



Islam's Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora

By Ronald Segal

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A pioneering history of the Eastern slave trade

In this groundbreaking work intended as a companion volume to *The Black Diaspora*, Ronald Segal tells the fascinating and horrifying story of the Islamic slave trade. Documenting a centuries-old institution that still survives today, *Islam's Black Slaves* outlines the differences between the trades in the East and West. Slaves in Islam, for example, were kept mainly in the service sector as cooks, porters, soldiers, and concubines, and while the Atlantic trade valued men over women, the Eastern trade preferred women, in numbers as high as two to one. Tracing slavery through history, from Islam's inception in the seventh century, across China, India, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, Spain, and the Sudan and Morocco, which still have active markets, Segal reveals for the first time the extent of the trade and the sheer number of slaves-as many as twelve million-bought and sold in the course of the subsequent centuries. In an illuminating conclusion, Segal addresses the popularity of Islam in African American communities. *Islam's Black Slaves* is a pioneering account of this often unacknowledged tradition and a riveting cross-cultural commentary.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Designed as a companion volume to Segal's *The Black Diaspora*, which traced the movements of blacks in the Western Hemisphere from the Atlantic slave trade to the present, this book undertakes the formidable task of recounting the dispersion of black Africans in Asia and the Middle East, most of which was forced by the Islamic slave trade. "In Islam, slavery was never the moral, political, and economic issue that it was in the West, so there are fewer sources about its history," notes Segal, the founding editor of the Penguin African Library and the author of 14 other books. Still, he pieces together a compelling drama of conquests and conversions, beginning with an illuminating chapter about the differences between the Atlantic and Islamic trades: the Islamic trade began some eight centuries before the Atlantic one, and preferred women slaves over men. His account then moves from early Islam, when laws did not subject slaves to any special racial discrimination, into the 19th century, when the process of enslaving blacks came to involve violence and brutality on a gigantic scale. Segal also discusses the extension of the Islamic trade into China, India and Spain, the role of the Ottoman Empire, slavery in Iran and Libya, and the effect of European colonization, which he argues "preserved the force if not the face of old subjugations." A preliminary dig in a little-explored area, this book has a rough-hewn quality about it; scholars may find it too general, even if it provides seeds for further study. General readers, however, will find much that is new, particularly in the early chapters, where Segal trains his eye on the part slaves played in the development of the high civilization attained by imperial Islam.

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From Library Journal

Segal (The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa), founding editor of the Penguin African Library, has written an overview of black slavery in the Islamic world from its beginnings to modern Sudan and Morocco. Relying primarily on secondary sources, the author explores Islamic slavery in China, India, the Middle East, and Africa and focuses on the differences between Islamic and Western slavery. He notes that while most slaves in the Americas were male and worked as agricultural laborers, in Islam female black slaves outnumbered males, and most slaves worked as servants. Segal concludes his study with an interesting epilog on the Black Muslim faith in the United States. Though it breaks little new ground, this book is an essential survey that serves as a helpful introduction to the topic. Recommended for public and academic libraries. DA.O. Edmonds, Ball State Univ., Muncie, IN
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From [Booklist](#)

Segal, founding editor of the Penguin African Library, has written a companion volume to his acclaimed history, *The Black Diaspora* (1995). Here he tells the less familiar story of the Islamic slave trade in Africa, which involved an estimated 12 million captives over more than 1,000 years. Drawing on eyewitness accounts and scholarly sources, he shows that there were marked differences between the Atlantic slave trade and that of Islam. In general, the Islamic one was less racist and brutal; the trade was more in women and boys than in men; some slaves could buy their freedom and even hold powerful positions. The horror is more in the accounts of capture and the journeys across the Sahara and to the coast: in some cases, the estimate is that for every slave sold at auction, 10 died on the way. And slavery continues today in the Sudan and Mauritania. The strength of this account is the meticulous documentation of what is fact and what is surmise. The dramatic narrative is sure to spark discussion and further research. *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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