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# **Bound to the Book**

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The Role of Religion in the Barbary Slave Trade

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## **Abstract**

This research essay concerns the Barbary slave trade of the Sixteenth to mid-Nineteenth century and examines to what extent religion governed its operation. This research shall be conducted by analysing the various primary accounts of slave-captives, explorers, and politicians. This analysis shall then demonstrate the various roles that religion played during the Barbary slave trade. These roles mostly regarded the harsh treatment of non-Muslims by Muslims. This was because appeals were made to the Qur'an, hadiths, and Islamic law to justify the enslavement, vilification, ostracisation, and abuse of non-Muslims. Even in instances where the Qur'an and Islamic law were ignored in regards to the treatment of non-Muslims, Islam as an ideology was still called upon in order to justify traditionally un-Islamic acts. This was because Islam was a quintessential part of the Barbary region's culture, meaning the majority of these Muslims rigorously adhered to traditional Islamic teachings, while others adhered to Islam through personal interpretations rather than strictly by official doctrine. Some notable Christian responses to the Barbary slave trade shall also be analysed. These responses included Christian-inspired appeals to assist enslaved Christians, Christian-based responses to rescued Christians, ex-Christians, and Muslims, and even willing conversions of some Christians to Islam. Much scholarship exists on the role of slavery in Islamic societies. However, the Barbary Coast's history of slavery deserves attention because it has generally only received brief mention when Islamic slavery is discussed, and until now there has been no comprehensive analysis of the role religion played in its midst.

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## Introduction

The Barbary slave trade was not the only instance of slavery under a Muslim regime. However, academic attention has been devoted to it due to being an example of 'white' slavery. This is because it involved Arabs capturing mostly white individuals. When contrasted with the enslavement of black Africans by white Americans, which is perhaps the most well known example of slavery, the apparent reversal of racial roles presented the Barbary slave trade as unique. Of the scholarship surrounding the Barbary slave trade much has then been devoted to analysing this racial factor. However, the component which was more influential to the event was in fact religion, and this is the field which historians should strive to focus upon. Religion is a more appropriate lense to view the Barbary slave trade because the majority of actions taken during the event were largely motivated and governed by religious doctrine and religious appeals. Therefore, establishing the influence of religion shall allow for a greater understanding of such actions from both Muslims and non-Muslims

As the Barbary states were Islamic majorities they therefore promoted and enforced compliance with Islamic law. This was executed especially to the detriment of non-Muslim inhabitants, as Islam not only legalised but also encouraged the enslavement and general persecution of non-Muslims. Such enslavement and persecution was still regulated under Islam in attempt to limit the extent to which non-Muslims could be persecuted. This regulation also established specific methods for non-Muslims to gain greater social and legal treatment, usually always relating to the adoption of Islam. While many Muslims observed and enforced these traditional Islamic laws there were some who chose to interpret Islam differently, usually because they had certain desires that Islamic law would otherwise prohibit. While not practising official Islamic doctrine they would often still justify their actions by claiming to be acting in the spirit of Islam instead.

During the slave trade Christians and other non-Muslim individuals also made efforts to move to the Barbary Coast and assimilate into society. Such assimilation would commonly involve voluntarily conversion to Islam. These converts would often then partake in the capturing and enslaving of non-Muslims themselves. But the common Christian reaction was horror in response to their fellow countrymen assimilating into Islamic culture, regardless or whether it was by force or by choice. To deal with this issue Christians likewise appealed to their religion to oppose Islam. These reactions included Christians assisted their fellow-Christians who were captured and also reacting to Muslims with strong suspicion and persecution.

## Methodology

This research drew upon an mixture of primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources consisted of books and journal articles which usually dealt with the wider historical relationship between Islam and slavery. Those which dealt directly with the Barbary slave trade tended to focus heavily upon economics, diplomacy, war, and social life. However, many sources still made notable mentions of the roles of Islam and Christianity during the slave trade, though usually without heavy devotion to such topics.

Of all the secondary sources utilised the Qur'an was the most relevant. This was because it was necessary to first establish the direct link between Islam and the Barbary slave trade, so the "Background to the Islamic Regulation of Slavery" section explained how the persecution of non-Muslims originated with the Muslims' holy text. This would then substantiate the analyses of Islam and Barbary that followed in later sections of the essay, as it would explain how Islamic doctrine allowed for and encouraged non-Muslims to be dehumanised, ostracised, and persecuted. Another secondary source that was notably relevant to this analysis was Claire Norton's "Lust, Greed, Torture, and Identity: Narrations of Conversion and the Creation of the Early Modern Renegade." Though this source was not directly called upon for research it was still engaged with for a historiographical analysis provided in the "Forced Conversion of Barbary Slaves" section. This was due to Norton's challenge to the supposed exaggeration of the extent of non-Muslims' forced conversions by Muslims. In response, an analysis of Norton's method of argument and her use of sources was presented, alongside a comparative source analysis which challenged Norton's own sources and their resulting conclusions.

The primary sources this research was based upon consisted predominantly of 'captivity narratives' from non-Muslims apprehended and imprisoned by Barbary pirates. The accounts of non-Muslim explorers and travelers who came into contact with the Barbary

states and Barbary slaves were also drawn upon. In both instances these types of primary sources provided first-hand knowledge of the practises Muslims engaged in with regard to non-Muslims. To a lesser extent the narratives of certain political figures were also utilised for reference. The most relevant primary sources used were the accounts of Thomas Pellow, Mungo Park, and William Lithgow. Pellow's account of his enslavement in Morocco detailed a large number of abuses he suffered and acts he witnessed which he claimed to have been religiously motivated. His account was also of substantial use because Norton challenged its authenticity, which allowed it to be closely analysed for historical accuracy and reliability in comparison with similar captivity narratives, explorer accounts, and secondary source analyses. Park's account of his travels in Morocco was also useful, especially in contrast to the captivity narratives used, because it showed that even non-Muslims who were not enslaved were still subjected to certain religiously-motivated attitudes and abuses on the Barbary Coast. Lithgow's account of his exploration of the Ottoman Empire was particularly useful because it presented how slaves and non-Muslims were subjected to religiously-motivated oppression in the instance of less direct contact with the Barbary slave trade. This was because many slaves from the Ottoman regencies of Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers were frequently gifted to the wider Ottoman empire.<sup>1</sup> Lithgow was therefore able to show how non-Muslims captured in Barbary and transported to the greater Ottoman empire still had to endure religious persecution.

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<sup>1</sup> Y Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 37; Martin N. Murphy, "The Barbary Pirates," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24 (2013): 27.

## Background to the Islamic Regulation of Slavery

Before analysing the religious justifications for actions during the Barbary slave trade it is important to analyse the traditional Islamic texts of the Qur'an and hadiths and their acceptance and promotion of the persecution, enslavement, and forced conversion of non-Muslims. This then provides clear and direct explanations as to why Islamic practitioners in Barbary acted as they did, since such texts are fundamental to Islam's understanding and implementation. When one appeals to religion as explanation for their actions it is only correct to consider religion to truly be one of their significant motivating factors if they can be reasonably linked with traditionally accepted guidelines for the religion. For Islam such guidelines are found in the Qur'an and the hadiths.<sup>2</sup> Without this area of analysis any connections made between a Muslim's religion and their persecution, enslavement, or forced conversion of a non-Muslim in Barbary could be ignored, since it could be argued that such acts were neither accepted nor taught in the Muslim faith. It should be stated that the intention of linking Barbary Muslims' religiously-motivated actions with traditional Islamic texts is not to imply such texts inherently promote oppression or persecution, but to instead show how Muslims may have rationalised their actions in conjunction with their religion.

Under Islamic law, as it was written in the Qur'an, commented upon in the hadiths, and as it has been interpreted by Islamic scholars of various periods, slavery was a sanctionable act, though only admissible under very particular circumstances. Though there were no direct guidelines for laws within the Qur'an or in the hadiths, much of Islamic law was interpreted by Islamic scholars.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore likely that the regulation of slavery was adapted through Islamic scholars interpreting certain readings from certain passages of the Qur'an and hadiths which mentioned slavery in conjunction with Allah's and/or Muhammad's aims and actions. This was because Muhammad was the

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<sup>2</sup> John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 37-38.



Muslim prophet and considered the ideal model for Muslims to follow as a way of also following God's will.<sup>4</sup> The most important factor that led to slavery was the dichotomy established between Muslims and non-Muslims. Qur'an 53:29 instructs Muslims to "turn away" from those who reject the Islamic message,<sup>5</sup> and Qur'an 5:51 describes Christians and Jews as people of "wrongdoing" whom God will not guide.<sup>6</sup> Unbelievers being described as such, as they are repeatedly throughout the Qur'an, places them on a lower level to the Muslim believers, and such "wrongdoing" people whom are ordered to be shunned may then appear as acceptable targets for ostracism in the eyes of the Muslim who believes they should follow God's teachings.. Qur'an 9:1-3 details how Allah and Muhammad disassociated from these "disbelievers",<sup>7</sup> which Muslim followers may also take as the implication to similarly distance themselves from such people.

Qur'an 9:3 describes repentance as the best option for these non-Muslims, as a "painful punishment" awaits those who continue to lack Islamic conviction.<sup>8</sup> Here, it is implied that Allah shall punish the non-Muslims in some manner, which may cause non-Muslims to act similarly as they attempt to mimic the precedent set by their god. Qur'an 9:4-5 states that unless a treaty of neutrality has already been made with the "polytheists" and "disbelievers" then it is decreed that Muslims then "kill the polytheists" and "capture them".<sup>9</sup> However, if the disbelieving "polytheists" repent, pray, and pay the religious *zakah* tax then they are ordered to be set free, as they are then considered "brothers in religion".<sup>10</sup> These are some of the many examples of violence being justified against 'unbelievers', though mention is made of how they may avoid such conflict with their Muslim superiors if they convert to Islam. The logical implication here, in line with the previous examples which promoted the righteousness of following God and the moral bankruptcy of non-Muslims, is that such serious conflicts should only be instigated

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<sup>4</sup> Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 53:29, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/53/29>.

<sup>6</sup> Qur'an 5:51, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/5/51>.

<sup>7</sup> Qur'an 9:1-3, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/9/1-3>.

<sup>8</sup> Qur'an 9:3, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/9/3>.

<sup>9</sup> Qur'an 9:4-5, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/9/4-5>.

<sup>10</sup> Qur'an 9:5, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/9/5>.

against non-Muslims, that violence is to some extent acceptable against non-Muslims for their disbelief, and that these conflicts may only cease following the non-Muslims' conversion to Islam. Qur'an 47:1-4 explains that "disbelievers follow falsehood", and once Muslims have "inflicted slaughter upon them", as mentioned in Qur'an 9:5, they may then be captured.<sup>11</sup> Qur'an 8:67 regulates this, stating that slaves may be taken (at least by Muhammad himself) only after a "massacre" has been inflicted upon Allah's enemies,<sup>12</sup> which consist of the non-Muslim 'unbelievers'. Qur'an 8:69 instructs Muslims to consider goods gained through skirmish as "lawful and good",<sup>13</sup> which would likely extend to war prisoners, as Qur'an 8:67 suggested. Muhammad himself was noted to have shown lack of concern for slaves that he encountered in his life, even engaging in slave trading himself at times.<sup>14</sup>

While most modern people believe slavery to be reprehensible for its breach of liberty, enslavement under Islam was historically viewed more so as a "blessing in disguise" as John Alembillah Azumah suggests.<sup>15</sup> This was because non-Muslims were considered "fortunate" to be "spared" a life without Islam.<sup>16</sup> This explains the positive connotations as seen in Qur'an 8:70, which mentions Muhammad being instructed by God to tell war captives that they would be forgiven and rewarded if Allah found goodness within them,<sup>17</sup> implying they should appeal to the Islamic religion for a chance of freedom. Qur'an 8:38-39 similarly instructed non-Muslims to be told that if they ceased their disbelief then they would be forgiven, but that they should otherwise be fought continuously until they no longer rebelled.<sup>18</sup> Sahih Bukhari 60:80 specifically explained how Muslims were

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<sup>11</sup> Qur'an 47:1-4, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/47/1-4>.

<sup>12</sup> Qur'an 8:67, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/8/67>.

<sup>13</sup> Qur'an 8:69, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/8/69>.

<sup>14</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari 34:351, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/bukhari/34/351>; Sahih Muslim 15:4112, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/muslim/15/4112>; Sahih Muslim 10:3901, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/muslim/10/3901>; Sunan Abu Dawood 11:1814, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/abudawood/11/1814>; Sahih al-Bukhari 47:765, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/bukhari/47/765>.

<sup>15</sup> John Alembillah Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2001), Epub ebook, 254.

<sup>16</sup> Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*, 254.

<sup>17</sup> Qur'an 8:70, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/8/70>.

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an 8:38-39, trans. Sahih International, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://quran.com/8/38-39>.

the best of all people, and how Muslims brought people “with chains on their necks” until they embraced Islam,<sup>19</sup> referring quite literally enslavement with shackles until conversion occurs. It was these positive views of Islam’s universal benefit which led to a slave’s manumission being viewed as a highly pious act.<sup>20</sup> While they slave master may have owned their slave them was ideally only temporary, and would also eventually lead to even greater liberation after their conversion. This is reflected in Sahih al-Bukhari 46:693, as it is narrated that Muhammad declared that Allah shall save whoever frees a slave turned Muslim.<sup>21</sup> It was this strongly positive view of Islam that led to the traditionally unjust acts of ostracism and the use of force to be interpreted as moral, as they were in pursuit of conversion to Islam, which was established to be the most highly esteemed ideology that was possible to adopt.

These various passages in the Qur’an and hadiths likely influenced Islamic scholars and Muslim followers to believe that the enslavement of non-Muslims was not only permissible under Islamic doctrine but was also justified. Upon hearing that their God and prophet not only stated the acceptability of such actions but also promoted or even engaged in them personally it would only have been a rational conclusion for Muslims to make that they should then also ostracise, attack, and enslave ‘unbelievers’. The chance of such actions being avoided on ethical grounds was also then avoided, since they were also the justified as actually being truly ethical acts, since bringing people closer to Islam and enforcing Islamic law was considered the pinnacle of moral action. Many aspects of these interpretations of the Qur’an and the hadiths shall be reflected in the direct analysis of the Barbary slave trade in later sections of the essay and make clear why the Barbary Muslims called upon or mentioned their religion when enslaving and otherwise persecuting non-Muslims.

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<sup>19</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari 60:80, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/bukhari/60/80>.

<sup>20</sup> Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari 46:693, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://muflihun.com/bukhari/46/693>.

## Religious Motivation for Enslavement in Barbary

Similar to how it was important to first establish links between the Islamic doctrine and the persecution of non-Muslims in Barbary prior to explaining the religious motivation of Muslims during the Barbary slave trade, it is likewise important to establish the historical trend of Islam's relationship with the persecution of non-Muslims. Failing to do this, it could be assumed that the fact that no mention has been made of other instances of Muslims engaging in religious persecution implies that religion had no true motivating factor. Instead, it could be interpreted that the Barbary case should be viewed in isolation, and that religion really had no significance since the Barbary slave trade was the only noteworthy time that an Islamic society acted in such ways. By the process of elimination, this would mean that any analyses of the importance of religion in the Barbary slave trade could be seen at best as an anomaly and at worst as entirely irrelevant.

As it happens, the Barbary slave trade was only one in a series of instances of Islamic slavery, following those such as the Abbasid Caliphate, the medieval Egyptian and Indian sultanates, and the Ghaznavid dynasty in Central Asia.<sup>22</sup> The Barbary slave trade was also not the only instance of a form of conquest enacted by Islamic followers. Muhammad himself led a successful capturing of Mecca in 630 against the Quraysh forces that initially persecuted him for his preachings.<sup>23</sup> Segal accurately summarises how in this time only those who adhered strictly to Islamic tenets were free from persecution, with non-Muslims being free only so far as they could choose to convert to Islam or be killed.<sup>24</sup> The idea of *jihad*, meaning 'holy war', initially only concerned self-defence, but 'self-defence' came to encompass any act which promoted the advancement of the Islamic faith,<sup>25</sup> relating to how the Qur'an and hadiths justified acts

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<sup>22</sup> Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 175-176.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 19-20

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 20.

such as enslavement as actually being moral. Muhammad's spiritual successor, Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, united the Muslim people after Muhammad's death, subdued secessionists, and extended Islam via conquest across to North Africa, Samarkand, the Indus River, and most of the Iberian peninsula.<sup>26</sup> Bakr's successor, Umar, succeeded in conquering Egypt and much of Iran.<sup>27</sup> Caliph Uthman continued conquest northward and eastward in Iran and westward from Egypt.<sup>28</sup> Caliph Mu'āwiyah spread Islam by conquest further into the Mediterranean.<sup>29</sup> Caliph Al-Walid I led successful conquests of Spain, Sind, and Transoxiana.<sup>30</sup> The Fātimid Caliphate eventually gained control of all of the Maghreb in the decades following 909.<sup>31</sup> These various Islamic tribes and empires had successfully spread Islam via their conquests, as many of the conquered people would convert either due to Islam being the culturally normalised religion of their land or from the threat of violence against non-Muslims.<sup>32</sup> These such actions of conquering non-Muslim territories and spreading the Islamic faith to them fall closely in line with the orders and recommendations mentioned in the Quran and Hadiths, and would mimic the actions of the later Barbary States. The eye-witness account of Robert Adams, who was captured by Arabs on the Barbary Coast between Capes de Noon and Bajedore,<sup>33</sup> even mentioned how he consulted the Barbary Arabs' own history and discovered that their ancestors had completed a conquest of North Africa by dispersing and exterminating all those who either hindered such conquest or "refused the Mohammedan creed".<sup>34</sup>

Robert C. Davis suggested that the main way the Barbary Slave Trade differed from previous iterations of Islamic slavery was that it was a form of *jihad*-inspired religious revenge against Christians, not only for the preceding centuries of crusading violence

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<sup>26</sup> Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 200.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>31</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam Volume 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 18.

<sup>32</sup> Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> S. Cock, *The Narrative of Robert Adams* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1817), 126.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 186.

but also for the recent conquest of southern Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella who expelled the inhabiting Muslims to Morocco, the Algiers, and eventually the entire Maghreb.<sup>35</sup> Davis suggested that the Muslim societies that then formed along the western coast of North Africa were motivated to “square accounts” with the Christian people that had wronged them for many centuries, and especially so recently in Spain, which inspired the Barbary States’ construction of galleys, attacking of European/Christian merchant ships, raiding Christian nations, and enslaving Christians.<sup>36</sup> Not only were these Muslims along the Barbary Coast therefore inclined to engage in violence against non-Muslims (particularly Christians) from a place of religious motivation but also out of personal hatred. Following on from the ardent pro-Muslim and anti-‘unbeliever’ sentiments mentioned in the Quran and hadiths the Barbary States operated under Islamic Law which ruled that the seizure of Christian ships and booty (including captives) was not only legal but also encouraged under the premise of *jihad* which promoted the use of Muslim force against unbelievers.<sup>37</sup>

Judah Paddock and his crew were captured by a group of Arabs in the southern Barbary Coast in 1800,<sup>38</sup> and Paddock noted that Arabs distinguished Muslims from Christians because of the Muslim “creed” which would “permit the disciples of the true Prophet to enslave the heretics”,<sup>39</sup> referring to how the understanding of the Muslim faith via the Qur’an and hadiths permitted slavery against non-Muslims.<sup>40</sup> In 1786 Thomas Jefferson recalled his meeting with the ambassador of Tripoli when he asked as to why the Tripolitarians, Tunisians, Algerians, and Moroccans had engaged in war with the Christian nations, to which the ambassador apparently responded that the “Laws of the Prophet”, as written in the Qur’an, decreed that non-Muslims were sinners whom

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<sup>35</sup> Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters* (Chippenham and Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xxv.

<sup>36</sup> Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, xxv.

<sup>37</sup> Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Baepler, “The Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture,” *Early American Literature* 39 (2004): 234.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840), 469.

<sup>40</sup> Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, “Slavery and Muslim Jurisprudence in Morocco,” *Slavery & Abolition* 19 (1998): 61.

Muslims had the duty of warring against and taking as slaves.<sup>41</sup> In 1815 Captain Walter Croker was ordered to Algiers where he witnessed Algerian pirates attack and enslave a group of Christians.<sup>42</sup> Croker also stated that the Algerian *dey* was selected in relation to his popularity, which was “in proportion to the extent and success of his atrocity towards the Christian world”,<sup>43</sup> explaining how the Algerian pirates’ attacks on Christians were due to the socially desirable nature of such acts. Croker did caveat his report by stating he did not believe the Algerine pirates to be motivated to their anti-Christian acts by religious conviction alone, but that religion did nonetheless play a role,<sup>44</sup> likely because Islamic law legalised enslavement in the first place. Robert Adams’ story of enslavement under the Moors mentioned his consideration that “religious bigotry” was the main motivating factor for the Muslims’ treatment of non-Muslims, especially Christians.<sup>45</sup> Reflecting Azumah’s assertion of enslavement being considered a positive for the non-Muslims, Adams stated that the Muslims were “conferring a benefit” onto the blacks they enslaved, since they were “placing them within reach of instruction in the true belief”.<sup>46</sup> Christians were apparently viewed in contrast as “hardened infidels” who actively rejected the Islamic message, and whom the Muslims hated and treated with the most possible cruelty in accordance with the spirit and teachings of the Qur’an.<sup>47</sup> Adams concluded that the cruelty of the Barbary Muslims towards Christians “must almost be considered as a part of their religion; so deep is the detestation which they are taught to feel for the unclean and idolatrous infidel.”<sup>48</sup> Leiner succinctly summarised the religious motivation for enslavement in the Barbary States by explaining how it was simply the way of life for these nations to be in constant conflict with others, as the precedent had already been set by previous iterations of Islamic empires targeting

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<sup>41</sup> ‘American Commissioners to John Jay, 28 March 1786,’ *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 9, 1 November 1785 – 22 June 1786, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954, pp. 357–359, found in <https://founders.archives.gov>.

<sup>42</sup> Walter Croker, *The Cruelties of the Algerine Pirates* (London: W. Hone, 1816), 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>45</sup> Cock, *The Narrative of Robert Adams*, 131.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 188.

non-Muslims and hence the notion of Islamic superiority had been imbedded into the Muslims' practised doctrine.<sup>49</sup> He considered the Barbary states to be simply fulfilling the Islamic tradition of *jihad* which in this case incorporated the targeting of Christians with maritime attacks and eventual enslavement.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror*, 17-18.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



## Religious Persecution of Non-Muslims in Barbary

Once the act of capturing a non-Muslim and transporting them to their new slave-home had occurred there was still much regulation under Islam for the non-Muslims to endure. This was not limited to just the non-Muslim slaves, as it could also apply to the ex-Christian converts to Islam, known as the “Christian renegades”, as well as non-Muslims travelling through regions where Barbary pirates operated. The same sentiments in the Qur’an and hadiths which expressed contempt towards non-Muslims and promoted that they be persecuted were then used to justify Muslims’ other actions against non-Muslims, including verbal attacks, ostracism, limitations on movement, limitations on speech rights, limitations on religious freedom, and threats and acts of violence. Though not all of these experiences would have been equally impactful in regards to the negative effects they had on the slaves they are all worth mentioning in order to depict the sort of treatment the slaves endured from living in a region ruled under a religion different to and opposed to their own.

Examples of religiously-coloured verbal attacks are shown in the accounts of Thomas Pellow, Captain Judah Paddock, James Massey, and John Braithwaite. Pellow’s account told of his capture off Cape Finisterre by two Salé rovers, his transportation to Morocco, and his life there as a slave.<sup>51</sup> Pellow mentioned many instances of ill-treatment at the hands of his Muslim superiors, but the most illuminating was his comment regarding his arrival in Meknes. Pellow and his fellow slaves were apparently berated by the Moors with “vile insults” and threatened to be physically attacked.<sup>52</sup> Pellow specifically mentioned that he and his fellow slaves were labeled “caffer billa oarosole”, the first word being a similar spelling for *kafir*, the Arabic term for a non-Muslim/unbeliever,<sup>53</sup> and Pellow correctly understood this to signify that he and the

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Pellow, *The Adventures of Thomas Pellow, of Penryn, Mariner*, ed. Robert Brown (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1890), 49-50.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 45.

slaves were being derided as heretics who knew “neither God nor Mahomet”.<sup>54</sup> As opposed to the general insults and ridicule that Pellow’s account mentioned, Paddock’s narrative instead mentioned verbal condemnation in the form of appeals to superiority. He mentioned that one of his captors was particularly talkative and that he characterized Paddock, his crew, and all Christians as so dependent on other nations that they could easily go extinct if left to their own devices.<sup>55</sup> Paddock’s captor likely viewed this as self-evident, given he and his fellow Muslims had indeed subdued Paddock’s crew. Massey was sold into slavery to the Algerians and forced to reside in his new home of Cherchell. Massey accounted having mostly pleasant relationships with the masters to whom he was sold, yet did recall that most inhabitants there would constantly mock Christianity, and that Massey would have to restrain himself from responding to their ridicule because he knew he would have no protection should,<sup>56</sup> implying that he feared the possible threat of violence they posed. Lindsay Colley noted John Braithwaite’s account of how even royal British envoys visiting the North African coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were subjected to religious persecution, as groups of young men would surround their landing parties and deride them as unbelievers while attacking or threatening to attack them in the process.<sup>57</sup> Much of these stories were reminiscent of the implied lessons from the Qur’an and hadiths outlined earlier. Those religiously-tinged beratings relate to the Qur’an’s passages which defined non-Muslims as misguided and immoral, while such a culture which acted with such superiority and dominance over non-Muslims could be linked to those Qur’an passages which declared Islam the quintessential state of enlightenment, implying their advantage over non-Muslims.

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<sup>54</sup> Pellow, *The Adventures*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Judah Paddock, *A Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Oswego* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 148.

<sup>56</sup> James Massey, *The Travels and Adventures of James Massey*, ed. Simon Tyssot de Patot, trans. Stephen Whatley (London: John Watts, 1733), 276, 283-284

<sup>57</sup> Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), Epub ebook, 226-227.

While general contempt for non-Muslims could be considered to consist of ostracism there were also very specific examples of intentional ostracism rather than ostracism as a side effect. Massey stated that the regional contempt towards non-Muslims in Algeria even resulted in an ardent atheist or deist that he knew one day claiming to be Muslim, at least by label.<sup>58</sup> This was because he knew Islam to be the dominant religion in the land and wished to fit in regardless of his true beliefs.<sup>59</sup> While Massey's associate was not forcibly compelled to convert he did make it clear that he considered doing so to be the most practical method of ensuring his prosperity and avoiding ostracism, which follows logically from Massey's statement that most in the region showed contempt for non-Muslims. Even ex-Christian Muslim converts were ostracised, as Mr. T. S. recalled that ex-Christians who neglected prayer were at risk of being barred from employment,<sup>60</sup> demonstrating the extent to which non-Muslims were expected to conform with Islamic culture. Clearly even on the social level of Muslim society there was religious pressure placed upon non-Muslims.

Examples of more pressing dangers to non-Muslims in Barbary regions are noted in the accounts of William Lithgow, Paddock, Mr. T. S., Riley, and Mungo Park. Lithgow's early 1800s account of his travels in the Ottoman Empire mentioned many accounts of strict punishment for non-Muslims. Christians were punished for wearing the highly reputable colour of green,<sup>61</sup> were threatened with "cruell censure" for uttering Muhammad's name,<sup>62</sup> and were not included in the spirit of the Qur'an's seventh commandment discouraging murder, since that was considered to only apply among Muslims while Christians would instead feel "the smart thereof".<sup>63</sup> In Paddock's description he noted that one of his group's captors stated that Christian property

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<sup>58</sup> Massey, *The Travels and Adventures*, 284-285.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Mr. T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr T. S.) an English Merchant*, ed. A. Roberts (London: Moses Pitt, 1670), 53.

<sup>61</sup> William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures & Painefull Peregrinations* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose, 1906), 130.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 132.

rightfully belonged to the Muslim Arabs, the “true believers”,<sup>64</sup> hence why Paddock, his crew, and their goods were seized. This exact scenario was encountered by Mungo Park in Morocco in the early 1800s. Park explained how in one instance a group of Muslims attempted to antagonise him into conflict so that they had excuse to attack him and steal his baggage, but they instead chose to argue that Park was Christian and therefore his property was lawfully owed to them, the followers of Muhammad, and so they successfully took Park’s valuables by force.<sup>65</sup> James Riley noted that in Mogador if a Christian wished to enter a mosque his choices were to either convert to Islam by shaving his head, being circumcised, and confessing his faith in Allah and the prophet Muhammad, or suffer instant death.<sup>66</sup> Mr. T. S. confirmed this in his own experience in Algiers, stating Christians had no liberty to enter a mosque unless following a conversion to Islam, or else they would “burn”.<sup>67</sup> Mr. T. S. also recalled that in Algeria there were frequent executions for the crime of sacrilege, as any action that dishonoured Muhammad or Islam could result in the punishment of scolding lead poured in one’s mouth.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, there was a variety of physical punishments enacted on both legal and social levels against non-Muslims. These punishments were very often driven by religious motivation. Actions deemed offensive towards Muslims and their religion could be responded to physically. Non-Muslims were also not extended the same property rights and right to public movement as Muslims, and non-Muslims attempting to establish such rights could receive physical retaliation.

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<sup>64</sup> Buxton, *The African Slave Trade*, 470.

<sup>65</sup> Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (London: William Bulmer and co. Cleveland-Row, 1816), 112-113.

<sup>66</sup> James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce* (New York: T. & W. Mercein, 1817), 433.

<sup>67</sup> Mr. T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr T. S.)*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 181-182.

## Forced Conversion of Barbary Slaves

By far the most noteworthy area of the religious persecution of non-Muslims in Barbary regards the forced conversion of slaves. These religiously motivated acts related to the original intention of slavery in the Qur'an and hadiths; the conversion of non-Muslims. Forced conversion intended for non-Muslims to share their Muslim superiors' religion, which would often mean experiencing enhanced freedom within the Muslim-ruled regions. This is distinguished from the persecution of verbal scoldings, ostracism, and general physical attacks as analysed in the "Religious Persecution of Non-Muslims in Barbary" section because those acts were only intended to punish non-Muslims and restrict their freedoms. Forced conversion, by contrast, aimed to encourage the non-Muslims to share the Muslim ideology, which would in turn increase the slaves' freedom and improve their treatment. This topic has notable historiography surrounding it, with some arguing that the significance of forced conversion has been overstated.

Thomas Pellow explained that after his initial arrival in Meknes he endured months of torturous punishment for rejecting his master's offer of freedom if he should "turn Moor", meaning to convert to Islam.<sup>69</sup> After a long period of suffering Pellow claimed to have finally converted to Islam but in words only, doing so only to gain some larger amount of freedom while truly remaining a faithful Christian.<sup>70</sup> After conversion Pellow claimed he was then treated more leniently, removed from confinement in prison and placed in a school to learn the Moorish language and learn to write Arabic.<sup>71</sup> Pellow would go on to then become a servant and guard of the Sultan,<sup>72</sup> taking part in various military expeditions and skirmishes as part of the Sultan's army.<sup>73</sup> Pellow's larger amount of freedom upon conversion was a common Islamic practice of relieving new Muslim-converts from slavery, since the Qur'an only taught that non-Muslims could be

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<sup>69</sup> Pellow, *The Adventures*, 54.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 56-57

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 80-87, 90-96.

enslaved. This was often never a total manumission, only a general improvement of treatment by the slave-owners and the transformation of the slave into more of a servant role, with full manumission being intended in future.<sup>74</sup> Pellow's eventual recruitment in the military was also similar to the Ottoman practice of the royal household purchasing caucasian and similarly light-skinned male slaves (*mamluks*) to train them to be members of the Ottoman military-administrative elite.<sup>75</sup> Thus far, Pellow's account falls in line with academically accepted accounts of Islamic practice in Barbary.

The authenticity of Pellow's narrative has been questioned by some modern academics. Claire Norton directly challenged the authenticity of Pellow's account on the grounds that his supposed forced conversion to Islam was not reflected in other noted accounts of Christian and European meetings with people from Barbary.<sup>76</sup> Norton gave the example of Sir Henry Mainwaring who claimed that the *dey* of Tunis assured him he would never be forced to convert to Islam so long as he stayed with the *dey* and worked for him.<sup>77</sup> Norton likewise mentioned the accounts of William Lithgow, Mr. T. S., and Joseph Pitts, who apparently neither mentioned any form of forced conversion they experienced or witnessed in Barbary.<sup>78</sup>

The evidence and arguments that Norton presented to challenge Pellow's account appeared to be lacking. She referenced the accounts of Mainwaring and Pitts who specifically mentioned that they themselves were not forced to convert to Islam or did not witness the coercion of others to convert.<sup>79</sup> However, Azumah reminded that one should not draw conclusions from individual accounts, as many kind slave-owners have

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<sup>74</sup> Stefanie Fricke, "Renegades Between Christian 'Self' and Muslim 'Other': the Captivity Narratives of Joseph Pitts and Thomas Pellow," *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 26 (2016): 39.

<sup>75</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>76</sup> Claire Norton, "Lust, Greed, Torture, and Identity: Narrations of Conversion and the Creation of the Early Modern Renegade," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29 (2009): 263.

<sup>77</sup> Norton, "Lust, Greed, Torture," 263.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

been known across history in various cultures.<sup>80</sup> The existence of some kind of slave-masters in Barbary is not denied, but also does not automatically disprove any other claims of improper treatment from slave-masters and other Muslims. Also, Norton's reference to Mainwaring's claim that he was promised to not be forced to convert to Islam should be noted to have occurred only under the provision that Mainwaring stay with the *dey* and work for him. This is perhaps counter-intuitive to Norton's argument, as it closely resembles the Islamic legal practice of the *jizya*; a tax placed upon non-Muslims living in Muslim nations in which the non-Muslims (the *dhimmi*) were permitted to practice their own religion.<sup>81</sup> While Mainwaring was not subjected to forced conversion to Islam it is possible that he was still acting in compliance with Islamic law by being permitted religious freedom only as long as he paid dues, in this case by providing labour for the *dey*. This means that if Mainwaring rejected the *dey*'s offer then he may have still been subjected to forced conversion. Norton's citation of Lithgow was also odd, considering that Lithgow specifically mentioned how apprehended Christians in Ottoman controlled Constantinople "must either turne Turke, or Slave all his life",<sup>82</sup> and that if a Christian recited Islamic phrases or words in front of Turks then he was "adjudged to a most cruell death, or compelled to renounce his Christian Religion".<sup>83</sup> Lithgow also acknowledged how the "Turkish state" ordained the "Townes of Barbary" to target the Spanish and "seaze upon all other Christiane ships, goods, and persons as they please".<sup>84</sup> Lithgow's comments challenge Norton's claim that he "does not make any reference to forced conversion", as he clearly establishes that there did exist a precedent for the abuse and persecution at least of non-Muslims within Barbary-operated areas. The same can be said for Norton's use of Mr. T. S.'s account, as he directly stated: "I was affraid of my Masters Cunning, or any other Plot which might be set on foot to drive me to a necessity of turning Mahumetan; for I was often importun'd by my Master, and invited with the promise of my

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<sup>80</sup> Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*, 317-318.

<sup>81</sup> Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 74.

<sup>82</sup> Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse*, 139.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 318.

Liberty, in case I would renounce Christianity”.<sup>85</sup> Whereas Lithgow explained how such cases for forced conversion did exist but did not mention any particular instances where forced conversion was acted upon, Mr. T. S. provided a direct example of coercion placed upon him in pursuit of conversion to Islam.

Norton also ignored the account of Mungo Park, who recalled how in the Moorish kingdom of Ludamar in Morocco he was organised to meet the Ludamar king, Ali, and upon coming to Ali’s tent a group of nearby Moors came to inspect Park.<sup>86</sup> Park claimed that one individual then tried to threaten him into repeating the words “there is but one God and Mahomet is his prophet”.<sup>87</sup> Though not a threat desiring Park’s official conversion to Islam the implication was that Park was being coerced to at least satisfy the Moor’s desire to hear him share the Muslim religion, and that he was willing to threaten Park with violence to force him to comply. James Riley’s account also depicted the use of violence in compelling non-Muslims to convert, as he claimed to have witnessed a group of Jews in Mogador face the task of paying a large tax to the Muslims or risk having to convert to Islam.<sup>88</sup> Though Riley appeared unaware of the specific practice, this such was likely in accordance with the *jizya* tax,<sup>89</sup> as Mainwaring may have been subjected to. Riley wrote that the group of Jews were unable to pay the tax and were thus barred from leaving their towns for three days except when requested for work by Moors or Christians.<sup>90</sup> This apparently resulted in some Jews publicly converting so that the Moors apparently then viewed them as “brothers”, took them to their mosque, and feasted with them, though they were still required to pay their remaining tax alongside their group.<sup>91</sup> In ignoring these accounts Norton had presented a distorted picture of forced conversion. She implied that only certain accounts which

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<sup>85</sup> Mr. T. S., *The Adventures of (Mr T. S.)*, 204.

<sup>86</sup> Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, 100, 119.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>88</sup> Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 393, 399.

<sup>89</sup> István György Tóth, “Catholic Missionaries as Turkish Prisoners in Ottoman Hungary in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 120.

<sup>90</sup> Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 397-399.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 397-399.



did not specifically mention forced conversion should be considered when concluding the extent to which the act existed in Barbary.

It is possible that Norton used a different definition when describing “forced” conversion, which would explain her citation of Mr. T. S. and Lithgow despite these sources not supporting her argument. The debate then becomes more semantic, as it could indeed be argued that conversion can never really be ‘forced’ because conversion is a matter of personal conviction. However this interpretation would act to take responsibility away from the Muslim slave-owners, as it was their ownership of the slaves which placed the slaves into the mindset where conversion was the only possible option for gaining relative freedom. Were slaves and other non-Muslims not captured or otherwise passing through Muslim lands in which general chastisement and violence towards non-Muslims was not encouraged, especially in the case enslavement, then such non-Muslims would never have needed to convert, for their freedom would never have been breached in order to require conversion to alleviate such a situation. When it is demonstrable that there was religiously-motivation for the persecution of non-Muslims, including to the extent that they were attacked, tortured, and enslaved, then the fact that they were offered some larger amount of freedom upon conversion to Islam should show that non-Muslims were likely being coerced into conversion. Even if it could be shown that all the mentioned accounts of Muslim persecution of non-Muslims were isolated incidents such experiences should still not ignored, and forced conversion should not be degraded as hyperbolic. Norton was indeed correct when she mentioned that some conversions of non-Muslims were voluntary, as shall be addressed in the “Christian Reactions to the Barbary Slave Trade” section

## Religious Disobedience and Economic Incentive

As all religious creeds are prescriptive rather than descriptive there was always the eventuality that some supposed religious followers would act outside of what their holy texts or religious leaders ordered and taught. Some Muslims would often only acknowledge those parts of the Qur'an/Hadiths or only the teachings of Islamic scholars which accepted the enslavement of non-Muslims, while ignoring the justification that enslavement intended to teach non-Muslims of Islam and eventually convert them. This occurred mostly because Christian captives were valuable as either participants in the North African labour force, potential sales within the wider Ottoman empire slave economy, or as high-paying ransoms for return to their Christian homes.<sup>92</sup> This meant that the slaves' potential as a commodity or tradeable good was more important to some slave-owners than the slaves' potential to become fellow Muslims. Some Barbary corsairs performed maritime raids on Christians solely because of such high a value that slaves possessed.<sup>93</sup> Though these acts appeared on the base level as a total disregard for Islamic practice on the behalf of such Muslims they were usually still justified in regards to some other aspect of religion, that was still a very significant part of Muslim culture and identity.

Robert Adams' noted that while Christians were strongly hated for being 'unbelievers' Muslims would dissuaded them from converting to Islam at the same time.<sup>94</sup> This was because, while the Muslims captors did indeed desire to convert unbelievers, they were also self-interested and knew that conversion generally required them to grant their newly Islamified slaves greater freedom.<sup>95</sup> Such self-interest usually was driven by the economic reward that came from being able to utilise slaves for labour or sell them on

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<sup>92</sup> Alan G. Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 121.

<sup>93</sup> Oded Löwenheim, "'Do Ourselves Credit and Render a Lasting Service to Mankind': British Moral Prestige, Humanitarian Intervention, and the Barbary Pirates," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 30.

<sup>94</sup> Cock, *The Narrative of Robert Adams*, 131-132.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 132.

the market, hence some slave-owners were cautious about converting their slaves to Islam out of fear that this would dry up the rich economic source that slaves made up.<sup>96</sup> Erdem suggested that it was actually the Islamic practice of integrating slaves into society via their conversion to Islam or the agreement to protect their rights via *dhimmi* status that caused the Ottomans to require outside sources of slaves.<sup>97</sup> This would explain the constant exportation of slaves from the Barbary States to the Ottoman empire, as the Ottomans may not have been able to improve their economy as they continually lost their source of free labour as a result of manumission and *jizya* agreements.

Slaves were similarly desired for their potential ransom value,<sup>98</sup> and therefore also desired to be kept away from conversion to Islam since it meant the Muslim owners would then lose the potential to receive large ransom payments from Christian nations and individually rich families.<sup>99</sup> James Riley was a captive in Mogador and described those along the Barbary Coast as “barbarians” who “know and obey no law”,<sup>100</sup> perhaps implying not even their own religious law. Though the means of trade was not a legal motivation within Islamic code for enslavement, such acts were still linked back to religious belief as Riley noted that the Muslims believed they were entitled to enslave people such as him because their god rewarded them with captives for their “virtues and good actions”, and it was therefore the their “sacred duty” the use the captives to their best potential.<sup>101</sup> Some Muslim slave-masters and slave-traders who experienced heavy guilt in regards to what felt like total disregard for their religion were able to justify their actions in relation to the ethics outlined in the Qur’an and hadiths by arguing that they were simply purchasing slaves for the sake of personally manumitting them at a later time, or in the case where these Muslims sold slaves they could argue that they were

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<sup>96</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), 28.

<sup>97</sup> Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Fricke, “Renegades Between Christian 'Self' and Muslim 'Other',” 39.

<sup>100</sup> Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 542.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 542.

simply allowing the slaves' to be manumitted by their new masters at a later time too.<sup>102</sup> For those Muslims who wished to ignore the teachings of their religion and pursue more selfish aspirations they were still faced with the difficulty of attempting to ignore acts and beliefs that they were raised to believe were not only rational but also moral. Unable to totally justify the dissonance of understanding the importance of their religion but simultaneously abandoning the teachings of their religion these Muslims often only focussed upon appealed directly to specific passages of their religious texts and certain religious teachings to excuse the supposedly illegal nature of their acts. In a less purely self-interested manner Christian slaves were also desired as a means to be traded for Muslim slaves captured by the opposing Christian nations.<sup>103</sup> This technically still broke Islamic law since it was established that non-Muslims could only be enslaved as punishment for their lack of Islamic belief and that they should ultimately led towards Islam, and not that they be used for trade. However, these such acts likely did not produce the same amount of guilt that trading slaves and enacting slave labour did, as it could have been argued that the Qur'an and hadiths taught about the importance of Muslims, thereby justifying the return of Muslims to their societies by any means necessary.

Another example of the desire to convert a slave to Islam being viewed as less significant to the potential value of a slave as a good and commodity is seen with the Ottoman practice of the *devshirme* tax. This tax authorised the forced conversion of Christian youths to Islam in the process of culturally assimilating them Muslim culture in preparation for palace or military service.<sup>104</sup> 16th century author Mustafa Ali argued that this tax was at odds with traditional Islamic law, and was only being enacted in order to increase the number of Muslims within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>105</sup> Although at odds with traditional Islamic law it was argued by its practitioners to still be in the 'spirit' of Islam

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<sup>102</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Hodgson, *Venture of Islam Volume 3*, 157

<sup>104</sup> William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 37.

<sup>105</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 39.

because it led to a larger number of conversions to merely Islam, the natural religion of all humanity,<sup>106</sup> and therefore no harm was really being committed by disobeying the Qur'an's decrees,

The most famous instance of such disregard for Islamic law regarding the treatment of slaves concerned the late-seventeenth-century Moroccan sultan Mawley Isma'il. Although outside of the traditional Barbary Slave Trade, having not occurred directly from Barbary pirate attacks on European ships, this event still pertained to slavery and still occurred within a commonly accepted 'Barbary' region. Morocco's central government was in decline in the mid seventeenth-century due to internal struggles for power and occupation of land from western powers.<sup>107</sup> The Sa'di dynasty eventually fell and Mawley Isma'il came to rule over Morocco.<sup>108</sup> Seeing his country in disarray Isma'il desired to unite it and strengthen it, considering the best method of doing this to be by forcibly enslaving and conscripting blacks throughout the country to form a makeshift army.<sup>109</sup> That such blacks were Muslim made this mass-enslavement a sharp violation of Islamic legal code which forbid the enslavement of fellow Muslims, and many contemporary Islamic scholars took issue with the act.<sup>110</sup> Though the act defied accepted Islamic law Isma'il still considered himself a faithful Muslim, or at least realised that he needed to present himself as such in order for the act to be accepted by his majority Muslim nation. This caused Isma'il to attempt to legalise the act by having Islamic scholars write up registers and having Muslim judges, notaries, and witnesses authenticate the conscription in writing.<sup>111</sup> Isma'il himself is reported to have presented a group of conscripted blacks with a copy of the Sahih al-Bukhari *hadith* and told them "you are now slaves of the Prophet".<sup>112</sup> The actions of Isma'il showed how even rulers of

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<sup>106</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 39.

<sup>107</sup> Chouki El Hamel, "The Register of the Slaves of Sultan Mawley Isma'il of Morocco at the turn of the Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 51 (2010): 90.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

Muslim nations were at times persuaded to act outside of what was commonly accepted within Muslim culture. Islam was an extremely pervasive socio-cultural phenomena though, meaning that even attempts at superseding important Islamic teachings still required appeals to other aspects of Islam in order for self-justification and/or public justification.

## Christian Reactions to the Barbary Slave Trade

As the Barbary slave trade was largely the result of Muslim-inspired action there was not an equal number of examples of notable Christian-inspired actions for comparison. Christians were the most heavily targeted religious group from the Barbary Muslims' actions against non-Muslims though. This meant that many Christians ended up interacting with the Barbary states either directly or indirectly. Christian-based actions in the Barbary slave trade were definitely not as extensive as Muslim-based actions, but there were indeed notable similarities between adherents to both religions.

Though the name itself implies the use of force the Barbary slave trade was also known to have had a surprising number of European and similarly non-Muslim individuals who moved to the Barbary Coast and converted to Islam without any coercion. Muslims were not the only group who occasionally possessed ulterior motives regarding actions they took under the guise of adherence to their religion. Many Christians saw great prosperity along the North African coast. The Barbary states appeared formidable on land and sea as they attacked and plundered Christian ships, all while being supported by the imposing Ottoman Empire. To some Christians this proved what dominant people lived there, while large urban centres of well-run military organisations and the booming markets looked to provide ample career opportunities, especially compared to the Christian nations these men originated from who were suffering such heavily losses at the Barbary nations' hands.<sup>113</sup> Piracy was thriving under the success of the Barbary states, so working on the Barbary corsairs was a lucrative profession for many Christians in Europe.<sup>114</sup> The success of the Barbary slave trade also meant there was a high demand for men to man the corsairs and act as ship carpenters or maritime specialists, which were occupations that many Christians immigrants ended up filling.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>115</sup> Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea*, 117.

These Christians were often pressured to convert to Islam for the sake of smooth cultural assimilation, but in some instances their work ethic was enough for their employers and co-workers to leave them be.<sup>116</sup> Some Christians fell victim to the Barbary pirates before they could attempt their peaceful transition to the continent, but others managed to arrive on the coast, renounce their faith, assimilate into the Muslim culture, and prospered in their new lives.<sup>117</sup> Ex-Christian converts to Islam, known as “renegades” were often raised to the highest offices of state via their work on the Barbary corsairs, provided they remained loyal servants to the Ottoman sultan and to Islam.<sup>118</sup> Quite a few of these ‘renegades’ were successful in climbing the social ranks in their new lives to the point that they made up a relatively large percentage of important Barbary corsair captains during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though they dwindled to a minority by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>119</sup> Many of these North African immigrants spent the rest of their lives in their new home with their new religion, though some worked only temporarily before attempting to return home.<sup>120</sup>

Not all Christians responded to the Muslims of Barbary with the intention of joining their endeavours. Under King Charles I in 1641 the British House of Commons produced an act entitled “An Act for the relief of the Captives taken by Turkish Moorish and other Pirates and to prevent the taking of others in time to come”, which addressed the pressing matter of the Islamic conversion of British captives in Barbary.<sup>121</sup> Such an act was likely brought about by the petitioning of parishioners who warned of the loss of Christians to Islam through either temptation or duress, and how more Christians were likely to be converted away from Christianity should their ransoms not be paid.<sup>122</sup> This such reliance on religion was also used by British family members of captured men to

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<sup>116</sup> Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea*, 117.

<sup>117</sup> Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea*, 61.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 85, 195.

<sup>120</sup> Matar, *Turks, Moors, and the Englishmen*, 63.

<sup>121</sup> Matar, “The Barbary Corsairs, King Charles I and the Civil War,” 245.

<sup>122</sup> Nabil Matar, “The Barbary Corsairs, King Charles I and the Civil War,” in *The Seventeenth Century* 16 (2001): 247.



press for the return of their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, referencing how the potential for the British citizens to convert to Islam meant they would renounce their allegiance to the crown and their loved ones.<sup>123</sup> This resulted in many groups petitioning the Privy Council and general British government in the 1620s and 1630s to act upon saving their captured family members either by way of ransom payment or other diplomatic action.<sup>124</sup> In 17th century Britain when slaves managed to return home it was common practise for their families and parishioners to check whether they had been circumcised in order to judge whether or not they had been converted to Islam and returned home with impure intentions.<sup>125</sup> Other returning captives also sought certification from village magistrates or justices of the peace to prove their Christian commitment.<sup>126</sup> In the instance where 'renegades' were able to return to their Christian homes there would be even greater suspicion toward them. Church preachers would denounced them for having abandoned their true faith yet had the audacity to return to their Christian country, also allowing for the other parishioners to taunt these 'renegades'.<sup>127</sup> The Muslims were clearly not the only ones involved the Barbary slave trade who made appeals to religion to justify their treatment of others, as Christians engaged in similar acts of religious ostracism to ensure the stability of their own religion. These religious appeals also existed on both social and legal fronts, much like in the Muslim Barbary nations.

There was a high demand for the return of captured Christians, and the Barbary pirates' were willing to comply in order to receive ransom payments. This resulted in most European powers establishing consuls in the Barbary regencies in attempt to bargain for the release of important individuals or groups of people.<sup>128</sup> Alongside this, Christian priests worked to aid the captured Christians by setting up charities along the Barbary

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<sup>123</sup> Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, 80.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 81-82.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 52

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 52

<sup>127</sup> Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>128</sup> Löwenheim, "Do Ourselves Credit," 30.

Coast.<sup>129</sup> Christian orders, such as the 'Order of the Holy Trinity' and the 'Order of Our Lady of Mercy', would periodically make visits to the Barbary Coast for the sole purpose of freeing Christian slaves.<sup>130</sup> They gathered the money for the ransom payments via particular families, in order to release their specific relatives, and through general alms collecting which would be used for any suitable Catholic captives.<sup>131</sup> After permission was agreed upon by the orders' governing nation as well as the Muslim rulers of the designated corsair port, the monks would set sail and carry out negotiations for the Christians' freedom.<sup>132</sup> For Protestants in particular governments were more likely to pay their ransom than religious orders were, though Protestant churches did perform collections to contribute for the ransom payments.<sup>133</sup> This was likely because, as well as Protestant making up only a small numbers of slaves until the seventeenth century, the Spanish government gave their redemptionist orders clear instruction to know free renegades, military deserters, and Protestants.<sup>134</sup> The groups the Spanish government instead desired to be freed were government officials, Indies fleet employees, Catholic clergy, women, children, and generally those that were young and fit.<sup>135</sup> While Christianity was utilised in how funds were raised by both private and public institutions for the sake of saving fellow-Christians there were still specific regulations for these actions, as not all Christians were treated equally as shown by those with high social status and those of the appropriate domination were often favoured first.

Another Christian response to the Barbary Slave Trade was to in turn engage in the enslavement of Muslims. Christian nations all along the Mediterranean eventually made counter-attacks on the Barbary states, with most captured Muslims made to work in fields, in homes, or, similar to the Christian slaves, in Muslim ship galleys.<sup>136</sup> The

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<sup>129</sup> Löwenheim, "Do Ourselves Credit," 30.

<sup>130</sup> Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea*, 118.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, 106.

enslavement of Muslims by Christians was also used as a solution to the Muslim enslavement of Christians. Rather than acting as just a symbol of revenge, Muslim slaves could be used as leverage to barter for the release of the Muslims' Christian slaves.<sup>137</sup> When these Christian nations happened to come across 'renegades' during raids they were occasionally executed immediately for apostasy and attacks against their fellow countrymen, though most went before trial with the Inquisition.<sup>138</sup> Those who stressed coercion for their conversions and promised to return to Christian belief had a chance at receiving lenient treatment, but those who professed commitment to Islam were deemed to live as slaves or be burnt at the stake.<sup>139</sup> While these violent actions against Muslims were largely provoked by desires for revenge as well as punishment they were also noticeably coloured by the justification religion, seen through how abandoning Christianity was considered a crime on par with the actual attacks on Christians. Again, although occurring as a desire retaliation, Christian nations ended up establishing their own efforts of religious persecution in how they directly attacked, enslaved, and killed Muslims from the Barbary Coast in response to the Muslims' initial attacks. Without stating whether the Christian response was equally justified, it was indeed equal in scope because of the religious component that motivated it.

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<sup>137</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam Volume 3* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 157.

<sup>138</sup> Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea*, 126.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The slave trade that took place upon the Barbary Coast during the sixteenth to mid-nineteenth century was largely influenced by the religion of the Muslim inhabitants there were several other historical aspects surrounding the slave trade that were likewise influenced by religion. These aspects were not other acts of slavery but were instead influenced in the same way that slavery was; through the strict Muslim adherence to particular implementations of the Qur'an and hadiths. Islam was understood by its followers to be not only an important part of one's life but the definitive part. The promise of forgiveness and salvation in return for loyalty and obedience appealed to many. As a result, many people who took interest in the Islamic ideology were tasked with the feat of doing exactly what they believed their God and prophet required of them. There was difficulty in how they had no specific guidelines to understand the instructions presented in their texts, but through the interpretation of their intellectuals and through their own analyses they were able to come to certain agreements.

They concluded that not only was Islam a superior way of life but that all other ways of life needed to be opposed, not just with ridicule and exclusion but even with physical violence. While Islamic law being enforced in its customary manner, technology was advancing and the Barbary economies were growing. This allowed for Muslims on the Barbary Coast to establish new ways of attacking their enemies and spreading their faith. They took advantage of the developments in maritime warfare to improve their ability to attack and enslave non-Muslims and had widespread success in creating new converts and ceasing or dissuading the proliferation of nonconformists. Not all Muslims adhered to their religion strictly, but a significant number still held high regard for Islam and strived to ensure they could justify their actions in accordance with it. To a lesser extent Christians also had strong regard for religion in relation to their own involvement in the Barbary slave trade, whether that regard was for their own religion or another.

Religion ruled over all aspects of human interaction during the Barbary slave trade. Someone was either being compelled to act according to Islamic law and doctrine or someone was compelling someone else to do the same. Having understood this, academics should then have good reason to reapply their focus to the Barbary slave trade in order to best understand how its various other facets operated. While not the most well known historical instance slavery, the enslavement of non-Muslims on the western coast of North Africa is particularly unique and interesting for how it depicted the extent to which religion could be used to condone extreme acts.

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