

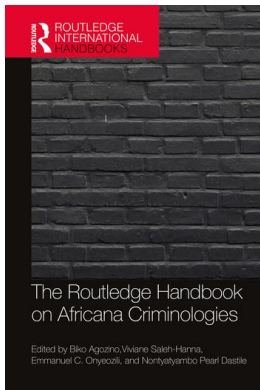
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4

TRANS-SAHARAN HUMAN TRAFFICKING AS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

Patterns, evolution, and implications for
people-centered development in Africa

James Okolie-Osemene

Introduction

Slavery has remained an indispensable aspect of human existence with nostalgic implications for vulnerable groups whose ancestors suffered different forms of enslavement. Trans-Saharan human trafficking manifested in the form of slave trade across the Sahara and beyond, exposing the victims to labor and sexual exploitation. The fact that Trans-Saharan trafficking in persons was a crime against Africans cannot be downplayed, considering how such an act dehumanized the people, exposing them to mockery, slavery, and abuses.

The trans-Saharan slave trade was an economic transaction that existed between the empires in West Africa and Islamic empires in North Africa and the Middle East, despite the hostile terrain that characterizes the Sahara desert (Boahen, 1962; Savage, 1992; Wright, 1996; Seddon, 2000; Kehinde, 2015). Per documentary evidence, the harsh environment did not prevent the slave traders from transporting slaves through the routes that facilitated the transactions. The trade in salt, gold, and slaves offered them the opportunity to interact in a commercial context through the caravan routes that were created. Gold and salt were relevant considering how they benefited the people.

The trans-Saharan slave trade began in the 7th century when Abdallah Ben Said, the king of Islamized Egypt, conquered the Sudan, “the land of infidels,” through jihad and succeeded in imposing on Sudanese King Khalidurat a treaty known as Bakht in 652; this included the compulsory annual supply by the Sudanese king of hundreds of African slaves to the Muslim king of Egypt (Fatunde, 2012). The supply

further exposed the commodities in the form of human beings forced into servitude to the advantage of Egyptians.

Slavery was one of the features of international affairs from the Middle Ages, when different empires and kingdoms engaged in slave raids during and after communal clashes and inter-ethnic wars of conquest, which paved way for looting that included the capturing of human beings, who were regarded as commodities (Wright, 2007; Benham, 2017). This explains why such victorious communities owned human beings, and even in Africa, slavery became an organic part of the traditional society in which people had reasons to sell others to make a living. According to Anene, Ayandele, and Afigbo (1999), people gained ownership of human beings as a result of the need for labor. While some groups purchased slaves, others who did not have the desire to own slaves instead sold their troublesome group members into slavery. During this period, the export and marketing of slaves made them the currency that determined international trade (Fisher and Fisher, 1971, cited in Ganga, 1973). It is on record that the Ghana and Mali empires were beneficiaries of the slave trade across the desert to the extent that Mansa Musa of Mali journeyed to Mecca in 1324 with about 500 slaves for sale (Anene, Ayandele and Afigbo, 1999). One of the most traumatic and degrading consequences of slavery was that some groups in Savanna were generally regarded as the descendants of slaves, especially the sedentary people in Damergu, who usually looked to the Tuaregs for security provisioning (see Baier, 1977). The slave trade became a profit-making endeavor as chiefs in some powerful African tribes went on slave raids, which promoted human suffering (Batten, 1953). However, the transformation of human society from a nomadic one to a system of habitation created the need for people to demand the assistance of slaves.

The services of slaves in this regard were required to aid most of the tasks associated with labor. By this period, the entire Sudan region had become an epicenter of trade. Such labor was needed in the context of agriculture, particularly food production, from bush clearing to the tilling of the land, cultivation, weeding, and harvesting.

All these could be done by just a few individuals. It is noteworthy that war captives did not have the option of deciding their fate as they were automatically made slaves by their captors, who forced them to assist in various tasks they needed to execute. As noted by Anene, Ayandele, and Afigbo (1999), Nwugo (2002:15) also pointed out that

Although some groups like the “pagans” in Northern Nigeria and others in Central Africa did not own slaves because their organization remained simple, the idea of slavery were familiar to them. They did not hesitate to sell as slaves members of their group suspected of evil such as witchcraft.

To this end, paganism was a practice highly revered by some people in the country. The sale of notorious criminals into slavery showed that those engaging in antisocial behaviors were not safe in traditional African societies, and such action was seen as a punishment mechanism, although it was inhuman to subject people to such treatment.

Prior to the advent of the Arab slave trade in Africa, several African communities operated a system in which slaves became servants who generated wealth and prestige.

Notable were communities in Ganda of Uganda, Ethiopia and Nigerian ethnic groups like Ijaw, Efik, Kalabari, and Itsekiri, among others. Before the trans-Saharan slave trade, it is remarkable that notable forms of slavery existed in traditional African society, some of which included the cult slavery, popularly called the Osu system, and the pawn system, which was referred to as Iwofa by the Yoruba people. While individuals under the pawn regime were bonded, having no freedom in their master's or creditor's home as long as the debt their family owed remained unpaid, the system had social control value as it was regulated by customary laws, with the possibility of the individuals concerned being freed later when the creditor was satisfied with their settlement (Anene, Ayandele and Afigbo, 1999). Also, this was more of a servitude relationship than the cult slavery that exposed the slaves to public mockery/suspicion as such people were generally avoided as a result of their dedication to god(s) as practiced in some Igbo communities. Consequently, the cult slave system was more spiritual than all other forms of slavery. Women were not left out in the practice of slavery within Yorubaland and the Niger Delta, where wealthy women married wives for different reasons, including the labor of transporting their goods to markets, and and the wives bore children, for the wealthy women-husbands who retained the right over their children (Anene, Ayandele and Afigbo, 1999).

The trading companies that existed as houses were used to purchase slaves, with the aim of increasing trading output, as recorded among Efik, Ibibio, and Bonny groups. From the indigenous slaveholding, Africans graduated to international trade in humans as people became commodities exported across the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Indian Ocean, thereby portraying the Black race as direct victims of assault in the form of the internationalization of the slaveholding business, which showed how races other than Africans needed labor for development projects. Africans were trafficked across the Atlantic to the detriment of the continent, which lost laborers to the slaveholding colonies. The Portuguese and others transported many slaves in hundreds of ships in dehumanizing ways, with economic and social factors motivating slaveholding and enslavement of Africans who were aggressively dehumanized by the tactics of the slaveholders at a time when the trade caused a security threat in African communities. On the other hand, the trans-Saharan slave trade created traffic in slaves from the Sudanic belt across the Sahara Desert to North Africa and the Mediterranean communities (Wright, 2007). Such traffic was caused by the transport of slaves across the Sahara, which had several routes that aided the business.

Slaves are generally believed to be in a stranded situation in which they hardly have the freedom to decide what to do for themselves and control their destinies. Their predicament is better explained within the context of coerced servitude, which is sustained by deprivation and the lack of the right to self-actualization to the extent that intrapersonal peace eludes them on a daily basis the moment they have been sold into slavery.

With primary and secondary sources, this qualitative study examines the crimes against humanity associated with the trans-Saharan slave trade, with a focus on the patterns, evolution, and implications for people-centered development in Africa. The chapter maps the principal regions of the slave trade in Africa and responds to the following questions: Why is trans-Sahara trafficking in persons categorized as a

crime against humanity? What were the routes that facilitated the trade? How did the slaveholders transact the business of slavery across the Sahara? How did the tactics of slaveholders dehumanize the victims to the extent that they created security threats in African communities?

Theoretical consideration

When we talk about trafficking, it means the exploitation of people by syndicates with the aim of generating easy profit (Roelofse, 2013). Human trafficking refers to the illegal and immoral buying and selling of human beings as commodities by merchants or traders, with the intention of meeting the demands for commercial sexual slavery or forced labor in different parts of the world (Farhana and Easin, 2015). This chapter views the objectification theory as relevant in explaining the experiences of slaves and the entire trade in humans across the Sahara. Trafficking in persons is traceable to the early civilizations since the antiquities, as is the advent of slavery and the slave trade (Pourmokhtari, 2015). The disturbances witnessed by crisis-ridden states in the Central and Western Sudan were occasioned by institutionalized slavery and the slave trade, which made raids and incursions into territories a reality (Starratt, 1981; Anene, Ayandele and Afigbo, 1999). It then became an established socio-economic tradition that favored those engaging in the trade.

The objectification theory propounded by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) explains that when women are sexually objectified, they are treated as objects to be valued for their use by others, especially in a situation in which sexual desire makes them single out and separate a woman's body or body parts from her as a person and regard her as a physical object for sexual satisfaction (Szymanski, 2011:7–8; Bartky, 1990; Civile, Rajagobal, and Obhi, 2016; Gerassi, 2015; Mohamed, 2008). It was documented that “most slaves driven across the Sahara in the nineteenth century were women and girls destined for domestic and/or sexual services” (Wright, 1992:181). During the eras when slavery was the main enterprise, thousands of human beings from Sudanic Africa were turned into commodities and transported to North Africa (Becker, 2002). The foregoing points to the fact that slaves, both males and females, were sold because of their economic or sexual value and ability to satisfy the demands of their buyers. By implication, they were commodities purchased for the object-centered identity that manifested in their service delivery roles in the areas of labor and sexual satisfaction, which became exploitative without slaves having any right to complain. In essence, the objectification and commodification of human bodies and strength motivated the trade.

Human commodities, routes, risks, and fatalities during the trans-Saharan slave trade

Apart from the features of central Sahara being farmers, caravanners, and herders involved and interacting in a variety of socio-economic exchanges that have developed from the first millennium BC to the present day, the Sahara is not only a large desert with an arid climate but also an enclave with a rich heritage, as shown by the

existing remains: namely, forts, monuments, graves, and settlements that have not only enriched archaeological investigations but also continue to attract scholars in the field (Biagetti, Kaci, and di Lernia, 2015). It is remarkable that one notable aspect of the socio-economic exchanges was the slave trade that brought different groups in contact with one another, leaving the victims at the receiving end of the interaction.

One of the most significant effects of the trans-Saharan trade was the preference of the trade in human beings across the Sahara, usually facilitated by a caravan made up of Arab traders, slaves, and other material goods. The criminality associated with the trans-Saharan slave trade is found in the participation of individuals (slave merchants and raiders/sellers) who made every move to engage in and sustain the trade in human commodity, with the aim of profiting from the illicit business by opening the class of “enslavable people” (Rose, 2003). Consequently, enslavement of people became the order of the day as profit making became the motivation that subjected the victims to the inhuman treatment they experienced across the desert and their destinations during the trade.

The prevalence of slave trading showed that, along with material things, human beings can also be commodified and become a source of revenue generation when sold and exchanged for legal tender. This was also accentuated by the money economy that greeted the decline of the barter system in the past. Slaves became the most prioritized article of trade due to high volume and the economic value associated with the trade as the returns to the people of the Sudan motivated them to sell slaves to service the economies of North Africa, the Levant, and the Ottoman empire (Ayandele, 1999). Slave trade dominated the previously known industrial towns where busy commercial activities, such as textiles, skin, and leather, among others, were the order of the day. The human rights abuse of slaves also characterized the trans-Saharan slave trade as many of them became victims of trade that valued human commodity more than goods like salt and ivory. The death of the slaves usually occurred in transit and at settlement camps. It was documented that an average of 500 slaves per year died in transit. Black slaves were traded for North African horses at the rate of 14 to 20 slaves per horse through the 19th century, with the volume of trade being an average of 5,000 slaves a year while those who were sold in transit and the ones who died while being transported were not accounted for (Wright, 2007).

There was high political insecurity between Bornu and Murzuk, to the extent that in 1849, over 1,600 fatalities were recorded during an attack on a caravan while 795 slaves lost their lives in a caravan of 1,770 in 1850 (Boahen, 1964; Lovejoy, 1984). These were just the few recorded cases of violence against slaves who were the main commodities of the trade across the Sahara.

Table 4.1 shows that Tripoli was a major market during the trade. Bovill (1968) noted that “of an estimated 10,000 slaves being traded annually across the Sahara until the mid-nineteenth century, around half entered the Regency of Tripoli (with about 2,500 going to Morocco and the rest to Algeria and Tunisia)” (cited in Seddon, 2000:212).

From Table 4.1, it is apparent that females were highly sought after by buyers, to the extent that pretty females even had more economic value than and were priced above others like young males and elderly males. It meant that beauty was a factor

Table 4.1 Prices for slaves in the 19th-century trans-Saharan trade

<i>S/No</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Sex</i>
1	1819	Tripoli	\$80–150	Female
2	1823	Tripoli	\$80–90	Female
3	1825	Tripoli	\$70	Average slave
4	1845	Tripoli	\$70–80	Female
5	1845	Tripoli	\$50	Average slave
6	1850	Tripoli	\$100	Female
7	1850	Tripoli	\$60–65	Male
8	1865–6	Tripoli	\$70–90	Young male
9	1865–6	Tripoli	\$120	Pretty female
10	1879	Tripoli	\$105–130	Pretty female

Source: Lovejoy (1984)

in the market value of the slaves transported through Tripoli. The table also reveals that pretty females were priced up to \$130 in 1879 and \$120 between 1865 and 1866. This explains the objectification aspect of the slave trade as discussed earlier in the theoretical consideration. The situation was no different in slave markets in Morocco, where females were in high demand. Buyers in Marrakesh, Fes, and other cities preferred Hausa girls due to their neat/presentable appearance and cheerfulness (Seddon, 2000). These girls were favored because of their sexual satisfaction value and domestic servitude roles.

In addition, the British vice consul in Benghazi, T.H. Gilbert, estimated in 1847 that “three quarters of the slaves in any caravan were young females who were slaves either born in Wadai or kidnapped from Bornu, with those originating from Bornu being more emotionally stable than their counterparts from Wadai” (Wright, 1992:181). The crimes against humanity associated with the kidnapping of people for slavery are better imagined than experienced, considering how kidnapped people usually lose their right to freedom of movement the moment they are attacked and forced to cooperate and threatened by death at different points.

It is noteworthy that the volume of supply at different times determined the prices of slaves. For instance, the French occupation contributed to the decline in the supply of slaves from Wadai to the extent that a girl valued at £5 sterling at Kufra in 1916 was sold for between £30 and £40 in 1923 and £15 sterling at the weekly slave market on Thursdays in 1930, when Italians occupied the area (Seddon, 2000). The price largely depended on the bargaining between seller and buyer.

The total number of slaves transported annually has always been controversial considering the numerous sources, but the fact that cannot be disputed is that thousands of slaves were sold every year (Boahen, 1962; Hallett, 1964; Starratt, 1981). According to Bovill (1968), in the mid-19th century, slaves provided about half the total value of all items traded across the Sahara, with the number exported annually to the Maghreb amounting to around 10,000 (cited in Seddon, 2000). Through the

Table 4.2 Estimates of the number of humans trafficked during slavery

S/No	Route	Countries	Estimated quantity of commodities per year/scale of the trade
1	Darfur-Sennar-Asiut in Upper Egypt	Sudan, Egypt	5,000
2	Wadai-Kufra-Benghazi	Chad, Libya	Average yearly trade of 1,000 slaves through Benghazi in the early 19th century, but the slave traffic increased to an average of 2,000 and 2,400 slaves per year.
3	Tripoli-Kano-Katsina route	Libya-Nigeria	1,000 slaves per year in the 1850s
4	Timbuktu-Ghadames route	Mali-Libya	Thousands (not stated)
5	Sijilmasa-Walatah-Timbuktu route	Morocco-Mauritania-Mali	Thousands (not stated)

Sources: Baier (1977), Wright (1992), Seddon (2000)

existing caravan routes, many slaves were transported for months before arriving their destinations. These caravans had to travel up to 16 miles daily, depending on the volume of commodities carried, on journeys that lasted up to 90 days, depending on the destination; weather, winds, sand dust, and the Sahara winter with temperatures of about 2^o in some cases determined the speed of travelers (Ayandele, 1999).

Table 4.2 presents the routes that facilitated the export of slaves from various locations to North Africa.

Miege noted how the slave trade in Morocco reached its zenith between 1840 and 1855, at a time when up to 3,500 to 4,000 slaves arrived annually (Seddon, 2000:211). This trans-Saharan slave trade, which was simply the human trafficking across the Sahara, fed the Mediterranean slaving voyages by supplying slaves to the Near East. Most of these slaves were destined for different parts of North Africa and the Middle East. As noted by Wright (1996), Mediterranean slaving voyages coincided with the advent of the great trans-Saharan caravans bringing slaves and African tropical produce to markets in North Africa.

Notable socio-economic interaction between Africa and the peoples of Asia and the Middle East was characterized by trade across the Sahara, where gold and slaves were transported by ships of the desert in the form of camels, enabling them to exchange the commodities for salt, umbrellas, etc., which were conspicuously lacking in the area. This barter system of exchange was threatened from the 16th to the 18th centuries, which led to decline of the trade. Slaves had security value as they were needed to provide security for the potentates in the Ottoman world of North Africa and the Middle East, where they also served in other roles, working as soldiers and couriers. Muslim slavery was one of the attributes of the Islamic world, where some slaves were made to become soldiers for the support of the aristocratic class who

lacked popularity within their domains, consequently sighting slaves on horses was not enviable due to the slave-oriented status (Miller, 1992).

The existence of inter-regional trade between North Africa and the people of the Sudan in the Sahara Desert since the antiquities laid the foundation for the trans-Saharan slave trade. This inter-regional trade, which was believed to have commenced in the second century AD, already had an established market. It is noteworthy that Christopher Fyfe traced the origin of trans-Saharan trade back thousands of years; there was a small volume of trade until the advent of the camel in the fourth century AD. This led to a rapid increase in the number of commodities traded by the people as camels became a means of transport that alleviated suffering witnessed earlier when moving goods from one place to another.

The existence of several trade routes aided the free flow of exchange between the slaveholders and the people of Africa. While slaveholders committed the crime against humanity that targeted the slaves, they were more interested in how to sustain the illicit business of slavery to the detriment of the vulnerable persons. The attractive nature of the lucrative business and feeding the routes with adequate slaves for the trade were their focus. Also, the control of the salt mines by the Berber merchants for several centuries enabled them to import the following commodities to the Sudan: salt, copper, vessels, glass beads, cloth, brocades, dried figs, cowrie shells, books, horses, firearms, and armor (Anene, Ayandele and Afigbo, 1999). The significance of salt made them import this into the Sudan, where slaves were readily available for purchase in exchange for the aforementioned commodities.

As the Berber merchants dominated the control of this trade for centuries, it became more difficult for any other group to take over. Their ability to leverage the trading strategies was unparalleled. Trading of slaves and gold for salt became common. Criminality manifested in crime patterns that characterized the capture of slaves through wars and raids, which targeted those who were vulnerable. The slave trade flourished side by side with the sale of high-precision Italian and French rifles. The economic value of slaves manifested even in Wadai, where slaves were not only trained to use guns, but also used to acquire guns, to the extent that by 1907, one slave from Wadai was exchanged for an 1874 model French effective rifle loaded with 40 cartridges (Wright, 1992). An increase in demand generally resulted in a decrease in supply, and the situation created more risk.

During a period when the smuggling of arms and the sale of slaves were entrenched attributes of the trade across the Wadai-Kufra-Benghazi route, warriors were desirous of having rifles as a symbol of their manhood while most Sudanic rulers wanted an arsenal of them as a means of displaying and commanding political authority in times of need during slave raids, which boosted their revenues at a time when the route was notorious for the smuggling of girls and boys (Wright, 1992; Seddon, 2000). The display of manhood through gun-ownership by warriors increases security risks in the society because those without rifles were perceived as weaklings and thus defenseless. Groups that had the advantage of capturing more slaves through raids were better positioned in the markets and therefore more prosperous than those who could not overcome the limitations of the trade. Consequently, every successful slave raid meant danger for the invaded communities, where families lost some of their members and

able-bodied youths. This also depopulated communities and further exposed them to the danger of future raids, considering the impossibility of resistance.

The security provisioning roles of the Tuaregs rather facilitated and sustained the trade, which further abused the Africans who were trafficked across the routes. Notably, northern termini included El Jadida, Fez, and Marrakesh in Morocco; Constantine in Algeria; Tunis in Tunisia; and Tripoli in Libya. This route facilitated easy transport of slaves from Africa to Asia. The terminus that was close to the people of Sudan was the southern terminus, which included Ancient Ghana; Mali; Jenne; Gao in the Western Sudan; and Kano, Katsina, and Kukawa in Central Sudan, as well as established linkages with other parts of Northeastern Africa, such as Cairo and Assiout. Apart from the main Saharan trade routes, there were interconnected trade routes and also, later, a trade route from Wadai to Kufra and Benghazi (Harich et al., 2010). All these portrayed the expansion of the trade across the region to the detriment of the vulnerable groups.

The superiority of Tuaregs over their employers manifested in their mastery of the desert region, which positioned them as caravan guides, facilitating the mobility of slaves and merchants with their skilled work as pastoralists who lived a nomadic life for ages. This does not mean that there were no Tuaregs involved in the trade as merchants and slave hunters. According to Starratt (1981:108),

[S]ome Tuareg hunted slaves in the Sudan, others raided them from passing caravans and even settled communities of Arab, Tebu or enemy Tuareg tribes. Tuareg bella and ascetics were active slave merchants, while the nobles contracted to guide slave caravans.

As the control of the slaves was the responsibility of the owners, Tuareg guides were concerned with the itinerary management, especially deciding on the distance and speed of daily travel and the choice of pasturage, as well as the choice of campsites, considering their knowledge of the entire route (Diolé, 1956, cited in Starratt, 1981; McDougall, 1992). The appearance of Tuareg guides and their activities can be described as negative peace, considering their security provisioning role for the slave owners within such a harsh desert region, where many slaves only endured the threat of sandstorms and struggled to get to their destinations as planned by the merchants.

The bodily harm and abandonment suffered by the slaves characterized the crimes against humanity during the era. For instance, Anene, Ayandele, and Afigbo (1999) chronicled how slave raiders – mostly Arab merchants – used guns to launch attacks against villages, which were usually on the outskirts and had little capacity to defend themselves against invading forces. Taking such villages unawares was disastrous to them as their women, young men, and children were captured after every attack, becoming slaves at the end. The crime against humanity manifested in their enslavement as they carried heavy articles of trade and were threatened by the scarcity of water. Unfortunately for some of the slaves, the merchants often left them to perish in transit on the surface of the ground without any form of burial.

Scholarly evidence documented that while riding on camels assisted caravan guides and slave owners to move towards the northern terminus, the hot weather in the

desert was not conducive for long journeys as slaves automatically became the victims of inadequate water while in transit, trekking for over 18 hours daily on journeys of up to 2,000 miles for over six months, to the extent that they had to manage crawling or die after developing sores on their feet or losing body weight (Lyon, 1966; Richardson, 1848, cited in Starratt, 1981; Wright, 1996). Despite the malnourishment they suffered, they were treated like animals during the forced mobility to unknown lands. Poor food provision for the slaves largely contributed to their suffering as they starved, being fed with herbage and dates (date palm) instead of the staples they were used to, such as meat, grain, vegetables, and other classes of food known for high nutritious value (Richardson, 1848, cited in Starratt, 1981). The life-threatening condition of slaves was identified by Batten (1953:88):

Heavily loaded, forced to march from sunrise to sunset, often without food, water, or a midday rest, the weaker slaves sometimes had not enough strength to go on. In such cases they were beaten, and if they still failed to get up they were killed or left in the bush to die.

The distant walk and their being tied to one another were crimes against humanity and created more threatening situations for the slaves.

The relevance of timing to the safety of and successful caravans trips cannot be downplayed. This is because several archival and secondary sources have presented some scenarios that highlighted the risk of embarking on voyages across the Sahara at the wrong time, when weather was not conducive to human sustainability and thus contributed to fatalities recorded by the slave merchants. One wonders whether the caravan organizers lacked adequate knowledge of the summer and winter seasons and the life-threatening consequences of such trips or if they simply chose to take the risk. For instance, Wright (1996:49) presented two frightening scenarios on the human cost of the trade that are noteworthy: traveling in the high Saharan summer caused all 1,600 slaves in a caravan that embarked on a journey from Lake Chad in August 1849 to perish on their way to the coast when a well dried up; also, poor dressing of slaves throughout caravan crossings in the desert during winter risked their lives in the extreme cold that resulted from winter nights, to the extent that a caravan that crossed through the Libyan desert from Wadai to Benghazi when the season was cold lost 400 out of 1,600 slaves and over 2,000 camels in early days of spring 1850. This is to say that the uncovered body of a slave was prey to the winter. The aforementioned scenarios can be attributed to poor calculations by the caravan leaders.

Before the 1930s, poor security governance by then-French colonial administrators around remote areas of the desert emboldened the nomadic groups in southeastern Morocco to intensify their slave raids, and this coincided with the problem of child theft by traders en route, which eventually became an attribute of the caravan trade (Becker, 2002). Although the advent of colonialism led to the decline of slave traffic, the weakness of the antislavery policy of the colonial administrators occasioned by their reluctance to rupture the sociopolitical status quo in the remoter desert regions, which already had indirect rules in place (Seddon, 2000). This emboldened

them as they were not receptive to colonial policies, which were viewed as anti-people policies that undermined the economic survival of communities.

In terms of impact, when compared with the slavery in traditional African society, that of trans-Saharan trade was more exploitative than that of traditional African society, which can simply be described as more humane, having some level of consideration for human dignity and even allowing the so-called slaves to enjoy some respect and preserve their identity, having the opportunity to own property. For instance, in Kanem and other parts of Central Sudan, slaves had entertainment value and were sometimes given the opportunity to practice various trades – namely, weaving, house building, shoemaking, ironwork and selling firewood – while their masters received the proceeds after sales (Bovill, 1966; Mahadi, 1992). The slave trade across the Sahara was characterized by the mobility of the slaves from their places of origin to distant, unknown territories where they had no knowledge of the people's culture and religion but were forced to acculturate.

Cult slaves and pawns were not subjected to inhuman treatment like those sold and purchased by the Arab slave merchants. The dehumanization of Africans was worsened by the tactics of both the slave raiders and the buyers who exported the slaves to North Africa and Southwest Asia, where there was a high demand for household slaves. This domestic demand became a major driver of the trans-Saharan slave trade. Commodification of the people became more threatening as the Berber merchants invested huge amounts in organizing the caravans that made use of trade routes.

Slaves transported across the Sahara were exposed to harsh and inhuman conditions due to the risks and difficulty associated with mobility in the desert, which further increased the suffering of the slaves. The harshness of the merchants towards slaves and the environment of the business demonstrated the weakness of emotional intelligence on the part of slaveholders, who sought to undermine the human dignity of victims throughout the period of the trade.

The suppression of slaves spanned their places of origin to areas they were transported and eventually put to work either in homes or on farms (fetching water from wells, getting firewood, taking care of herds) or engaging in battle for the groups that purchased them (Miller, 1992; Becker, 2002). Another issue was the nature of the places that enslaved people passed through, which also contributed to the misery they experienced. What this meant was that during the period of enslavement, the tasks not found honorable enough to be done by free people, including children of the privileged individuals, were largely executed by the slaves.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nature of trans-Saharan slave trade, which made some societies in Africa have slaves as one of their existing social groups. As victims of most forms of slavery in history of humanity – the indigenous, trans-Atlantic, and trans-Saharan slave trades – Africans were the victims of the so-called international trade that promoted transnational atrocities that targeted the vulnerable race to the extent that the continent remains on the receiving end to date. Since the institution of slavery declined from the beginning of 20th century, its existence in different parts

of contemporary Africa is not as pronounced as it was in the past. For the slave traders to overcome the challenges of their times as far as mobility was concerned showed their doggedness in making profits from the trade.

The fact that security provision and the nature of climate across the Sahara determined the volume of trade showed how the suppliers and enslavers sought to advance their selfish interests to the detriment of the slaves. Slavery was not only punishment of the vulnerable, but also made the entire Black race appear cheap. The memory of slavery cannot just be wiped out in contemporary society, where such dehumanization has only been transformed rather than abolished.

The human trafficking in the trans-Saharan slave trade era showed how slaveholders and their caravan-guiding counterparts were notorious for searching and utilizing trade-friendly and safer routes to reduce the risk and fatalities usually associated with such long-distance enterprises, which had premium to the advantage of the buyers and sellers, leaving the slaves on the losing side of the transactions. The high value in the trade only motivated more raids and continuous caravan trips up north despite the weather and security risks across the Sahara.

The role of camels in facilitating the trans-Saharan trade was significant. Religion also played significant role in the expansion of the trade as Islam became a dominant religious movement within the region, which had different ethnic groups and other indigenous practices. The need to facilitate domestic work and agriculture also sustained the trade in North Africa even after the colonial administrators arrived in Africa.

The welfare of the slaves in terms of health was not the concern of the caravan leaders, who prioritized the arrival of the caravans to the destination markets rather than the survival of their human commodities during winter and summer. The trade persisted as long as it did due to the motivations from within and outside the vulnerable communities to the extent that attempts to resist the enslavement of people did not prevent the business. Despite the intergroup relations facilitated by the slave trade, it was highly exploitative as far as the rightness or wrongness of human conduct is concerned, and it showed a master-servant relationship to the disadvantage of the slaves and the communities invaded. The trans-Saharan slave trade, the trafficking of Africans, undermined people-centered development across Africa, and this affected the continent since most of the slaves would have contributed to the development of their communities. This chapter argues that human trafficking across the Sahara did not just affect Africa in terms of depopulation but also relegated Africans to the lowest part of global economy as they used the medium to assist other parts of the world in developing their societies, leaving Africa psychologically stranded.

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