

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Black Morocco

*Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* chronicles the experiences, identity, and agency of enslaved black people in Morocco from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Chouki El Hamel argues that we cannot rely solely on Islamic ideology as the key to explain social relations, particularly the history of black slavery in the Muslim world, for this viewpoint yields an inaccurate historical record of the people, institutions, and social practices of slavery in northwest Africa. El Hamel focuses on black Moroccans' collective experience beginning with their enslavement as members of the loyal army of Sultan Isma'il. By the time the sultan died in 1727, the army had become a political force, making and unmaking rulers well into the nineteenth century. The emphasis on the political history of the black army is augmented by a close examination of gender and concubinage as well as the continuity of black Moroccan identity through the musical and cultural practices of the Gnawa.

Chouki El Hamel is an Associate Professor of history at Arizona State University.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## African Studies

The African Studies Series, founded in 1968, is a prestigious series of monographs, general surveys, and textbooks on Africa covering history, political science, anthropology, economics, and ecological and environmental issues. The series seeks to publish work by senior scholars as well as the best new research.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

David Anderson, *University of Oxford*

Catherine Boone, *University of Texas at Austin*

Carolyn Brown, *Rutgers University*

Christopher Clapham, *University of Cambridge*

Michael Gomez, *New York University*

Nancy J. Jacobs, *Brown University*

Richard Roberts, *Stanford University*

David Robinson, *Michigan State University*

Leonardo A. Villalón, *University of Florida*

A list of books in this series will be found at the end of this volume.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# Black Morocco

*A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam*

CHOUKI EL HAMEL

*Arizona State University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107025776](http://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'îl, Sultan of Morocco,  
d. 1727. 7. Gnawa (Brotherhood) I. Title.

DT3 I3.6.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.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*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*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

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

Elie Wiesel<sup>1</sup>

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 Jean<sup>2</sup>

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

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



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## 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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

## Contents

	<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

## 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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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 Souldre-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.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## 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.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02577-6 - Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam

Chouki El Hamel

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---