies; 123)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02577-6 (hardback)

1. Blacks – Morocco – History. 2. Slavery – Morocco – History.
3. Concubinage – Morocco – History. 4. Slavery and Islam – Morocco.
5. Soldiers, Black – Morocco – History. 6. Isma'il, Sultan of Morocco,
d. 1727. 7. Gnawa (Brotherhood) I. Title.

DT313.6.B5E5 2013

326.089'96064-dc23

2012023658

ISBN 978-1-107-02577-6 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs
for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not
guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

*To my mother and all the mothers of Morocco, for paradise
lies under their feet!*

To Malaika and Kanza

*In memory of the silenced members of the Soudani and the
Gania families*

The executioner kills twice, the second time [by silence].

Elie Wiesel¹

We cannot sustain an open and free society if we do not remain mindful of the lessons of the past. Because with ignorance comes indifference. With indifference comes incomprehension. And with incomprehension comes the foundation upon which systems of injustice, exploitation and racism can flourish freely.

Michaëlle Jean²

¹ Elie Wiesel, *The Oath* (New York: Random House, 1973), 237.

² Michaëlle Jean's speech on the occasion of inaugurating the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University, Toronto, Sunday, March 25, 2007.

Acknowledgments

I express my vast gratitude to all my friends and colleagues for their support throughout the course of my writing this book. I am, in particular, indebted to Tim Cleaveland, Robert Conrad, and Patrick Manning for their contributions, corrections, and suggestions. Tim Cleaveland, an expert on race, ethnicity, and gender in the western Sahel, has read many drafts of my book and offered invaluable insights toward improving it. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers and the adviser of the African Studies series for their constructive criticism. Paul Lovejoy, Deborah Kapchan, Michael Gomez, Yacine Daddi Addoun, Sarah Shields, Eve Trout Powell, Kim Butler, Gregory Castle, Mohamed Salem Soudani, and Jean Boulègue are friends whose intellectual support and friendship were crucial in enhancing my work. I recall my mentor, Jean Boulègue, with deep sadness, as he passed away in March 2011. Many thanks also go to my colleagues at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York (Class 2001): Colin Palmer, Kim Butler, Rhonda Frederick, Samuel Roberts, Jeffrey Sammons, Barbara Savage, Jeffrey Ogbar, Thomas Reinhardt, Barbara Katz, Geoffrey Porter, and Aisha al-Adawiyya. A special thanks to Doann Houghton-Alico for helping me build the index of my book and Mary Margaret Fonow, director of the School of Social Transformation at ASU.

Many people have contributed directly or indirectly with comments or encouragement to improve the quality of my research: Alice Bullard, Constant Hamès, Myriam Cottias, Barry Gaspar, Karla Holloway, Charles Payne, Louise Meintjes, Paul Berliner, Janet Ewald, Miriam Cooke, Barry Gaspar, Rick Powell, Nichole Green, Martin Klein, John

Hunwick, David Lewis Levering, Joseph Miller, Toyin Falola, Julio Tavares, El Ouafi Nouhi, Mohamed Jouay, Ahmed Toufiq, Mohamed Ennaji, Mokhtar Gania, Suzanne Miers, Ousseina Alidou, Alamin Mazrui, Cynthia Becker, Carolyn Brown, Emmanuel Akyeampong, Renée Soulodre-LaFrance, Mariana Candido, Amal Ghazal, Claudine Bonner, Ismael Montana, Bruce Hall, Brian Gratton, Andrew Barnes, Joe Lockard, Deborah Losse, Stanley James, Victoria Thompson, Lynn Stoner, Rachel Fuchs, James Rush, Anna Holian, Kent Wright, Ann Hobart, Mark Von Hagen, Alex Bontemps, Norma Villa, Sarah Wolfe, Carine Nsoudou, Thierry Etcheverry, Françoise Bordarier, Keith Binkley, Ismael Diadie Haidara, Lahcen Ezzaher, Mohamed El Mansour, Fatima Harrak, Hassan Hakmoun, Alicia Brewer, Philip Thorne, Nikki Taylor, William Merryman, Bouna Ndiaye, Monica Green, Eleanor Green, and the late John Hope Franklin.

I acknowledge my deep gratitude to the wonderful librarians who assisted me in the United States, France, Mali, Mauritania, and Morocco, especially Liliane Daronian, Henry Stevens, Edward Oetting, Ahmed Chouqui Binebine, Khalid Zahri, Mohammed Saïd Hinch, Nouzha Bensaadoun, Aziz Laghzaoui, Rahma Nagi, Mohamed Abbouti, Chafik Khafajah, Bouâzza El Khalfouni, Meriam Stoni, Mohamed Malchouch, and the late ‘Abd al-Wahhab b. Mansur, director of the Royal Archives. I am also grateful to the Soudani and Gania families for allowing me to interview them and to enjoy their warm hospitality.

My initial research was supported by the Scholar-in-Residence fellowship at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York (2001–2002), which helped me broaden my understanding of the similarities and the particularities of the experiences of enslaved black Africans in the global diaspora. The 2005 summer grant from the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS) allowed me to make another research trip to Morocco to gather more information that was crucial in giving me more insight into the experience of the Gnawa. My institution, Arizona State University, allowed me two sabbatical research leaves. These two semester leaves from full-load teaching, advising, and administrative duties were crucial in allowing me the time to write a great part of my book.

I thank the various universities that invited me as a guest speaker to share my work in progress and to get feedback from my colleagues in different disciplines. Finally, I ask forgiveness from those my memory has failed to remember.

A Summary

This study chronicles the experiences, identities, and achievements of enslaved black people in Morocco. I examine the history of slavery in Morocco from the beginning of the Islamic era through the reign of Mawlay Isma'il, with a special emphasis on the "black army" or 'Abid al-Bukhari. I have written the story of the black army to inform readers beyond those with narrow specialist knowledge. I have explored how the concept of integration in the name of Islam functioned as a source of privilege as well as discrimination by focusing on the agency of black Moroccans. The second part of the book, especially Chapters 4, 5, and 6, oscillates between narrative and analysis in order to give readers a deeper sense of the historical and sociological implications of the story being told across a long period of time, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Though the strongest element of these chapters concerns the black army, an important component of my discussion is the role of female slaves. The shortcomings of this analysis rest on a limited "evidentiary base." My goal was to broaden this base and make clear the importance of female slaves in relation to the army and to Moroccan society at large.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>A Summary</i>	xiii
Introduction	I

PART ONE RACE, GENDER, AND SLAVERY IN THE ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

1	The Notion of Slavery and the Justification of Concubinage as an Institution of Slavery in Islam	17
	<i>What Exactly Does the Qur'an Say about Slavery?</i>	20
	The Justification of Concubinage	22
	<i>What Does the Hadith Say about Slavery?</i>	36
	<i>A Critical Exam</i>	42
	<i>Slavery in Islamic Law</i>	46
	<i>Slavery in Maliki School in the Maghreb</i>	51
	<i>A Comparative Mediterranean Practice of Slavery</i>	56
2	The Interplay between Slavery and Race and Color Prejudice	60
	<i>The Othering of Blacks in Arabic and Islamic Traditions</i>	62
	<i>The Berbers' Attitude to Blacks in Morocco</i>	86
	<i>A Comparative Discourse on Race and Slavery</i>	94
	<i>Conclusion</i>	104

PART TWO BLACK MOROCCO: THE INTERNAL AFRICAN DIASPORA

3	The Trans-Saharan Diaspora	109
	<i>Tracing the Origins and Roles of Black People in Morocco and West Africa: The Autochthonous Blacks of Morocco</i>	109

	<i>The Arab Conquest and Black Africans</i>	113
	<i>Expanding the Diaspora: Exchange of the Atlantic and the Saharan Trade Networks</i>	132
4	"Racializing" Slavery: The Controversy of Mawlay Isma'il's Project	155
	<i>The Isma'ili Project</i>	156
	<i>The Legal Debate</i>	165
	<i>The Registers of Slaves Belonging to Sultan Mawlay Isma'il and the Haratin's Protest</i>	174
5	The Black Army's Functions and the Roles of Women	185
6	The Political History of the Black Army: Between Privilege and Marginality	209
7	The Abolition of Slavery in Morocco	241
8	The Gnawa and the Memory of Slavery	270
	<i>The Origins of the Gnawa</i>	273
	<i>The Gnawa's Agency and Impact</i>	277
	<i>Gnawa Spiritual Music and the Diaspora</i>	287
	Conclusion	297
	<i>Appendix: The complete translation of Mawlay Isma'il's Letter to Scholars of the al-Azhar Mosque</i>	312
	Index	319

Introduction

In the summer of 1994, when I was in Nouakchott, Mauritania, researching my first book on the spread of Islamic scholarship in the western Sahel (the area of Mauritania and northern Mali),¹ I met a local Arab scholar at the archives who graciously invited me to his home. He wanted to share some primary source documents in exchange for some books I had brought with me. As I enjoyed his hospitality, sipping mint tea, a little girl of dark complexion appeared at the door. I called for her to come in, but she did not move or speak. I again called to her and asked, “I have a camera. Do you want to take a picture?” Still she did not react. The scholar’s wife then entered the room and said: “Don’t bother with her; she is just a slave [*abda*].” After a while, she added that I should buy one and take her with me to Morocco in order to assist my mother in her household chores. I was taken off guard. I had naively believed that Africa was currently free of these cruel practices, yet this little girl was living proof that slavery still existed. I wanted to do something but felt powerless. I was enraged and left hastily. While still in Mauritania, I inquired about the issue of slavery, but as it was a politically sensitive issue in Nouakchott, people were apprehensive and avoided talking about it. I did learn, however, that when Mauritians call a black person by the terms *‘abd* or *‘abda* (Arabic generic terms that designate male and female slaves respectively), they often refer to the blacks’ family origins rather than their current legal condition. In either case the stigma persisted. I concluded

¹ Chouki El Hamel, *La Vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel ouest africain. Une étude sociale de l’enseignement islamique en Mauritanie et au Nord du Mali (XVIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002).

from my conversations with Arab Mauriticians that slavery existed only rarely but its effects were still profound.² I realized that field work in Mauritania would be complicated, so I decided to start my research on slavery and its legacies in the country I knew best: Morocco.

Although slavery has practically ceased to exist in Morocco since the 1950s, its legacy persists in a form of prejudice and inherited marginalization. Morocco has traditionally been described in local historiography as a racially and ethnically homogenous nation, defined religiously by Islamic doctrine and linguistically and politically by Arabic nationalism. Written history is generally silent regarding slavery and racial attitudes, discrimination, and marginalization and paints a picture of Morocco as free from such social problems, problems usually associated more with slavery and its historical aftermath in the United States. Slavery and racism are issues that were previously academic taboo in Morocco. In May 1999, at a conference at Duke University entitled "Crossings: Mediterraneanizing the Politics of Location, History, and Knowledge," a Moroccan professor in the French department at the University Mohamed V (Rabat, Morocco) stated that there is no Africanity (black consciousness) in Morocco. At the same conference, Abdessalam Ben Hamida, a Tunisian professor at the University of Tunis, said that from an ethnic standpoint the Mediterranean is a "melting pot." That same year, at a seminar about slavery in Africa directed by Roger Botte at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris, a Mauritanian scholar indignantly denied the existence of slavery and Africanity in Mauritania and stated that "the culture of the Haratin [former black slaves] has been erased."³ Whatever the real intentions of these Maghreb scholars were in presenting the region as a hybrid and harmonious society, this denial and refusal to admit the injustices of slavery and its legacy produces the unfortunate effect of seemingly eradicating the historical truths surrounding race and slavery and does an injustice to those who were enslaved.

The assumption that one can adequately describe the Maghreb without reference to its past demonstrates the need for more scholarly rigor than current research has so far yielded. Indeed, after a decade of researching, writing, and disseminating the findings of my critical analysis with a diverse audience in African and Islamic studies across four

² The legal abolition of slavery in Mauritania happened in 1981.

³ Perhaps she implied a complete integration of the Haratin into the dominant culture. Roger Botte replied that he could provide testimonies that slavery still existed in Mauritania in that year of 1999.

continents, I noticed that progress has been made and that Arabs and Muslims from slaving societies are more receptive to breaking the culture of silence about the history of race and slavery. In July 2011, at a conference in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), my paper on "Othering Black Africans in Islamic Traditions" was well received by religious and secular Muslims, Arabs, and non-Arabs. I was excited to hear Sadiq al-Mahdi, the great-grandson of al-Mahdi and former prime minister of Sudan, applauding my work on slavery and its legacy of racism. But there is still a way to go as I was also shocked to hear 'Abd al-Hamid al-Harrama, a Libyan scholar of ISESCO, downplaying the history of slavery in Libya by reiterating the apologetic discourse. This discourse defends the view that slavery was not harsh in North Africa and contributes to the culture of silence by attacking and dismissing Western scholarship by labeling it as "orientalist," and this discourages Moroccans from benefiting from the rich Western intellectual heritage in the field of race, gender, and slavery.⁴ It is important to note that a similar silence about slavery could be found in Europe as well. Jacques Heers, a specialist in European history, in his study of slavery in medieval Europe, has written that this silence reflects an embarrassment felt collectively throughout the centuries.⁵ This is better illustrated in a recent study by Sue Peabody entitled "*There Are No Slaves in France*": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*. She writes:

"There are no slaves in France." This maxim is such a potent element of French national ideology that on a recent trip to Paris to do research on "French slaves" I was informed by the indignant owner of a boarding house that I must be mistaken because slavery had never existed in France.⁶

Moroccans do not claim that slavery never existed in their country, but the culture of silence about the history of race and slavery either located black Moroccans outside the community or completely absorbed them in it. Conversely, the most revealing testimony of slavery and its

⁴ Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, a scholar from Sudan, is a clear example. His scholarship attempts to deny the history of the trans-Saharan slave trade and slavery in North Africa in general and in Morocco in particular and to accuse the West of fabricating the social ills of racism and slavery in Islamic Africa. See Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, "Africanists and Africans of the Maghrib: Casualties of Analogy," *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2010): 349–374.

⁵ Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen Age dans le monde méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), 10 and 14.

⁶ Sue Peabody, "*There Are No Slaves in France*": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

legacy in Morocco is the very existence of the Gnawa: a spiritual order of a traditionally black Muslim people who are descendants of enslaved sub-Saharan West Africans.⁷ The Gnawa have retained many of the rituals and beliefs of their ancestors, expressed through the unique musical traditions of this distinct social group. Songs dealing with Gnawa origins and assimilation are still performed and are similar to those of black Americans who sang as a way to deal with their plight. In this regard, Gnawa music is analogous to the blues rooted in black American slave songs, which were widespread in the southern United States by the late nineteenth century. During my interviews with many Gnawa musicians in Essaouira and Marrakesh, they pointed out that blacks occupy a marginal position in Moroccan society as a result of their history as slaves. Another crucial testimonial is the historical memory and the living experiences of the descendants of enslaved people living in the rural south of Morocco, for example, in the Tata and Aqqa oases. In the words of as-Sudani, the grandson of an enslaved man who belonged to a rich family in southern Morocco:⁸

This ambivalence [in talking about slavery in Morocco] is further compounded by a deep upwelling of frustration at the beliefs and attitudes shaped by the historical legacy of slavery and injustice to black people. Yet, there is still a fear of stirring up the ashes, lest they would start a fire that might hurt me and my nation, instead of helping it to overcome the scars of the past. Yes, slavery existed, especially in the south of Morocco, for a long time, and into the twentieth century. Of course, it has faded slowly, but in the beginning of the century people were still bought and sold. The majority of African people who were enslaved were Muslims, including my own grandfather and the “guard” slaves in my village. One of my uncles still remembers the names of twenty-five slaves still owned by rich white Berbers.⁹

The history of slavery in Morocco cannot be considered separately from the racial terror of the global slave trade. For racial groups such as blacks in Morocco, the problems of slavery, cultural and racial prejudice, and marginalization are neither new nor foreign. Blacks in Morocco have been marginalized for centuries, with the dominant Moroccan culture defining this marginalized group as *‘Abid* (plural of *‘Abd*), “slaves”; *Haratin* (plural of *Hartani*, a problematic term that generally meant

⁷ See the interesting study by Viviana Pâques, *Religion des esclaves: recherches sur la confrérie marocaine des Gnawa* (Bergamo, Italy: Moretti & Vitali, 1991).

⁸ The family is that of Shaykh Ma’ al-‘Aynayn. Ma’ al-‘Aynayn, a famous religious scholar and anticolonial leader, was born around 1830 in Mauritania. In the early 1890s, he moved with a large number of slaves to the south of Morocco, where he died in 1910.

⁹ This is an excerpt of my interview with as-Sudani in June 2001.

free black people and/or formerly enslaved black persons); *Sudan* (plural of *Aswad*), “black Africans”; *Gnawa* (plural of *Gnawi*), “black West Africans”; *Drawa* (plural *Drawi*), “blacks from the Draa region,” used in a pejorative way; *Sahrawa* (plural of *Sahrawi*), “blacks from the Saharan region”; and other terms with reference to the fact that they are black and/or descendants of slaves.¹⁰

The situation in Morocco was similar to the trans-Atlantic diaspora with zones of cultural exchange, borrowing, mixing, and creolization as well as violation, violence, enslavement, and racially segregated zones. The forced dislocation from a familiar place to an alien territory fits the trans-Atlantic African diasporic patterns. Colin Palmer, a scholar on the African diaspora, defines a “diasporic community” as a process and a condition. Diasporic Africans share an emotional link to their land of origin. They are conscious of their condition: assimilation, integration, or alienation and retention of elements of their previous culture in the host countries. “Members of diasporic communities also tend to possess a sense of ‘racial,’ ethnic, or religious identity that transcends geographic boundaries, to share broad cultural similarities, and sometimes to articulate a desire to return to their original homeland.”¹¹ The diaspora of black West Africans in Morocco, the majority of whom were forcefully transported across the Sahara and sold in different parts of Morocco, shares some important traits with Palmer’s definition of the trans-Atlantic diaspora. The legacy of the internal African diaspora with respect to Morocco has primarily a cultural significance and is constructed around the right to belong to the culture of Islam and the *umma* (the Islamic community at large). In this sense, black consciousness in Morocco is analogous to Berber consciousness and shares the Arab notion of collective identity. Blacks in Morocco absorbed some of the Arabo-centric values expressed in the dominant interpretation of Islam in order to navigate within the Arabo-centric discourse. Black Moroccans perceive themselves first and foremost as Muslim Moroccans and only perceive themselves secondarily as participants in a different tradition and/or belonging to a specific ethnic, racial, or linguistic group, real or imagined. For blacks, this Islamic identity is the determining factor in their social relations with other ethnic groups. In a way, Berbers are to some

¹⁰ These various terms for race and their meanings will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2.

¹¹ Colin A. Palmer, “Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora,” *The Journal of Negro History* vol. 85, no. 1/2 (Winter 2000): 29.

extent in the same boat as black Moroccans, but neither is in the same boat as the dominant Arabs.

The study of marginalized groups has only recently attracted the interest of Moroccan scholarship, and writing the history of enslaved people is particularly difficult because of the lack of sources. There are no written slave narratives in Morocco, and such narratives are rare in the Islamic world due partly to the lack of a consistent abolitionist movement. One informative exception is found in Sudan, where a few narratives were committed to writing and translation due to the encouragement and sponsorship by European Christian abolitionists. For example, the memoirs of the late-nineteenth-century Sudanese slave soldier Ali Effendi Gifoon¹² and the narrative of Josephine Bakhita (1869–1947) were published at the turn of the twentieth century.¹³ Scholars interested in recovering the slaves' views of Moroccan slavery are limited to oral histories and the evidence preserved in the Gnawa slave songs. Hence, all the documents I consulted were written from the Moroccan slaveholders' perspective or written by Westerners. One of the pioneering books on the history of Moroccan slavery, entitled *Serving the Master: Masters and Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Morocco*, was published in 1999 by Mohammed Ennaji.¹⁴ In this book, Ennaji depicts aspects of the slave experience that demonstrate the cruelty of slavery in Morocco. One can also find unpublished dissertations about Moroccan slavery in the universities of Morocco and France, but most tend to describe the lives of slave soldiers in the Moroccan army and/or slavery's legal aspects, often with an emphasis on the benign features of the Islamic institution of slavery.¹⁵ What's more, most North African books on the subject are written

¹² "Memoirs of a Soudanese Soldier (Ali Effendi Gifoon)" dictated in Arabic to and translated by Captain Percy Machell in George Smith et al., *The Cornhill Magazine* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1896).

¹³ Trout Powell has analyzed this narrative and other important narratives in Sudan, Egypt, and Turkey at the end of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. See her book, *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Mohammed Ennaji, *Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco*, translated by Seth Graebner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). See also the dissertation thesis of another Moroccan scholar, Majda Tangi, *Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire des "Sudan" au Maroc du début de l'islamisation jusqu'au début du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Université de Panthéon-Sorbonne Paris I, 1994). The dissertation is very informative; it traces the history of blacks in Morocco from the beginning of Islam to the eighteenth century.

¹⁵ For instance, Muhammad Razuq, "Qadiyyat ar-Riqq fi Tarikh al-Maghrib," *Revue d'Histoire Maghrébine*, (Tunis: Librairie des Chercheurs Arabes, n. 41–42, June 1986): 114–128. See also 'Imad Ahmad Hilal, *ar-Raqiq fi Misr fi al-Qarn at-Tasi* 'Ashar (Cairo:

in an apologetic manner: emphasizing the generosity of Islam toward those enslaved and hence undermining the experiences and agency of the enslaved people. As for external study of slavery in Morocco, the bulk of published scholarship on slavery in Islamic lands, with Morocco only as a minor case study, was undertaken by European and American scholars such as William Clarence-Smith¹⁶ and Bernard Lewis.¹⁷ As yet, there is no comprehensive and analytic published book on the history of slavery in Morocco.

As for the primary sources, the records in the libraries and archives of Morocco have so far proved to be abundant and indicative of Morocco's significant historical presence and the participation of blacks in the making of Moroccan society and culture. The Moroccan archives, kept at the Royal Library and the Bibliothèque Générale (now Bibliothèque Nationale), both in Rabat, are largely unedited or unclassified and as of yet not well exploited. Moroccan historiography, mainly unpublished and published historical chronicles, although focused largely on elites and events, provides tremendous assistance on the context of the black Moroccans. Traditional Moroccan historiography is chronically and factually centered on the episodes of dynastic history. It is nonetheless possible to glean from it crucial scattered notations concerning the origins of Morocco's black people, their contributions, and the institution and ideology of enslavement. A great example is *Ithaf A'lam an-Nas Bijamal Akhbar Hadirat Maknas* by historian 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Zaydan,¹⁸ which is important by reason of the amount of information it contains regarding the critical roles that black individuals played in the politics of the palace and the Makhzan. But caution must be taken because Ibn Zaydan was explicitly biased in favor of the 'Alawi dynasty.

The primary Western sources such as accounts of European voyages and colonial documents present a different and often Eurocentric perspective. To maintain objectivity, I corroborated the European information with other local sources. For instance, Joseph de León, a Spanish officer

al-'Arabi li 'l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi', 1999) and Ibrahim Hashim al-Fallali, *La Riqq fi 'l-Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1960). See also Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, *Shaihu Umar: A Novel*, translated by Mervyn Hiskett (New York: M. Wiener Pub, 1989). This novel depicts domestic slavery in Islamic societies as on the whole benign.

¹⁶ William Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁸ 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Zaydan, *Ithaf A'lam an-Nas Bijamal Akhbar Hadirat Maknas* (Casablanca, Morocco: Librairie Idéale, 1990).