

The Veiled Genocide: A forgotten Historic Tragedy

By Bassam Michael Madany

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In 2008, Editions Gallimardⁱ, published *Le Génocide Voilé*. The author, Tidiane N’Diaye, is a Senegalese anthropologist and economist, living in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The book was introduced with this summary:

« Les Arabes ont razzie l’Afrique subsaharienne pendant treize siècles sans interruption. La plupart des millions d’hommes qu’ils ont déportés ont disparu du fait des traitements inhumains. Cette douloureuse page de l’histoire des peuples noirs n’est apparemment pas définitivement tournée. La traite négrière a commencé lorsque l’émir et général arabe Abdallah ben Saïd a imposé aux Soudanais un *bakht* (accord), conclu en 652, les obligeant à livrer annuellement des centaines d’esclaves. La majorité de ces hommes était prélevée sur les populations du Darfour. Et ce fut le point de départ d’une énorme ponction humaine qui devait s’arrêter officiellement au début du XXe siècle. »

The following is my translation of the summary:

“The Arabs have raided sub-Saharan Africa for thirteen centuries without interruption. Most of the men they deported have disappeared, due to their inhuman treatments. This painful page of the history of Black people does not seem to have been completely ended. The beginning of this treatment of the Blacks began when the Arab Emir and general Abdallah ben Saïd, imposed upon the Sudanese a “*Bakht*” (an agreement) in 652, forcing them to furnish hundreds of slaves annually. Most of them were men who were taken from the people of Darfur. That became the point of departure for an enormous human operation that continued officially until early in the 20th century.”

To the best of my knowledge, this book is only available in French. Interest in the subject is quite high in the Francophone world.

Philippe Triay, a French writer, sent questions about this subject to Mr. Tidiane N’Diaye, who graciously answered them. They were posted on 30 April 2015, under the following title
« L’autre esclavage : un aperçu de la traite arabo-musulmane »

“The Other Slavery : An Overview of the Arab-Muslim Slave-Trade.”

<https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/2014/04/29/l-autre-esclavage-un-aperçu-de-la-traite-arabo-musulmane-147531.html>

The following are excerpts from Tidiane N’Diaye’s responses:

“To date, the most analyzed and documented forms of slavery and the slave-trade, have been the Trans-Atlantic ones. Several essays, novels, and movies have dealt with the subject, allowing the public to learn about this tragic history.

“However, Europe did not have a monopoly on the slave-trade. There were others, like the East African and trans-Saharan trades organized by the Arabs. Those were violent and devastating for Africans and their descendants, as were the Trans-Atlantic ones, that were supported by Islam and Christianity, for a long time.

“My main concern is with the East African and Trans-Saharan trades. The reason for calling my book, “*The Veiled Genocide*,” is due to the massive castration of the African captives during the Arab-Muslim slave-trade.

“While slavery has been known throughout history among all nations, and on all continents, what is less known is that the African slave-trade was inaugurated by the Arab-Muslims; it lasted around thirteen centuries without interruption. It was accompanied by a generalized castration of incalculable numbers of Black captives. Its impact was greater than the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade. The saddest thing about this historic tragedy is that most of the deported people were deprived of having any descendants, due to the policy adopted by the Arabs.

“The Trans-Atlantic slave-trade lasted for four hundred years. Despite its monstrosity, and the humiliations that befell the captives, a slave had an inherent monetary value. His master wanted him to be productive in the long term. Thus, the goal was not the extermination of a people. Furthermore, the Arab-Muslim trade went on for thirteen centuries. Most of the men they had deported have disappeared from history. From the moment Africa had become the main source for the provision of slaves, in the collective Arab consciousness a Black person became also a symbol, or a synonym, of slavery.

“In the Arab world, the notion of the basic inferiority of Black people took deep root, which explains the acceptance of the ill-treatment of Black captives, and the means used to deny them any descendants. The result is that in our day they have almost disappeared in Turkey, Yemen, and Iraq; and very few survivors can be found in North Africa and Saudi Arabia.

“To learn about the heavy toll of that slave-trade, I compared the archives of these countries with the testimonies of explorers like Cameron, Stanley, Dr. Livingstone, and Mgrs. Lavigerie. I read as well, the horrific descriptions of the Arab slave-traders at the castration centers. I concluded that between 70% to 80% of the slaves perished. Combining the Trans-Saharan and East African trades, we arrive at a total of 17 million who were castrated. Some of them died or were brought alive to the Arab world and beyond.

The Arab-Muslim slave-trade was a *veritable genocide of Black people*. By way of comparison, around 70 million African descendants of the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade now live in the Americas; mainly in the United States, Brazil, and the Caribbean islands; while only a tiny minority of Africans have survived in the Arab-Muslim lands.

“While there are no degrees in the classification of horrors, or a monopoly of cruelties perpetrated on human beings, yet the Arab-Muslim slave-trade was far more devastating for Black Africa than the Trans-Atlantic trade.

“It is unfortunate that the Arab-Muslim slave-trade is little known or studied. It is puzzling that many would like the subject to be covered-up under a veil of forgetfulness for religious or ideological solidarity. It’s as if a virtual pact had been concluded between the victims’ descendants and their tormentors, leading to this denial. This silence, or the underestimation of the extent of the Arab slave-trade, results in a unique attention being focused on the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade.

“Furthermore, Arab-Muslim intellectuals attempt to erase the very memory of this infamy, as if it had never happened! They fail to consider critically their own history and to debate such issues with their compatriots. African-Americans who convert to Islam seem to be oblivious of the Arab-Muslim slave-trade; as if any mention of this subject is an attempt to minimize the evils of the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade!

“Thus, a veil of silence has for a long time covered-up a dark page of our common history, as we also observe this strange amnesia on the part of Black elites. They are wrong to ignore the memory of this genocide. Equally, it’s unscientific, when they concentrate their attention, on the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade. By writing my book, I lift the veil over this dark page of our history. My book is a memorial for this martyrdom of Black people; their descendants must no longer remain hypocritically selective, focusing exclusively on Western crimes”

Analysis

While the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade has received proper attention in the West, the East-African and Trans-Saharan slave-trades conducted by Arab-Muslims over a long period of time, have been ignored. The West African scholar Tidiane N’Diaye, seeks to remedy that neglect, by publishing the results of his research. His conclusion: this slave-trade was *a genocide*; it has remained relatively unknown he entitled the book, “*The Veiled Genocide.*”

Comments

It was back in 2008, that Tidiane N’Diaye’s book was published in Paris, France. Ten years later, the book is available in French only! In a sense, the veil has been lifted only in the Francophone world! Thanks to the interest and labors of West African scholars in Francophone Africa the subject has been frequently discussed at international conferences and taught at universities in West Africa and in France. I have posted links to these events that have been archived on YouTube. The proceedings and discussions are in French.

As I reflect on this matter, I wonder whether the reticence to publish an English translation was to avoid promoting a negative view of the Arab-Muslim history. Such a theory might have been plausible, had the author and speakers been Westerners. In fact, all were Africans such as Tidiane N’Diaye, Salah Trabelsi, Muhammad Ennaji, Ibrahim Thiabe. They presented well-researched lectures, in impeccable French; a testimony to the maturity achieved by Francophone Africans, since the end of French colonialism, in the early 1950s.

Having listened to the presentations several times, I was impressed by the passion and sincerity of the African scholars. Their goal was to give a truthful narrative of one of the most shocking

events in African history. Their professional standing coupled with the zeal to unveil a historic tragedy, could be felt in the delivery of their papers.

For me personally, to publish this information is a sacred duty. Having grown up in the Levant as an Eastern Christian, whose ancestors lived as *Dhimmi*s under Islamic colonialism for centuries I am happy to see the publication of this book and hope many people will read it . The humiliations and deprivations inflicted on my forefathers, pale into insignificance when compared with the sufferings of Black Africans! The least I can do for the memory of East-African and Trans-Saharan captives, is to share this information, gleaned from French-language presentations, of trustworthy, honorable, and brave African scholars!

Postscript

The following interview on YouTube is with Tidiane N'Diaye (dated 17 January 2015) where the author refers to the main points of his book. The audio is in French and lasts 9 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbn2bAqMIZQ>

Tidiane N'Diaye, Salah Trabelsi, Muhammad Ennaji, Ibrahim Thioub, discuss the

Arab-Slave Trade. The audio is in French and lasts 15 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DaXgrPgsNY>

Professor Salah Trabelsi, of the University of Lyons, France, opens a conference on Arab-Muslim slave-trade. The audio is in French and lasts one hour.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qcqp5m_Ztl4

An Interview with Tidiane N'Diaye Published on 10 May 2017

Jean-Pierre Elkabbach reçoit tous les matins un invité politique dans [#LaMatinaleInfo](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgUGNdXOjC8&t=262s>

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