PROMISES AND PITFALLS OF GLOBAL COMPARISONS

Slavery in West African Political Cultures

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ABSTRACT: Taking cue from Paul Lovejoy's criticism of the dichotomies of centralized and decentralized societies, and Slave Societies and Societies with Slaves, this article contextualizes Lovejoy's arguments within broader debates on historical comparisons in global slavery studies. It examines a case of slave trade that involved negotiations between actors belonging to different political cultures in regions west of Lake Chad in the 1920s through 1940s. The article agrees with Lovejoy's criticism of macro-historical dichotomies and argues in favor of comparative models that go from the specific to the general. It suggests that historians pay specific attention to vernacular ideas and embodied experience.

Introduction

The growth of the global history agenda in the 1990s stimulated new reflections on comparative frameworks in global slavery studies. David Brion Davis recommended reflecting on "the Big Picture" in an article that proposed ways forward to broaden perspectives for the study of transnational comparisons.[2] One of the ways forward that he envisaged revolved around "the recognition of greater African agency in creating and sustaining the slave trade," suggesting that Africa-focused research has original contributions to make to the development of global comparisons in the study of slavery.[3] The focus of the debate that followed has been macro-historical:

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contributors have been primarily interested in classifying and comparing macro phenomena (like slavery, the slave trade, the state).[4] The distinction between Slave Societies and Societies with Slaves has been revisited with the aim to develop less Eurocentric analytical frameworks that do not treat Europe and its overseas territories as paradigmatic in world history.[5] Some authors had already shifted the focus from "slavery," as if it were the same institution everywhere, to "slaveries" in the plural.[6] Joseph Miller went so far as to argue for the singularity of each historical slaving process. He rejected the notions of slavery as an institution and of the slave-master dyad as the historical epitome of domination worldwide. He advocated particularism and the reconstruction of myriads of local practices of slaving in history, each seen as unique.[7] Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as social death, "the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonoured persons" was an obvious target in Miller's rejection of generalizations.[8] Those who disagree with Miller defend comparative methods, but disagree on what we should be comparing and how.[9] In recent years, comparative approaches to slavery can be said, schematically, to have developed into four positions:

1. Gradationist approaches: a number of global labor historians have been advocating contextualizing slavery, or slaveries, along a continuum of forms of dependency and labour coercion documented in world history. They criticize the slavery-freedom binary opposition and are concerned that it obfuscates all the forms of unfreedom that characterize so-called "free" (non-slave) working conditions. They include, among others, David Eltis and Stanley Engerman, Robert Steinfeld, and Marcel Van der Linden.[10]
2. Macro-historical comparative approaches: adopt classificatory frameworks that go from the general to the particular in order to compare diverse modalities of exploitation in world history. Historians rely on macro-historical categories for the purpose of classification and comparison (such as slave society versus society with slaves, low-density versus high-density slavery, assimilative slavery versus chattel slavery, and modes of production).
3. Micro-historical comparative approaches: proceed from the specific to the general, starting from particular actors, relations, and events to describe how slavery functions at the local level. They then de-singularize specific micro-historical circumstances by identifying generalizable aspects. This approach has been discussed recently by Paulin Ismard, who suggested focusing on institutions as the smallest units for cross-societal

comparison and argued that comparison can advance our understanding of how institutionalized slavery functioned in world history.[11]

4. Historical-semantic approaches: authors focus on the semantic analysis of vernacular sources on slavery with the aim of developing a universal grammar of labor coercion and dependency that does not prioritize Eurocentric epistemologies. This approach is followed by a network of scholars coordinated by Juliane Schiel through a global collaborative on "Grammars of Dependencies." In African historiography, Camille Lefebvre developed a similar approach based on the close reading of Hausa and Kanuri sources.[12]

These approaches are not incompatible with each other. The same author can change approaches in different works, and the same analytical category can be the result of micro-historical de-singularization, or the starting point for macro-historical comparison. For example, Patterson's classic book *Slavery and Social Death* examines a large number of micro-historical case studies to generalize that enslaved persons everywhere are reduced to a state of "social death," a concept meant to shed light on what slavery is, and does, in human societies.[13] Yet many authors rely on Patterson's notion of social death to develop macro-historical comparisons based on the slave-free dichotomy that gradationists criticize.

Today authors in all four approaches see themselves as trying to avoid Eurocentrism. They aspire to place non-Western epistemologies on an equal footing with Western ones. Attempts to achieve this goal should be mindful of two pitfalls: the assumption that "West" (or "Global North," or "Euro-America") and "non-West" (or "Global South") are meaningful signifiers,[14] and the assumption (often implicit) that concepts that develop in a particular place/time, language, and culture cannot travel outside of it and be put to use elsewhere. Gareth Austin's discussion of conceptual Eurocentrism and reciprocal comparisons provides a methodological roadmap to avoiding both drawbacks.[15] Harris Memel-Fotê's theory of slavery based on the author's engagement with Aristotle, Kwame Nkrumah, and Marx is an example of methodological eclecticism. It attests to the usefulness of reflecting on concepts with different genealogies to develop analytical frameworks that can be applied to Greek city states, African lineage-based societies, or European industrial towns alike.[16] Another example is Kathy Gaca's philological analysis of the ancient Greek term *andrapodizein* as a gendered form of wartime battering that advances our knowledge of gendered logics of enslavement in conflict zones well beyond the ancient Greek context where the notion originated.[17]

What can the study of slavery in Africa contribute to these debates? One of the peculiarities of Africa is the variety of forms of political organization. While in Europe and its colonial outposts political power was mainly centralized, African societies addressed the problem of government in a more diversified manner. In nineteenth-century Africa political centralization was only one of many forms of government, and politically decentralized societies were themselves internally diverse, including lineage-based societies, unilineal segmentary structures, hunter-gatherer bands, and societies organized into age sets or age grades, just to name a few variants.[18] How did this heterogeneity influence the functioning of slavery? More generally, is slavery a function of political structure? With its rich variety of political formations, Africa is a privileged arena for this enquiry. Taking cue from Paul Lovejoy's reflections on state-centered and stateless societies, and Slave Societies and Societies with Slaves, this article asks how, if at all, political organization influences slavery. It examines a case of slave trade that involved people moving across different political cultures in the west of Lake Chad in the 1920s through 1940s. It argues that close engagement with local meanings and embodied experience is a precondition for comparative generalization. A priori assumptions about the comparative relevance of political or other macro-historical structures are best avoided unless supported by micro-historical analysis.

We cannot presume we already know how slaveholders and enslaved persons make sense of their integration in a lineage-based society or an empire, and how their perceptions inform their actions. We can only interpret their projects—the projects that shape history—if we question pre-made categories of comparison and investigate how macro-historical structures influence lived experience. Experience is not only intellectual, but also embodied. The article shows that corporeality colors experience as different bodies elicit diverse responses in specific cultural settings in ways that partly elude the individual's control. But embodied actors also turn their bodies into projects as they consciously weigh opportunities of self-defense or self-realization in centralized or decentralized polities, Slave Societies or Societies with Slaves.[19] Fight or flight in a slave raid, seduction or rejection of a lustful master . . . these options present themselves differently to enslaved men and women faced with lone raiders or state armies; to male and female captives aware of their ability, or inability, to captivate their captors. To compare slaveries is to compare how embodied exegetes lived out enslavement and slave ownership. Methodologically, de-singularization should start with making sense of their experiences as a precondition for identifying the most relevant categories of comparison.

Africa in the World of Slavery

In his recent contribution to the volume edited by Noel Lenski and Catherine Cameron "What Is a Slave Society?" Paul Lovejoy argues with characteristic clarity: "The distinctions between states and stateless societies, on the one hand, and 'Slave Societies' and 'Societies with Slaves,' on the other, are false dichotomies."[20] To support this statement, he analyses West African societies that lacked centralized state structures, but where slavery was an important institution by all the criteria highlighted in Moses I. Finley's definition of Slave Society, namely: slaves must constitute a significant percentage of the population (over 20 percent); slaves must play a major role in production; and slaves must exercise a pervasive cultural influence.[21] Lovejoy puts these analytical frameworks to the test in the West African context by examining three societies usually classified as decentralized: the Igbo and Ibibio of the Bight of Biafra, the societies of the Upper Guinea coast that occupied the region between the Atlantic coast and the Fuuta Jalon highlands, and the small-scale societies that surrounded the Sokoto Sultanate in the northern Cameroon mountains to the east, the hills of Togo and Benin to the west, and the Jos plateau in the Sultanate's interior.

What are Lovejoy's main critiques of the dichotomies state versus stateless, and Slave Societies versus Societies with Slaves? First, he argues that so-called stateless societies were governed effectively by organs that did not resemble states but fulfilled the state's functions for all slavery-related purposes.[22] The state-stateless dichotomy is not helpful because it misleadingly creates the appearance of a binary where in fact, according to Lovejoy, there is only difference. The dichotomy presupposes that the presence or absence of a state is what accounts for differences. But this is not the most meaningful factor. Slavers and enslaved persons navigated across centralized and decentralized governments whose interconnections (as opposed to distinctiveness) are particularly relevant when it comes to studying slavery.

Furthermore, there is no univocal correspondence between political culture and form of government. As a specialist of the Hausa-speaking world, Lovejoy is familiar with political cultures that do not overlap with a single political system. Hausa political culture encompasses both "dynastic Hausa" (the *sarauta* system) in urban centres (the political cultures of *birane*, sing. *birni*, the famous Hausa walled city states) and the lineage-based organization of the Hausa hinterland.[23] As highlighted in Finn Fuglestad's discussion of "contrapuntal paramountcy," the different political institutions of various Hausa speaking groups co-existed in Hausa political culture.[24] In the nineteenth century, these diverse political structures gravitated in the orbits of centralized Islamic empires, the best studied of which (largely thanks to Paul

Lovejoy's work) is the Sokoto Caliphate. They then became integrated in the French and British colonial empires. Slavery existed in all of these contexts.

Differences in forms of Hausa political organization were not entirely fortuitous. Sometimes they were actively maintained to serve the interests of actors operating at a regional level. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century the European abolitionist explorer James Richardson noted that Zinder's ruler (*sarki*) kept local Asna communities animist, rather than promoting their conversion, so that he could continue preying on them.[25] Both the *sarki* and the Asna groups partook of Hausa governmentality, but they operated in semi-autonomous polities. Semi-autonomy was functional to slaving logics that followed religious criteria. With Lovejoy, the state-stateless dichotomy conceals the degree to which political groups characterized by different degrees of (de-)centralization were actually interconnected. Differences were expedient to the functioning of regional systems of slavery.

In the "stateless" societies discussed by Lovejoy, slavery was a fundamental institution, not only because internal slaveholding was widespread, but also because these societies functioned as slave reservoirs for centralized polities with superior military power. Lovejoy shows that Igbo and Ibibio on the Bight of Biafra, the societies on the Guinea Coast, and multiple societies at the edge of the Sokoto Sultanate constituted reservoirs of persons deemed enslavable for, respectively, the British empire and its American colonies, the Fuuta Jalon Islamic state, and the Sokoto Sultanate. Lovejoy's discussion chimes with Martin Klein's description of relations between slaving states and decentralized societies as "a web-like network of commercial and political relationships that linked various centers of military power with major market centers."[26] It is consistent, too, with Jeffrey Fynn Paul's focus on the tension between slaving zones and no-slaving zones, which emphasizes religious ideologies as the criterion demarcating the enslavable and the non-enslavable.[27] The combination of political centralization, technological and economic power, and ideological hegemony yielded consistent patterns of slaving by imperialist monotheist rulers. A narrow focus on dichotomies based on structural differences between centralized and decentralized political systems risks obfuscating the relevance of interconnections. Where does this leave us with respect to the Slave Societies / Societies with Slaves distinction?

Lovejoy's article suggests that we should think of both (centralized) predators and (decentralized) preys as Slave Societies. This is not entirely new in African historiography. In his seminal article on slavery in decentralized societies Klein agrees with critics of the "predatory states" thesis, who had shown decentralized societies to be as effective as centralized ones in defending insiders, and equally aggressive when acting as slavers. Yet, when

nineteenth-century decentralized societies acted as predators, they tended to be "predators that captured people like themselves."[28] Why did these societies develop rampant forms of slavery, when the slave trade hit them so hard? Klein answered that "the logic of the state was not as irresistible as the logic of the market."[29] The slave trade offered economic opportunities that appealed to both older and younger men trying to gain power in intergenerational conflicts that existed across centralized and decentralized societies alike. Lovejoy, too, opted for an economic explanation. He replaced a focus on dichotomies with a focus on the presence or absence of a slave mode of production, as defined by three criteria: "the use of slaves in productive activities to such an extent that economic relationships became dependent on slavery; the mechanisms of supplying slaves to such a social formation because in general [slaves in] 'Slave Societies' did not reproduce themselves biologically but rather did so through the continuous introduction of slaves through enslavement and trade; and third, the mechanisms for the enslavement of people, which usually involved the incorporation of people from outside the state."[30]

Is presence/absence of a slave mode of production yet another dichotomy? Is it a more heuristically fruitful one? The comparative use of the notion of "mode of production" has been criticized for two main reasons. Some critics objected to the concept's derivation from a Marxist vision of history in stages (ancient, feudal, capitalist) marked by evolutionary overtones.[31] Others objected to the overemphasis on economic factors. Patterson criticized the stress on modes of production for its "narrow materialistic focus [that . . .] is of no value in the study of genuine slave societies in which the structurally important role of slaves was noneconomic, as was true of most of the Islamic slave systems."[32] He prefers thinking in terms of "mode of articulation," which in his rendering encompasses three dimensions: the specific nature of the dependence on slavery (economic, political, materialistic, bureaucratic, domestic); the degree of such dependence (not just the demographic size of the slave population, but also the roles of enslaved persons in key aspects of society); and what he calls the "direction" of dependence (whether slavery was passively integrated, or actively articulated and transformative of economic, political, and social dynamics). Patterson's dimensions travel seamlessly across more or less centralized contexts, enabling comparison without imposing the straightjacket of "slave mode of production." Yet this notion conveyed immediately a concern for the intensity of slavery in any one location—a concern that cannot be dropped lightly in comparisons of historical forms of slavery.

Noel Lenski suggested more specific criteria for comparing slaveries in terms of relative benefits to slaveholders and disadvantages to slaves.[33]

He introduced the notion of "vectors of intensification," a measure of the intensity of exploitation. Slave-master relations are compared by weighing benefits to masters (use and exchange value of slaves as commodity, use and exchange value of slave labor and labor product) against disadvantages to enslaved persons (permanence of the slave condition, level of violent domination, degree of natal alienation and dishonor). Patterson's and Lenski's analytical frameworks propose parameters that can be used to compare different forms of slavery. Unlike gradationist approaches that see slavery as one form of coercion among many, they insist on the specificity of slavery as a distinct institution that opposes the free and the enslaved across time and space. The distinctiveness of slavery is also emphasized by Christopher Tomlins, who added a third category, "societies with slavery," to the binary Slave Society / Society with Slaves.[34] In Societies with Slavery, slavery is neither marginal nor absolutely central to all social and economic dynamics, but "is consciously instantiated as an institution to the perpetuation of which the society is committed."[35] This is an important distinction—it allows us to identify historical moments when a Society with Slaves does not turn into a full-fledged Slave Society, but transforms slavery into an institution supported by elaborate laws and ideologies enabling specific cruelties, punishments, or protections.[36]

Lovejoy argued that slavery can be as central and "structuring" an institution in decentralized societies as in centralized states. This is not only because the former are integrated in the slaving operations of the latter as "slaving zones." Slavery was a major institution also *within* Africa's decentralized societies. Tomlins' description of "societies with slavery" would appear to suit the three examples of decentralized societies discussed in Lovejoy's article. Yet, the main obstacle to the meaningful integration of African cases in global-comparative discussions is the unevenness of sources, especially for societies that did not write down their laws and norms. Ugo Nwokeji raises this issue in a review article in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, but inconclusively.[37] The problem of sources, which remains intractable for some regions, makes it difficult to compare contexts in terms of their legal or normative regulation of slavery, and of the practical translation of laws and norms into action. We can be more precise for Islamic contexts. But comparison between centralized Islamic polities and decentralized societies can rarely be conclusive, because the data available for these contexts is unbalanced in both quantity and quality.

This does not make comparison impossible, but it requires us to proceed cautiously. A corollary of caution is that Africanist researchers should be particularly careful when applying pre-made comparative categories and criteria to African contexts a priori, based on impressionistic (rather

than precise and verifiable) assessments. Macro-historical comparative approaches that proceed in a general-to-specific fashion may be suitable for societies where slavery is extensively documented and we rely on a long-standing tradition of research that subjected relevant sources to thorough exegesis. Doing so enables precision in classifying a particular context into one or the other category (for example, Tomlins' Slave Societies, Societies with Slavery, or Societies with Slaves). Where sources are few and poorly studied, however, comparative analysis should avoid creating the impression of certainty when in fact the evidence available for certain cases is substantially narrower than for others, and classification in one or the other category is, at best, hypothetical. Microhistorical comparisons are preferable here, because they start not from presumed but unverifiable differences among slave systems, but from "specific situations carefully de-singularized."[38] Authors can document de-singularization through their analysis of extant sources, allowing readers to decide for themselves whether they find comparisons convincing.

This approach allows historians to focus on the specificities of each case—for example, a fugitive slave seeking refuge in an ancient temple, Christian church, mosque, missionary station, an ally's home, or a ruler's palace—and reveal, through comparison, what is comparable and generalizable in the experience of runaway slaves. Do the circumstances of fugitives differ in centralized and decentralized societies? If one has sources for both contexts and can support this interpretation, then centralization will be a relevant comparative criterion but not a sufficient one. Centralized societies differ with regard to the relative importance and brutality of slavery, and so do decentralized ones. Lovejoy insists that we should seek to understand the historical experience of individual actors who moved across these systems. He asks:

> What were the characteristics of "Slave Societies" in terms of the experiences of slaves? What difference could it make to an individual if he was a slave in a "Society with Slaves" that was fundamentally connected with the perpetuation of slavery and where slavery was widespread and economically important, as in the case of the centralized states, or if one was a slave in a society where funeral sacrifice was common, as it was in many stateless societies? In both cases the sale to the Americas or across the Sahara was a possibility.[39]

What remains of this article considers these questions. It focuses on a place that, like Lovejoy's examples, lies at the edge of larger centralized polities. It argues that a micro-historical analysis that prioritizes the perceptions and experiences of individuals is a preferable method of global-historical comparison, especially were sources are limited.[40]

The Commandant, the Chief, and the Slaves of N'Guigmi

N'Guigmi is located in a multi-ethnic region inhabited mainly by Tubu and Kanuri, but also Hausa, Fulani, and migrants from a large number of non-Islamized small groups living in the surrounding mountains, around watercourses, and in the islands of Lake Chad.[41] The region displays the political instability characteristic of boundary zones. Occupying the interstices between what in the nineteenth century had been emirates tributaries of Bornu or Sokoto, or scattered in impenetrable environmental niches within emirate territories (on top of mountains, in the middle of water, in thick forest groves), small independent groups characterized as "pagan" had been considered enslavable by their Muslim neighbors at least since the late eighteenth century. Muslims sometimes assimilated them with nature and animals, describing them as sub-human.[42]

European explorers traveling in these regions in the nineteenth century reproduced in their testimonies the contrast between Muslim-civilized and pagan-uncivilized identities that they heard in local accounts and thought they witnessed in their travels. These regions hosted different religions and cultures. The ubiquitous proximity of scarcely integrated "others" was a source of both danger and profit. Slave traders exploited pockets of enslavable barbarians. In the twentieth century colonial occupation introduced new political, legal, cultural, and religious boundaries. The representatives of Europe became acquainted with local hierarchies, which they interpreted in their own peculiar ways. Like Muslims before them, they believed they represented a superior culture. But unlike the leaders of Bornu, Wadai, and Sokoto, they were determined to put an end to slavery and the slave trade.

An *Enquête sur l'esclavage* conducted in the District (*Cercle*) of Gouré in 1920 listed the "slave races" of this region and gave the precolonial prices of slaves: 15 thalers for a man, 20 thalers for a child, and 40 thalers for an "unmarried" girl.[43] Following French intervention, it argued, "slavery completely disappeared from the District. Those captives who remained with their masters of their own will are treated like [freemen] by the administration. The majority have become family members and do not wish to leave. In any case, they enjoy full freedom."[44] This was wishful thinking. The 1923 report of the Governor of Niger drew from district-level reports.[45] It referred to a sizeable traffic of slaves across and around Lake Chad from the cantons of Nigeria and directed toward the Egyptian Sudan.

Shortly afterwards a growing number of new cases of slave trade were discovered, revealing intense trafficking across the Anglo-French border. A 1928 report of a meeting with a British administrator, Captain Reed, assistant district officer of the Bornu Province,[46] discussed disorders on the banks

of the Komadugu River. It was deemed necessary to allow indigenous chiefs to cross the Anglo-French border to collaborate on issues of security and slave trade. Captain Reed reported that he had some information about slave trafficking between Cameroon, and the Rivers Benue and Komadugu. This traffic appeared to be directed toward the region of Bosso, but preliminary inquiries in Bosso and N'Guigmi were as yet inconclusive. Captain Reed's report raised concern. The Governor General of Niger Jules Brévié asked in a telegram to intensify investigations on the slave traffic mentioned by Reed.[47] He noted that relations between the Sultan of Bornu and Katchiella Abagana, Canton Chief of Bosso, had to be monitored closely. There followed an exchange of telegrams about the relation between the Sultan of Bornu and Katchiella Abagana. Brévié wrote to Dakar communicating that the Katchiella was suspected of involvement in the slave trade between Cameroon, Benue, and Kanem. The report of Captain Fernand Gilbin, commanding the Cercle of N'Guigmi, was attached for information.[48]

The investigations launched by Brévié established that Katchiella Abagana owned several slaves, facilitated the trade of slaves originating from Nigeria and exported toward the north, and received a fee of 20 francs for each slave sold in his territory.[49] Aware of the severe punishments foreseen by the French for involvement in crimes of slavery, Abagana required that everybody in his village swear that they would never share any knowledge they had on slavery with the French administration.[50] The Katchiella was a Mobeur chief who, alone amongst surrounding chiefs in N'Guigmi, had remained seemingly independent from the Sultan of Bornu.[51] His authority went beyond that of other local chiefs. His subjects feared him, and feared his agents who were known for their harshness toward the population.[52] This complicated Fernand Gilbin's task of obtaining public accusations against the Katchiella. Nevertheless, Gilbin amassed conclusive evidence: nine persons agreed to give witness in court. Witnesses included a cleric called Malam Ali Djarami Mainarami, the Katchiella's younger cousin Chettima Koutteye, two adult women who were, or had been, slaves in the Katchiella's household, called Yagana and Yakadji; four young girls who were also slaves of the Katchiella; the Katchiella's mother in law; and a native police officer who had been sent on a secret mission to Northern Nigeria, where he had obtained the confession of a man suspected to have owned a slave woman nicknamed Darasani who had ran away with her child and sought protection from the Katchiella. The latter had promised to protect her, but shortly afterwards had sold both her and her child. The evidence provided by these witnesses suggested that the Katchiella held at least five slaves in his home and that he had been involved in slave trading himself through the sale of Darasani and her child. Because the

latter was the most serious allegation, finding out what had happened to Darasani was vital.

In his testimony, Malam Ali Djarami Mainarami named three slaves whom he believed had been purchased by Abagana in 1927 and 1928: Fanta Mona (also spelled 'Fanta Noua'), 14 or 15 years old, Fanta Sougounam, 9 or 10 years old; and Fantaram, 4 or 5 years old. He mentioned, too, a woman with a child. He provided names of other residents of Bosso, both men and women, who had purchased slaves that same year, mostly children.[53] Armed with this potentially incriminating information that confirmed initial suspicions, the Cercle's administration organized a search in the Katchiella's home. Lieutenant Chapelle reached the Katchiella's home on 25 September at 5:45 a.m. Abagana found him in his compound when he returned from the early morning prayer. Chapelle asked Abagana whether the women who had been named as his slaves were there, to which Katchiella answered positively but denied knowing "Fanta Mami" or "Fanta Sougoumami"—these were all aliases of "Darasani," whom he was suspected to have sold.

Accompanied by Abagana, Lieutenant Chapelle, adjoint to the District Officer (*Lieutenant Adjoint au Commandant de Cercle*) entered in all the sections of the chief's house, asking everyone he encountered to follow him. He accumulated a larger and larger following that consisted primarily of women. He had with him the census list redacted by his predecessor Lieutenant Chapouty in 1927, and as he walked through the rooms, he verified that all of the individuals named in the census were still there: the six wives of the Katchiella, his two grandchildren, and his four young children. He then demanded that all the slave girls in the home be brought to him. Only two were found, initially: Fantaram and Fanta Noua. He asked the Katchiella who were these young girls. Abagana replied: "slaves" (*captives*). "How long have they been here for?" "A long time." "Where did you buy them?" "It is a Nigerian friend of mine who gave them to me as a gift." "You gave nothing in exchange?" "Nothing." Six other "servants" were brought forward, some described as herders who looked after the Katchiella's livestock, others as domestic servants. The Lieutenant suspected that these were slaves who had been mentioned in the course of his previous inquiries. The woman listed in the census as "Fanta Sougoumami," nicknamed Darasani, was missing. She was suspected to have been sold with her baby. The Lieutenant asked about her. The Katchiella denied that she was a member of his household. Chapelle replied that Abagana himself had dictated her name to Lieutenant Chapouty when he had recorded the census. Abagana replied defiantly: "Then go ask Lieutenant Chapouty."

That same morning Chapelle carried out household searches also in the homes of others who had been denounced as slave owners. He moved quickly,

fearing that if alerted the suspects would hide their domestic slaves, as they regularly did. Then, he returned to the Katchiella's home and interrogated some of the persons he had found there. One of the enslaved girls, Fanta Noua, told her story:

> I come from Mandara, but I do not know the name of my village. I was captured when I was about five years old. I was sold for two heads of cattle to a second master. I escaped to come to Abana [sic]. I was then seven years old. He is very good to me and does not treat me like a slave.[54]

The investigation continued. Gilbin hoped that Fanta Sougoumami would still be found. A man interviewed on 26 September revealed that Fanta Sougoumami (aka Fanta Sougourom, Fanta Mami, or Darasani) had been hidden in an island of Lake Chad at the place of a local fisherman.[55] On 27 September the guards Ibra and Mamadou were sent overnight to the island by pirogue to try and find the woman. But they found another woman and a little disabled girl instead. The owners of the place denied they had anything to do with the whole affair and asked the guards to take with them the two women and two oxen they had been asked to keep.

Lieutenant Chapelle interviewed the elderly woman. She was Aissata Bindou, mother in law of Katchiella Abagana.[56] The little disabled girl, explained the woman, had been bought by her deceased husband from Nigerian traders five years earlier. Her name was Mairam Kagna Bounkarou. Asked why she was hiding, Aissata replied that she was afraid because she owned a slave. She added that she had brought with her Fanta Sougourom (also known as Fanta Sougoumami, Fanta Mami, or Darasani), who was ill and had been sent to her by the Katchiella who told her to hide the two slaves in the island in Lake Chad. But Darasani was not found. The inquiry continued. Several new persons were interviewed and gave confusing information, naming several slaves, mostly children, owned by people known to them. Almost every household regularly bought, sold, and held slaves, the majority of whom were young children.

Lieutenant Chapelle travelled from village to village, following threads of information that sometimes turned out to be dead ends. In the village of Bilaberim, five kilometers north of Bosso, Chapelle secretly interviewed an old informant of his predecessor Captain Garnier. The informant, who had reached out to Chapelle voluntarily, confirmed that Katchiella Abagana had sold Fanta Sougoumami (Darasani) to Chougou Botrami for a horse and some money three months earlier. He knew that Fanta Sougoumami had escaped from Ali Boulama, her previous master, with her baby. Following his new lead, Chapelle sent the colonial guard Ali to Northern Nigeria secretly overnight to meet Ali Boulama, former master of Fanta Sougoumami (Aka

Darasani, Fanta Mami, or Fanta Sougourum), whose original name turned out to be Djehinam Kore. Ali Boulama explained:

> A slave I had bought escaped from my home with her baby five months ago. . . . I found out that she had sought refuge with the canton chief Abana [sic]. I went to look for her one night outside the enclosure of the home of the chief—the Katchiella walked out, and I claimed my slave back. He told me he did not have her. He made me swear on the Qur'an that I would never mention anything about this affair to anyone. I swore. Then I found out from a man that Djehinam Kore [a.k.a. Fanta Sougoumami, Fanta Mami, or Darasani] had been sold for 120 thalers to Chougou-Botrami. He paid half the sum with cash, and half with a horse.[57]

Chougou Botrami was found and interrogated, too:

> In May I gave Katchiella Abana [sic] a horse as a gift. Katchiella Abana gave me two loads [*charges*] of millet and two covers. When I gave Katchiella Abana the horse, I heard a rumour that Issa Ben Moussa Boulti and Fougou Moussa had purchased a slave with a child from Katchiella Abagana [. . .]. When I went back to see Fougou Moussa, he told me: I paid a part of [the price of] the slave bought by Issa Boulti to Katchiella Abana and now I will look for the rest of the money from Malam Darmane of Baroua [. . .]. The slave was paid 650 Francs in Thalers: Issa Boulti came to Taitbou and Fougou Moussa sent him the slave on a pirogue across the lake.[58]

Reviewing this evidence, Gilbin suggested that even though the Katchiella had kidnapped, and had almost certainly bought, people, he should not be sent to face trial at a tribunal of second degree, because the "Mobeur race is a race of bandits, allied to the Tubus and—since time immemorial—involved in slave trafficking amongst other wrongdoings."[59] Trading slaves, that is, was to be expected from these people, whose very nature made them prone to commit iniquities. Turning Aristotle's theory of the natural slave on its head, Gilbin produced a racialized theory of the natural slaver. But in spite of Gilbin's wish to show leniency toward the Katchiella on grounds that he could not help the natural inclinations of his race, on 3 December 1927 the Tribunal of second degree of N'Guigmi hosted the trial of Katchiella Abagana (accused of illegal confinement of person and slave trade), his mother in law Absata Bintou (accused of illegal confinement of person), Issa Boulti (accused of having purchased Djehinam Kore, a.k.a. Fanta Sougoumami, a.k.a. Fanta Mami, a.k.a. Darasani), and Fougou Moussa (accused of facilitating the sale).

The Trial

The first witness, Fanta Nona of about ten years of age, was asked what was her status in the Katchiella's home. She replied she was a slave of Katchiella Abagana, and had lived all her life at his place. She could not remember the circumstances of her arrival, because she was too young at the time.

The second testimony was by the nine-year-old Fanta Tiougounam, who had been found hiding in an island of Lake Chad. She confirmed that she had been on the island for three days only and had been brought there from the home of Katchiella Abagana.

The third testimony, also very brief, was given by eight-year-old Fantaram Olle, slave of Katchiella Abagana. Frightened and confused, Fantaram gave inconclusive answers:

Q: How long have you been living in the household of Katchiella Abagana?
A: I don't know.
Q: When you arrived there, did Fanta Nona and Fanta Tiougounam already live in the house?
A: I don't know.
Q: Did you meet a woman called Djehinam Kore in the house of Katchiella Abagana?
A: I do not know her.
Q: If this is the case, why did you call Djehinam Kore by name and ran to embrace her when you saw her at the instruction?
A: It was her, indeed.
Q: Where have you met her?
A: I don't know.

The fourth witness, Yagana, was a 22-year-old woman. She often visited the home of Katchiella Abagana. She confirmed that she knew all of the previous witnesses and gave an approximate indication of the dates when each of them had joined the Katchiella's home. She had also seen Djehinam Kore at Katchiella's place, breastfeeding her baby. She confirmed the name of Djehinam Kore's previous master and stated she had learned from a woman called Yakadji that Djehinam Kore had been sold to the Tubu.

The fifth witness was Djehinam Kore herself (a.k.a. Fanta Sougoumami, Fanta Mami, Darasani), who at the time was about 27 years old, and who had finally been located at the place of Issa Boulti, the man mentioned in Chougou Botrami's testimony as the one who had purchased her from Katchiella. Djehinam explained that when the guards had found her at the place of Issa Boulti she had been living there for about five years. Before then, she had been a "shared slave" (*esclave commune*) of Ali Boulama and a man called Boukar in Nigeria. One day, in the month of April, she learned

that there was "a white man" in Bosso and she escaped from her master to go to see "the white." When she reached Bosso, the white had left. A man saw her in the village and brought her to the Canton Chief, Katchiella Abagana. The latter asked her to explain why she was there. She said that she had run away from her master who mistreated her. The Katchiella told her: "Stay here; here you will be [treated] as you would by the whites."

> I remained about four months at the Katchiella's place, then I was sold. One night someone told me to go to the fields. I took my baby with me. I was escorted by one man; two mounted horsemen and two men on foot were waiting [for us]. Then the man who had accompanied me went back [to Bosso] and the two horsemen took me away. We walked for a while until we reached a house where we rested for one day. I spent the following day in an island, then I was taken away in a pirogue.[60]

At this point, Fougou Moussa was brought in the courtroom and Djehinam was asked if she recognized him. She confirmed and explained that it was in his home that she had stopped after leaving Bosso and it was his son who had brought her to the pirogue. She spent two days in the pirogue, and when she disembarked she met Issa Boulti and another man who made her mount a camel and brought her to the place of Issa Boulti, where she lived as a slave fetching water at the well and looking after livestock.

The sixth witness was Chettima Konteye [sic], 31-year-old cousin of Katchiella Abagana. Asked about the nature of his resentment toward Katchiella, he explained: "my father owned a slave who had been manumitted. This slave had some wealth. When he died Katchiella appropriated all of his wealth [leaving nothing to my father]." Chettima provided information about the other enslaved girls and Djehinam Kore, confirming previous testimonies and providing precise dates when these women had joined the Katchiella's home, which Chettima knew well. The seventh witness was Ali Boulama, who confirmed that Djehinam had been his slave and reiterated the account he had already provided in his first interview with the French officers.

Then the four defendants were interrogated, starting with Katchiella Abagana, who gave curt answers. He admitted that he had kept at his home the three slave women Fanta Nonna [sic], Fanta Olle, and Fanta Tiougounam: "yes, they were listed in the census [as resident] in my household," he stated, not only suggesting annoyance at repeated requests for the same information, but also making the point that the French administration was aware of the slave girls' existence and had not taken issue with this before. He explained the circumstances under which they had reached his home: Fanta Nona had allegedly come to him of her own will; Fanta Tiougounam

had been a gift made to his wife Tiougoum by his mother-in-law, who had acquired her from her deceased husband, who had originally bought her; Fantaram Olle was a gift from his "father-in-law" Chettima Fougou to his wife. He confirmed that he knew that all of these women were slaves. As for Djehinam Kore, he confirmed her testimony and stated that he had received 350 francs for her. He explained that Fougou Moussa had acted as intermediary:

> Fougou Moussa came to see me and told me: there is a Choa [Arab] who wants to buy a slave—have you got one? I replied that I did have one—we discussed the price and fixed it at 350 Francs. Fougou Moussa left and I had the slave brought to him in Yeroua.

Fougou Moussa was asked to describe what his role had been in these transactions:

> I am a relative of Issa ben Moussa Boulti. He had given me seven cows which he wanted me to sell for him. I sold them. Then Issa Ben Moussa Boulti told me: "I intend to buy a slave, try to find me one." This happened in the month of June. I asked Katchiella Abagana who told me: "I have got one." The price was fixed at 550 Francs. I came back to see Issa Ben Moussa Boulti who accepted the deal. The following night he [Katchiella] sent me the slave. [. . .] In Yeroua [another name of Maiduguri] I gave [the slave] to Issa Ben Moussa Boulti who told me: "I am afraid to spend the night with this slave in N'Guigmi, send her to me via Lake Chad." I found some *piroguiers* who conducted the slave to the east of N'Guigmi.

Issa Ben Moussa Boulti denied he ever purchased a slave. He explained that he was travelling in the area when he ran into the son of Fougou Moussa who was together with a slave who carried a child. The man told him that the child was sick and that Fougou Moussa sent it to him to make him drink milk and cure him.

When Absata Bintou, the fourth defendant, was interviewed, she repeated the story of how she had escaped to the island in Lake Chad with two slaves, fearing for her own safety. Eventually she was acquitted. Katchiella Abagana, Fougou Moussa, and Issa ben Moussa Boulti were condemned, respectively, to two years of prison, 1000 francs in fines, and the confiscation of the 350 francs he received in payment for Djeniham Kore; four months of prison; and one year of prison and 500 francs in fines. The verdict explained that the responsibility of those found guilty was attenuated by the fact that they "belonged to backward races that lack full awareness of the inhumane nature of the crime of slave trade."

The Enslavable Barbarian and the Barbarian Slaver

Katchiella Abagana, the Chief of Bosso, was determined to uphold the principles of hierarchy. His chiefly status was inseparable from his prerogative to own slaves, receive them as gifts, retain a fee for each slave bought or sold in his canton, and dispose of them at will. The search in his home constituted a major affront to his authority. His answers to colonial inquiries revealed disdain, and at points mockery, which suggests that he was confident in his power and did not lower himself to seek French support, not even by lying about actions that indicted him according to French law and eventually cost him his freedom. The freeborn witnesses who testified against the Katchiella all had an axe to grind against the chief. They did not act out of abolitionist convictions. In his deposition, Chettima Konteye even revealed that his animosity against the Katchiella derived from the latter's disregard for what he saw as his rights as a slaveholder: he and his father ought to have benefited from the inheritance of a slave they had manumitted, but Abagana had appropriated all of it.

The slaves in this case are mostly young girls and women. Yagana, 22 years old, and Djehinam Kore, 27, dared denouncing the Katchiella. Djehinam's odyssey had started about six years earlier when she had escaped from the place where she had served two masters who appear to have owned her jointly and who mistreated her. She ran away and sought French support, but was found out by a villager and directed to the Katchiella. The latter promised her protection, but if the quote remembered by Djehinam was correct, there could have been sarcasm in Katchiella's cruel reply that she should stay with him and he would treat her *as the whites would*. Djehinam, a fugitive slave, had been intercepted and re-enslaved. She had been renamed at will by everyone who had owned her and felt entitled to call her whatever they wanted. She had a child when she was sold, but we know nothing of the child's destiny. Maybe s/he ended up like one of the little enslaved girls found in Katchiella's home, who gave confused, terrified answers in the hope to avoid (more) violence.

This case sheds light on the experience of domestic slaves, girls and women, who lived in the home of their owners. It shows their constant fear, their vulnerability, their resistance in a context where slavery was taken for granted as a legitimate institution. The political context was a complex maze of interlocking centralized Islamic empires, imbricated with satellite chieftaincies that enjoyed varying degrees of political autonomy, and decentralized societies functioning as the main (but not the only) sources of slaves: most of the interviewed slave girls had stated they came from Mandara, a mountainous region inhabited by many decentralized groups who had not

converted to Islam. At the turn of the century this world had become integrated in abolitionist European empires. In the 1920s the League of Nations established transnational bodies for monitoring slavery worldwide and put pressure on abolitionist Europe to deliver on its abolitionist vocation. In this ideological climate, European officers pursued slave traders and traffickers relentlessly. Their persistence persuaded some slaves to denounce their owners. Alternative visions that did not see slavery as a curse imposed by God or nature became available to enslaved persons to reclaim a margin of autonomy and resist violence. In a remarkable demonstration of the power of racial essentialism to naturalize alleged inferiority, the enslavable Barbarian became the Barbarian slaver. And, yet again, othering turned into a justification for violence.

Othering endows perpetrators of violence with a sense of moral entitlement: victims are othered in such derogatory terms (dehumanized) that violence against them is portrayed as justified. In the summer of 1933 Lieutenant Romain Desfosses, probably with the cooperation of Lieutenant de la Brosse, tortured two Tubu slave traffickers named Aba Ari Mamadini and Ibrahim Boukarim. Three indigenous guards were present during the ordeal, which involved pressing hot irons to the soles of the feet of the two men under interrogation until they lost consciousness. This was not the last time Lieutenant Romain Desfosses tortured detainees in N'Guigmi's prison. Details of other similar episodes of torture and arbitrary punishments perpetrated by French officers in the Cercle of N'Guigmi were provided in 1935 reports. Desfosses did not try to deny the accusations. Instead, he defended himself by stating that his actions had been motivated by "indignation for the Tubu's cruelty toward their slaves."[61]

Romain Desfosses and de la Brosse asked that they be allowed to use classified reports and correspondence on the slave trade in the N'Guigmi region to defend themselves in the tribunal. Niamey's magistrate initially refused to release the reports. Then in March 1936 the satirical magazine *Bec et Ongles* published an article on the "abuses of N'Guigmi." The article focused not on torture, but on the continuing slave trade around Lake Chad. It asked what France had done to put an end to the enormity of trafficking in these regions. Jules Brévié, now Governor General of French West Africa, sent a copy of the article to the Governor of Niger Jean Toby and recommended that the classified files be made available without delay, for they demonstrated France's relentless efforts to end slavery and the slave trade: both the French public opinion and the "British neighbors" could only be impressed.[62]

Ideas and Bodies

Let us return to the false dichotomies of Paul Lovejoy's article and to our initial question: is slavery a function of political structure? In the 1920s Katchiella Abagana appears to have been a "Mobeur" chief whose chiefdom fell in the orbit of the Sultanate of Bornu. Charles Meek, a British anthropologist who worked for the colonial administration as District Officer in Northern Nigeria, wrote that "Katchella" was a title given to a chief of slave status: "In Bornu [. . .] the office of Kachella was nearly always held by a slave."[63] French reports qualified Katchiella Abagana as a "Mobeur," using the French spelling for the "Mobber" of British colonial writings. Olive and Charles Temple, also writing in the early 1920s, noted: "The Mobber, who were probably serfs of the Tubu, whom they followed from Yemen to Komadugu, where they remained, Bosso being their headquarters. Nachtigal writes that they were of mixed Kanembu-Sos, or Kanembu-Bedde stock. They now inhabit the banks of the Yo River and recognize the Shehu of Bornu. They are a Muhammedan people and number some 5000. They fish, breed stock, and make ropes. Their arms are spears, bows, and arrows."[64] Gustav Nachtigal, who had travelled in the region between the late 1860s and early 1870s, had encountered several men who held the Kanuri title "Kachella," which he translated as "chieftain" and saw as equivalent to titles given in various languages spoken in the region: "Kedela" in Daza and "Fougobo" in Kanembu.[65]

Relations between Katchiella Abagana and the Sultan of Bornu fell somewhere between direct political subordination and alliance between hierarchically unequal parties. Abagana ruled upon the people subjected to his authority with a considerable degree of autonomy, but recognized the political supremacy of the Sultan of Bornu. The different language groups scattered around Lake Chad can mostly be characterized as decentralized societies. But they professed allegiance to the Sultan and followed the dictates of Islam: they were partially integrated in a centralized political system. All around them, scattered in a complex patchwork of ethnic identities and languages, lived groups they saw as pagan. Even more decentralized than the groups headed by semi-dependent warlords, they consisted of one or few village settlements that Nicholas David in his detailed study of the Mandara mountains characterizes collectively as *montagnards*, linguistically diverse but drawing from a shared symbolic and cultural reservoir.[66] They were the primary targets of slave raids.

Dichotomies do not do justice to this heterogenous world of integrated semi-autonomous political formations, some of which were centralized while others were not. Slavers and enslaved persons moved across languages and political structures. The forms of violence, coercion, resistance, and

oppression they experienced were issued from a shared regional culture of slavery. In the 1920s and 1930s, slave raiding was a habitual practice for local chiefs. Hamman Yaji, Lamido and District Head of Madagali, located about 500km south of N'Guigmi and 400km south of Bosso, kept a diary between 16 September 1912 and 25 August 1927.[67] Many entries describe his slave raids in the northwestern part of the Mandara Mountains, often mentioning girls and women specifically:

> 6-7-1913: I sent my people to Sina and they captured 30 cattle and 6 slave girls.
> Between 2 and 27-2-1915: I raided Humumzi and captured 4 slave girls and 20 cattle.[68]

Kirk-Greene cites colonial reports describing how Yaji on one occasion "forced the wives of the dead Sukur men to come forward and collect their husbands' heads in a calabash."[69] Hamman Yaji seems to have captured mainly women: in 1913 alone he carried out 14 raids and enslaved 198 persons of whom 129, he specified, were girls. In general, enslavement of women from groups considered enslavable was massive on a regional scale, not a peculiarity of the Katchiella of Bosso. In 1990 and 1991 Godala Kosack collected the testimonies of Mafa elders from the town of Guzda, located north of Mokolo and south-west of Madagali in today's northern Cameroon. The son of a Mafa market dealer interviewed by Kosack stated that his father sold 40 to 60 slaves a week, mostly women and girls.[70] Mafa elders remembered their frequent exposure to slave raids organized by neighboring Muslim groups and warlords like Hamman Yaji. She interviewed descendants of women who had been enslaved and had eventually given birth to children in the societies in which they had been forcibly integrated.[71] Although within Mafa groups the status and condition of captives did not seem to hinder assimilation into free lineages for as long as in surrounding centralized polities, Mafa people were not only fully integrated in regional slaving processes but they also acknowledged differences between freeborn members and members integrated through enslavement, as attested by the recollections of Kosack's interviewees.

The area discussed in this article comprises small decentralized non-Islamic societies (where interior slavery appeared to have been *less* significant but not *in*significant), interspersed between Islamic sultanates and smaller-scale chiefdoms. The latter were headed by Muslim chiefs who acted like warlords and may have been perceived as tributaries or royal slaves by the main political authorities, the Sultans of Sokoto and Borno, but enjoyed considerable political autonomy in the everyday relations with the people subjected to their rule. The sultans of Sokoto and Borno were

the highest-ranking Islamic rulers in the region, followed by Bagirmi (to the east) and what remained of Wandala, studied by Bawuro Barkindo, which by the end of the nineteenth century was under the influence of Borno and Sokoto.[72] A broad range of lineage-based nomadic groups (Tuareg, Fulani, and Tubu) interacted with centralized states through various forms and degrees of allegiance. This political heterogeneity is an ideal terrain for comparing the consequences of centralization for the institution of slavery and the experience of enslavement. But vernacular sources on slavery are exiguous. This is a major obstacle.

The distinction between Slave Societies, Societies with Slaves, and Societies with Slavery is not workable unless one disposes of rich and detailed sources not only for sultanates, emirates, and lamidates, but also for the decentralized societies that were systematically preyed upon by various groups and whose laws and norms were transmitted orally. Sultanates appear to fit better in the category of Slave Society because of the large concentration of enslaved persons in almost all social and political spheres, including on plantations such as those vividly portrayed and analyzed by Mohamed Bashir Salau for Sokoto.[73] But slavery colored every aspect of life in the decentralized societies that interacted with sultanates. In a report of 1920 one British Resident described the northern districts of Madagali as

> the most lawless, ill-governed places I have seen in Nigeria since the early years of the Northern Nigerian Protectorate. Slave dealing and slave raiding are rampant… chiefs of minor importance were given rifles with which they were encouraged to attack the wretched pagans [who are] hiding like frightened monkeys on inaccessible hilltops… of course everyone goes about fully armed: spears, shields, bows and arrows, clubs, etc.[74]

Slaves were sold, bought, inherited and transacted as gifts. They were more exposed to arbitrary violence than free members of society. We lack data to establish with precision what percentage of the population was enslaved, or to quantify the slaves' contribution to the economy, especially in small-scale decentralized societies. But even with the limited data at our disposal, Lovejoy is right: state versus stateless, and Societies with Slaves versus Slave Societies, are fake dichotomies in this context. In the early twentieth century this region displayed a striking variety of rationales of government that were mutually intelligible and tightly integrated. Enslaved persons, at the bottom of these hierarchies, were themselves hierarchically ranked. Some slaves could be chiefs, others were chattels. People knew who was a slave and who was not; how different categories of slaves were valued; and who was enslavable and who was not in the eyes of different types of potential slavers.

A shared repertoire of ideas circulated across diverse political structures. In the early years of colonial occupation, Islamic polities followed Sharia law, and coexisted with non-Muslim groups. Following colonial occupation, European law was superimposed on preexisting legally plural systems. Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century frequent renegotiations of boundaries between French, British, and German colonial empires made it unclear which European law was to be followed and which administration was in charge in many parts of the region discussed in this article. In this complexity, certain ideas cut across the slaving practices of different polities. One such ideas was the religious-ethical taboo against the enslavement of Muslims by Muslims. This idea permeated the whole region and had differential consequences for different groups, increasing the risk of enslavement for purported "pagans," whose emic concepts of slavery in their own languages are poorly understood. Yet people knew what to expect when they had the misfortune to be captured and sold as slaves.

Some ideas were about gender. Cross-societal comparison supports generalizations about the gendered nature of the experience of slavery, and indeed Djehinam Kore's gender influences her treatment in all of the relations that were forced upon her. The particular uses that girls and women could be put to in a patriarchal world where war and politics were primarily managed by men (African and European) made them attractive to male slavers. As David Tambo demonstrated for the Sokoto Sultanate, these uses were reflected in different prices of male and female slaves.[75] Men competed between them to control the labor and sexuality of women. Such control was one of the main determinants of male power. If demand for slaves was legitimized by specific ideologies of slavery, the most important of which was informed by Islamic dictates on slavery, the demand for women—free and enslaved—was legitimized by gender ideologies that justified the sexual division of labor and authority. Ideas about paganism and gender functioned as othering ideologies that legitimated the power of certain people over other; they legitimated certain forms of violence, too.

An established definition of the state from Jean Bodin to Thomas Hobbes, from Max Weber to Giorgio Agamben emphasizes the role of the state as the entity that can lay claim to a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. The focus on the state is misplaced if "state" is seen as centralized by definition. What matters is who can legitimately use violence in the conduct of conduct (to borrow Michel Foucault's definition of governmentality), that is, in actions aimed at making people follow particular norms of conduct. Particular ideas about religion, gender, and race functioned like active ingredients in political ideologies that endorsed certain forms of violence, perpetrated by certain actors. Violence perpetrated by Muslim leaders against

pagans, European alleged abolitionists against African slavers, and men against women could rely on well-established legitimizing rationales. These rationales operated across political structures. With regard to slavery, they defined who could be enslaved by whom, and what forms of conduct had to be followed slaves, slavers, and abolitionists. Ideas influenced experience at the individual level, giving people a sense of entitlement, outrage, resistance, acquiescence, or hope—and informing their choices.

If ideas matter, bodies matter too. Violence, actual or threatened, is experienced differently by someone with a child's body, a male or female body, a lighter or darker body. Bodies influence agency. They silently tell people whether they should defend themselves or are too weak to stand a chance in unequal confrontations. Perpetrators read different bodies differently and act consequently: the gracile bodies of children appeal to would-be kidnappers faced with abolitionist persecution. The very shape—or physicality—of bodies has agency: it makes children easy prey, and thereby induces large-scale child trafficking. Women's bodies are seen as desirable or undesirable, fertile or unfertile, pure or impure. They are seen as instruments for the realization of God's will or man's pleasure, instruments that pious men, powerful rulers, chiefs, and abolitionists should control, protect, possess, reform, punish, or otherwise put to rightful use. Those with the right type of bodies claim they know better. Which body is seen as right or wrong for specific purposes—ruling, civilizing, serving, caring—is a social construction. But whose social construction prevails is aided by violence, the sheer force to impose one's rationales over those of others, and such violence is irrefutably embodied.

In Sokoto, women's value in the slave trade was measured by the size and appearance of their breasts. Their experience of violence was breasted.[76] Perceived age, race, and status gave them specific opportunities and roles that were not interchangeable with those of men of the same age, race, and status. The odyssey of Djehinam Kore is an enigma that the pre-made categories of Slave Society and Society with Slaves do little to help us solve. She was substantially more expensive than most other enslaved women. Who was she? What did she represent in the eyes of all those who tried to buy and sell her? Did her perceived beauty shape her destiny? What part did the shape or color of her breasts play in her life? In order to explain Djehinam's trajectory, and that of others like her, one would have to analyze the interface between the cultural perceptions of her identity (including her physical features) and her embodied experience. The latter influenced her strategies: the pain of her body when beaten or raped; her awareness of the effects of her body on others, for example on her children who needed it to survive, or on her lovers who wanted it and were perhaps prepared to protect it. Rationales about

gendered, religious, and racial identity informed the practices of empires and lineage-based societies. These mechanisms continue to be constitutive of local experience in the region discussed in this article.

The village of Bosso, where Katchiella Abagana was chief, continues to be an epicenter of slaving. In February 2017 the Hollywood actor Orlando Bloom visited Bosso in the region of Diffa of Southern Niger, which due to Boko Haram activities at the time hosted over 240,000 displaced persons and refugees including about 160,000 children. During his visit, he met a girl called Eta:

> I met Eta at her family home in Bosso, Niger, on the border with Nigeria; a bright and gentle girl with all the hopes and dreams of any 12-year-old, but deeply affected by trauma and fear. Eta told me how she was awakened one morning, two years ago, by the sound of gunshots and threats as Boko Haram arrived in her village. Shaking as she spoke, she told me that she really thought she was going to die. When the fighters finally left, Eta fled on foot with her family, leaving their home and belongings and not knowing if they would ever return. The family took refuge in a temporary camp in Diffa, but Eta wasn't able to sleep properly for months because of nightmares where she would see Boko Haram coming after her. Having recently returned to her home village with her father and siblings, Eta is now back at school in 7th grade and dreams of becoming a doctor when she grows up. Eta is one of thousands of children whose education has been stalled because of the ongoing instability in the region.[77]

As Melchisedek Chétima and others have pointed out, in these and nearby regions certain people have not stopped fearing enslavement.[78] People's memory draws a direct line between the slavers of the past and contemporary figures, such as between Hamman Yaji and Aboubakar Shekau.[79] Today, people in Bosso draw comparisons between their circumstances and those of their ancestors. They emphasize not political structure, but forms of violence, religious ideologies, age, and gender as key comparative criteria. Fanta Nona, Fanta Tiougounam, and Fantaram Olle experienced fear, like Eta. Enslaved, they lived on the other side of Eta's story. Their fear of violence was unlikely to vanish and give place to dreams of choosing the life they wished to live.

Conclusion

Ideas and bodies should be at the center of our research on slavery. It is less useful to approach our sources with preconceived macro-historical models in mind than to inquire into the models of the world that shaped the thinking of the embodied subjects of this history, who were themselves exegetes of the worlds and relations they inhabited. Limits of space and sources prevent this

article from developing a comparative semantic analysis that would shed light on similarities and differences in the ideas of slavery of the Sultan of Bornu, Katchiella Abagana, Djehinam Kore, and other regional actors. For most of them, we lack sources that contain unmediated voices, though there is a chance that this shortcoming be overcome as new sources become available. Their perceptions and actions were discussed here as conveyed in colonial sources. They reveal the pervasiveness of slavery and its moral acceptability (when practiced according to Islamic norms) to regional slaveholders who resented colonial interference in their life and power. They reveal the resistance of young enslaved women, who ran away from brutal masters even though chances to be punished or re-enslaved were high, and who turned colonial abolitionism to their own ends and denounced slaveholders when they had the opportunity to do so. They reveal, too, how abolitionist officers felt entitled to torture slavers on the basis of racial essentializations resembling the ones that underpinned local legitimations of slavery. Ideas about slavery, hierarchy, violence, and gender permeated centralized and decentralized societies and created a hybrid culture of slavery where actions and institutions were mutually intelligible to members of different societies. Like ideas, bodies acquire meaning and value contextually. Particular bodies can silently dictate events by their ability or inability to resist or accommodate kidnap, torture, escape, rape, childbirth, and so on. De-singularized, the embodied experiences in this article show how ideas of race, gender, and age shaped slavery and slaving across political structures and time.

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4. Noel Lenski and Catherine Cameron, eds., *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

5. Myriam Cottias, Elisabeth Cunin, and Antonio de Almeida Mendes, eds., *Les Traites et les esclavages : perspectives historiques et contemporaines* (Paris : Karthala 2016 [2010]); Michael Zeuske, *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei. Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen zur Gegenwart* (Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2013), 1–26.

6. "Contextualizing [the] master-slave dyad forces us to abandon the very notion of slavery as an institution," Joseph Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 19.

7. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018 [1982]), 13.

8. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, xv; Paulin Ismard, *La cité et ses esclaves: Institutions, fictions, expériences* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 14–17; Benedetta Rossi, "Beyond the Atlantic Paradigm: Slavery and Abolitionism in the Nigérien Sahel," *Journal of Global Slavery* 5, no. 2 (2020): 238–69.

9. Eltis and Engerman, "Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor in Time and Space," *The Cambridge World History of Slavery, Volume 3 AD 1420–AD 1804*, eds. David Eltis and Stanley Engerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–24, here 3; Robert Steinfeld, *Coercion Contract and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Marcel Van Der Linden, "Dissecting Coerced Labor," in *On Coerced Labour: Work and Compulsion After Chattel Slavery*, eds. Marcel Van Der Linden and Magaly Rodriguez Garcia (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 293–322. A critical review of this approach is in Christian De Vito, Juliane Schiel, and Matthias van Rossum "From Bondage to Precariousness. New Perspectives on Labor and Social History," *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 2 (2020): 1–19.

10. Ismard, "Ecrire l'histoire de l'esclavage."

11. Juliane Schiel, "The Idea for a Global Collaboratory on Grammars of Dependency and First Findings from Medieval Europe," International Workshop of the ELHN "Free and Unfree Labour" Working Group, the Bonn Cluster "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" and the Vienna Research Group "Figurations of Social Inequality" (17 June 2019, University of Vienna); Camille Lefebvre, Language as archive: European linguistics and the social history of the Sahara and Sahel in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (LANGARCHIV), https://langarchiv.hypotheses.org/the-project.

12. I criticize this tendency in: "What is a slave? Reflections on public slavery and social death," forthcoming in a special issue on public slavery in world history, ed. Franco Luciani, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 64, no. 2 (2021).

13. For example, where does the history of slavery in today's Greece fit in this divide? Colonised by the Ottoman empire for 400 years, Greece had no colonies in the age of empire, and yet ancient Greece is often taken as a template for so-called "Western slavery."

14. Gareth Austin, "Reciprocal Comparison and African History: Tackling Conceptual Eurocentrism in the Study of Africa's Economic Past," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 1–28.

15. Harris Memel-Fotê, *L'esclavage dans les sociétés lignagères de la forêt ivorienne (XVII–XX siècle)* (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire: Editions du CERAP, 2007).

16. Cathy Gaca, "Telling the Girls from the Boys and Children: Interpreting *paides* in the Sexual Violence of Populace-Ravaging Ancient Warfare," *Illinois Classical Studies* 35–36 (2010–2011, published 2012): 85–109; "Manhandled and Kicked Around: Reinterpreting the Etymology and Symbolism of andrapoda," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 116 (2011, published 2012): 110–46; "Girls, Women and the Significance of Sexual Violence in Ancient Warfare," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones*, ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 73–88; "The Andrapodizing of War Captives in Greek Historical Memory," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 140 (2010): 117–61.

17. For a detailed analysis of diverse manifestations of only one of these political formations, see Memel-Fotê's monumental study of lineage-based societies of the forest regions of the Ivory Coast, *L'esclavage dans les sociétés lignagères*, 37–38.

18. An exemplary application of this approach in a different field of African history is Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

19. Paul Lovejoy, "Slavery in Societies on the Frontiers of Centralized States in West Africa," in *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective*, eds. Noel Lenski and Catherine Cameron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 220–50, here 221.

20. M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), 79–82.

21. Lovejoy, "Slavery in Societies," 223.

22. Anne Haour and Benedetta Rossi, eds., *Being and Becoming Hausa: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

23. Finn Fuglestad, "A Reconsideration of Hausa History before the Jihad," *Journal of African History* 19 (1978): 319–339. See also Addo Mahamane, "Système politique en pays Hausa: Des institutions animistes aux dynasties musulmanes, ruptures et permanences," unpublished paper presented at the meeting Hausa identity: history and religion at the Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 11 July 2008.

24. "I only learnt what I knew before, that the Hazna make their offerings, which consist of milk and ghaseb, under trees. These Hazna are mostly peasants—little farmers; and like Cain, they offer their deity the fruits of the earth. The Imam said their deity was Eblis, or the Devil (. . .). He informed me also that there are a good number of Hazna in both Zinder and the other towns and villages of the province.

He despaired of their ever becoming Muslims, but added, 'The great men amongst them must become Muslims by order of the Sheikh, whilst the poor people are left to do as they please, and so furnish a constant supply for the home and foreign slave-mart. It is not in the interest of the Sarkee or the foreign merchants that they should become Muslims.'" James Richardson, *Narrative of a Mission to Central Africa: Performed in the Years 1850–1851 under the Orders and at the Expense of Her Majesty's Government* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1970 [1853]), 245.

25. Martin Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies,' *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001), 49–65, here 58.

26. Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era," *Past & Present* 205 (2009): 3–40, here 6. The construction of certain groups as peculiarly enslavable had already been theorized by Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, "Models of the World and Categorial Models: The 'Enslavable Barbarian' as a Mobile Classificatory Label," *Slavery & Abolition* 1–2 (1980): 115–31.

27. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," 49.

28. Ibid, 65.

29. Lovejoy, "Slavery in Societies," 222. The notion of "slave mode of production" has been one of Lovejoy's main analytical concepts. See his early article, Paul Lovejoy, "Indigenous African Slavery," *Historical Reflection/Réflexions historiques* 6/1 (1979): 19–83, and his discussion of this in relation to Finley's notion of slave societies in the classic, Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 9–12. In these earlier publications Lovejoy tended to treat as synonyms the concepts of Slave Society and of a society where a slave mode of production is dominant, that is, where "the structural interaction between enslavement, trade, and domestic employment of slaves was the most important part of a social formation," Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 11. He also highlights that thinking in terms of mode of production does not exclude but encompasses a consideration of social and political relations and ideologies and "the organization of the productive population in terms of its own identity and the ways in which this population is managed." Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 10.

30. Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 6ff.

31. Orlando Patterson, "Slavery: Comparative Aspects," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Volume 22 (2000): 49–53, here 51.

32. Noel Lensky, "Framing the Question: What is a Slave Society?" in *What is a Slave Society?,* eds. Cameron and Lensky, 52–53.

33. Tomlins does not refer to M. I. Finley's definition, but to Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave & Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1946), 117; and Philip D. Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans circa 1600–1780," in *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire,* eds. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, (Chapel Hill, 1991), 156–219.

34. Christopher Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 417, footnote 58.

35. Tomlins, *Law, Labor,* 417.

36. Ugo Nwokeji, "Slavery in Non-Islamic West Africa, 1420–1820," *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* 3, AD 1420–AD 1804, 81–110, here 86.

37. Ismard, "Ecrire l'histoire de l'esclavage, " 28. Conceptually, Ismard bases his comparative reflections on the work of Marcel Detienne, *Comparer l'incomparable* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

38. Lovejoy, "Slavery in Societies," 244.

39. Paul Lovejoy has advocated a focus on the experience of specific individuals in *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016), 238.

40. Christian Seignobos, "Les populations du lac Tchad : un patchwork ethnique complexe et mouvant," in *Atlas du lac Tchad. Passages*, eds. G. Magrin, J. Lemoalle, R. Pourtier, numero spécial 183 (2015), 70–73.

41. For a discussion of Islamic and European nineteenth-century representations of these identities and geographies, see Stephanie Zehnle, "A Geography of Jihad: Jihadist Concepts of Space and Sokoto Warfare (West Africa, ca. 1800–1850)," (PhD diss., University of Kassel, Germany, 2015), 388–414.

42. Capitaine Commandant le Cercle de Gouré to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Niger, 7 Mai 1920, Archives Nationales du Niger (hereafter ANN) 381.1.

43. Ibid.

44. Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Niger to Monsieur le Gouverneur General de l'AOF, 1 Juin 1923, ANN 381.1.

45. Compte Rendu du Lieutenant Chapelle adjoint au Commandant de Cercle de Nguigmi Gilbin au sujet d'une entrevue avec un fonctionnaire britannique, 10 July 1928, ANN381.5.

46. Telegram, Gouverneur Niger to Cercle N'Guigmi, 8 Aout 1928, ANN 381.5.

47. Brévié to Gouv General AOF, nd, ANN 381.5.

48. Text of the denunciation of Malam Ali Djarami Mainarami, 18 September 1928 ANN 381.5.

49. Denunciation of Malam Ali Djarami Mainarami, 18 September 1928 ANN 381.5; see also the statement of Alamai, a griot residing in Bosso: "Those who buy slaves pay a sum to Abagana to obtain his permission; as they pay, they swear on the Qur'an never to say anything [about the transaction]," interrogation of griot Alamai, Bosso, 26 September 1928, ANN 381.5.

50. Capitaine Commandant le Cercle de N'Guigmi to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Niger, 23 September 1928, ANN 381.1.

51. Lieutenant Gilbin Comm de Cercle de Nguigmi to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Niger, 20 October 1928, p. 4, ANN381.5.

52. Text of the denunciation of Malam Ali Djarami Mainarami, 18 September 1928, ANN 381.5.

53. Compte Rendu d'une enquete carried out in Bosso by Lieutenant Chapelle, 25 September 1928, ANN 381.

54. Interrogation of griot Alamai, Bosso, 26 September 1928, ANN 381.5.

55. Aissata Bindou was the mother of Katchiella's wife Tiougoun, Compte Rendu d'une enquete carried out in Bosso by Lieutenant Chapelle, 25 September 1928, ANN 381.

56. Lieutenant Gilbin Comm de Cercle de Nguigmi to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Niger, 20 October 1928, p. 5, ANN381.5.

57. Ibid., 5.

58. Ibid., 5.

59. Judgment no. 7, public audience held at the tribunal of second degree of N'Guigmi, 3 December 1928, ANN381.

60. Affaire de N'Guigmi, Centre d'Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (CAOM), Aix-en-Provence, Microfilms Internes, 11G/47.

61. Gouverneur General de l'AOF à Gouverneur du Niger, 5 Mars 1936, CAOM, Microfilms Internes, 11G/47.

62. Meek, C. K. *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria.* 2 Volumes, London: Humphrey Milford, 1925, Vol. 1, p. 290.

63. O. Temple and C. L. Temple *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria* (London: James Townsend and Sons, 1922), 216–17.

64. Gustave Nachtigal, *Sahara et Soudan, ouvrage traduite de l'allemand avec l'autorisation de l'auteur par Jules Gourdault*, Vol. 1 (Paris : Hachette, 1881), 446.

65. Nicholas David and C. Kramer, *Ethnoarchaeology in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 216–18; Nicholas David, "Patterns of Slaving and Prey-Predator Interfaces in and around the Mandara Mountains," *Africa* 84, no. 3 (2014), 371–97, here 373.

66. The diary's manuscript was found and kept by the European officials who defeated him. It was edited and published by James Vaughan and Anthony Kirk-Greene, eds., *The Diary of Hamman Yaji: Chronicle of a West African Muslim Ruler* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). Madagali was under German control in 1884–1916, under French control in 1916–1922 and under the British as Northern Cameroon in 1922–1960. At independence it went to Nigeria.

67. Cited in Walter Van Beek, "Intensive Slave Raiding in the Colonial Interstice: Hamman Yaji and the Mandara Mountains (North Cameroon and North-Eastern Nigeria)," *Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (2012), 301–23, here 307.

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69. Godula Kosack, "Aus der Zeit der Sklaverei (Nordkamerun): Alte Mafa erzählen," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde,* Vol. 38 (1992): 177–94, here p. 192.

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76. "Boko Haram cannot crush the spirit of children," Orlando Bloom's Article for CNN following his visit to NigerBellaNaija.com. Published on March 3, 2017 by BellaNaija.com, https://www.bellanaija.com/2017/03/boko-haram-cannot-crush-the-spirit-of-children-read-orlando-blooms-article-for-cnn-following-his-visit-to-niger/.

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