

ADVISING ABU IBRAHIM HUSNAYN TO “ACT BLACK” (!!!?) REFLECTIONS ON THE STATEMENT “STOP TALKING BLACK”¹

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful

Indeed all praise is due to Allāh, we praise Him, we seek His Aid and ask for His forgiveness, whomsoever Allāh guides there is none to misguide and whomsoever Allāh misguides there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allāh and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger, to proceed:

PREFACE

There has been something of a furore of late regarding some statements which have emanated from a young Muslim preacher from Birmingham. Here are my reflections on the matter. In his words, which he has, alhamdulillah, freed himself from, albeit rather belatedly, are some vital lessons for all of us. Moreover, the matter has been turned into something of an Asian and black issue, which I do not think is the main crux of the matter here. Many of the younger generation of British Pakistanis and Asian brothers who are under 50 years old and born and raised in the urban British conurbations, speaking from my humble experience in London and the South, and elsewhere in the Midlands and the North East (who largely interacted with poor white communities, and did not have large black communities therein), are used to diversity and have wisdom and nuance on these matters. So it would not be at all fair for anyone to merely use this matter to create increased tensions, though a frank discussion on these matters will help, insha’Allāh, to allay any tensions.

¹ Written by ‘AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Sections of this paper are from a forthcoming work soon to be published insha’Allāh.

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In the 1970s and 80s in the UK many black and Asian people cooperated against discrimination, violence and institutional racism, particularly in the inner-city conurbations of the larger cities. Furthermore, I observe that there are generational and regional nuances in how race is handled among the British brothers of Pakistani origin. The British-Pakistani brothers from the Southern English cities, or parts of the modern North-East, have been raised in diverse melting pots and mixed with different peoples on a daily basis, especially in London, Luton, Oxford, Reading, Aylesbury, Milton Keynes, Bedford etc. Yet there still may be entrenched racist ideas about some regardless even within the South. Whereas on the other hand, those raised in more segregated environs such as parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and sections of Birmingham generally may not have had such a diverse experience which can lead to strained relations among communities, with Birmingham standing out in particular as a haven for such racial tensions between black and Asian communities; this is with the exception of those who are in contact with others from other cities and regularly travel and mix.

Also some attitudes are generational, with younger generations steering clear from some of the racialized language which may have been used by ignorant elders. Pakistani elders, most of whom may hail from the Bareilwi religious belief system, which is entrenched in superstition, folklore, baseless practices and overall falsehood, handed down closed-minded and anti-black attitudes to younger generations. It is completely unsurprising, to an impartial person, that it will be obvious that people from such a background will have entrenched views which they should discard not only due to the incongruence with the unity of Islam but also in light of the fact that they are residing in a diverse multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society, not a mono-lingual village with remote contact with others; compounded by a lack of education and an inability to communicate with others in the language of the country.²

While on the other hand, on some occasions there were a very few cases of even black British youth in the 1970s and 80s used to join whites, united by the English language and influenced by Yob culture, in “Paki-bashing” attacks and bullying of Asians in parts of the UK.³ Whereas now in the 2000s, new immigrants are now targeted and bullied by both black and Asian British youth within the urban inner city conurbations, united by the modern urban culture and language, which incidentally is what Abu Ibrahim Husnayn fails to fully comprehend.

² This was the failure of past British immigration policy of the 1960s and 70s, indeed through to the 1990s, and all and sundry entering without assessments of their linguistic and cultural suitability to live in another environment and integrate.

³ See Nabeel Zuberi, *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p.53.

Though there are colourist and racist attitudes among some ignoramuses, they do not necessarily have a power structure by which to implement racist policies and institutionalised prejudice. The matter arises when it comes to how some have preferences, attitudes and stereotypes, but along with inappropriate and unsophisticated ways of communication. This is a recipe for disaster, so if a person for example likes light skin and holds this to be the pinnacle of aesthetic standards for beauty, such a person should understand and realise that for others it may be dark skin tones that are the hallmark of beauty and not denigrate or belittle that in wholly inappropriate terms and expressions. The opposite is also applicable. Allāh also says,

“We have certainly created man in the best stature...”

{*at-Teen (95): 4*}

Allāh Says that he created *man* in the best *taqweem* [stature], all humans, not that he created just *Blacks* in the best stature, or just *Arabs* in the best stature, or just *Indians* in the best stature or just *White Europeans* in the best stature, or *Far-East Asians* in the best stature, or just *Polynesians* in the best stature – but *man*.

I opine that the issue at hand has provided an opportunity to review the issue of hikmah in da’wah, experience in addressing people in the name of Islam when trying to convey to them, nuanced reflection before speaking on serious issues and how anti-black sentiments among some Muslims, some of whom have put themselves forward as spokespeople of Islām, have permeated to the detriment of the da’wah as it not only leads to a mockery of the religion but also distorts Islām among the black community unto whom many of us hail from and try to convey unto.

There are also issues of prejudice and discrimination among the different communities within Britain. So within Asian communities themselves, Pakistanis may deem Bengalis in a negative and derogatory manner etc. Not to mention among black communities, some West Africans distance themselves from Caribbean people with no understanding of their experiences and context, and some Caribbeans free themselves from any sort of connection with Africa at all! So there are a whole myriad of issues which could be opened up here. There are issues of light-skin privilege among black communities themselves. Then there is the *ikhtilāf* among the Somali communities, with some denying that they are black and fiddling their origins with no sufficient evidence to present as “Yemeni” (!?),⁴ and others maintaining and accepting that their

⁴ Moreover, in this issue Shaykh ul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, even during his time, stated in his book *Iqtidā’ Sirāt ul-Mustaqeem* that it was not possible for people to fully know their origins and trace that back to the Arabs. He stated:

Therefore, the origins and lineages split into three kinds:

identity is indeed black and African. While some modern Arabs will be quick to condemn Israeli atrocities and discrimination with an element of sanctimony, especially when their adherence to the Sunnah, Manhaj and intelligence is questionable, yet turn a complete blind eye to rampant anti-black racism and anti-Asian discrimination within their own societies, coupled with utter ignorance of racist injustices and slavery, in some cases of Muslims, which occurred in history. As seen in the history of Oman, parts of the Gulf (where black people may be derogatorily referred to as “**Abd**” [slave]), Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Shām. Not to mention that in parts of the Arab world questionable books such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are blindly followed as fact, when the veracity of it is highly dubious, and even Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is sold openly on bookstalls! Allāh Says,

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allāh, witnesses in justice and do not let your hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allāh, indeed Allāh is Acquainted with what you do.”

{*al-Mā'idah* (5): 8}

Not to mention the treatment of South Asian and Filipino workers within parts of the Gulf region, which itself is bordering on a kind of master-slave relationship.

The matter is also not one of Manhaj *per se*, so one should not be regarded as some sort of “Afrocentric” merely for opposing injustice, oppression, transgression and opening up the topic for frank discussion without incitement, excitability or emotion. Such an issue is a test for the believers, those believers who are black in particular who see that the pristine teachings of Islam ignored by some of their brothers on account of skin colour, and Allaah Says,

“There the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking.”

{*al-Ahzāb* (33): 11}

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1. People who are originally of Arab descent and maintained the Arabic language and place of origin. Or maintained the language and not the place of origin, or maintained the place of origin and not the Arabic language.
 2. People who are originally of Arab descent, in fact they are from Bani Hāshim but their language and place of residence became non-Arabic, or one of the two.
 3. **People who are not aware of their origin and do not know if they are originally of Arabic descent or non-Arabic descent. Most of the people today are of this kind, regardless of whether they were Arabs of the place of homeland or language, or non-Arabic in one of the two.**

See Shaykh ul-Islām Ahmad bin 'Abdul-Haleem bin 'AbdusSalām Ibn Taymiyyah, edited by Dr Nāsir bin Abdil-Kareem al-'Aql, *'Iqtidā' as-Sirāt ul-Mustaqeem li-Mukhālifa As-hāb al-Jaheem* (Riyadh: Dār Ishbilīa, 1419 AH/1999 CE) pp.164-166.

Both Imām as-Sa’dī and Imām al-Baghawī in their respective tafāsir of their verse say that this is in order to test the believers and distinguish the insincere and the Munāfiq from the sincere believers who manifest their certainty in īmān. Likewise, one should not be seen as a racist for making a foolish, ignorant and extremely offensive statement due to lacking wisdom. It would be incorrect to look in to the brother’s heart and accuse him of being racist, for making the highly offensive, ignorant and erroneous statement. It would be a serious allegation to say that he has “intrinsic racism in him”, though he should be very careful about his terminologies as elsewhere he has specifically mentioned “Jamaicans” and British-born Pakistani youth trying to “talk like them”.⁵

The brother Abu Ibrahim Husnayn, may Allāh reward and rectify him, stated: **“Brothers! We’re not black! Let’s stop talking like we’re black! Let’s talk in a decent way, with decent manners.”**⁶

INTRODUCTION: DOES ISLAM TEACH AND ENDORSE ANTI-BLACK RACISM?

Allaah mentions in His Qur’an mentions that Aadam (*‘alayhi salaam*) was created by Allaah from al-*Hama’* [black mud],

“And indeed, We created man from dried clay of altered black mud...”

{*al-Hijr (15): 26*}

It should also be noted, in order to refute the Kemet Afrocentrics, Zionists, Orientalists, Christian missionaries, EDL fanatics and other assorted anti-Islam elements that throughout the history of Islām, Muslim scholars have written monumental works to do with justice, racism, equality and also issues around slavery. These issues were never even discussed by any of the world’s religions and civilisations until the last two hundred years or so, let alone books written on such issues. At times when ignorance was rife, it was only the Muslims who carried the light of knowledge and some of the examples that will be presented here should indicate to people

⁵ See a few minutes in to a Youtube talk conducted by Abu Ibrahim Husnayn entitled ‘The Evil Effects of Music’.

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@nabzabdel86 https://www.instagram.com/p/BkFxmAchXpr/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=1wxaossmcjjgw&r=wa1

that Islām has to be judged upon the Qur’ān and Sunnah, not on ignorant statements which emanate from Muslims.

Ibn ul-Jawzī (*rahimabullāh*)⁷ a Muslim scholar of Baghdad wrote a book in the late twelfth century CE called *Tanweer al-Ghabash fi Fadl is-Sudan wa’l-Habash* [The Illumination of the Darkness on the Merits of the Black People and the Ethiopians].⁸ It is a historical summary of the social history of sub-Saharan Africa and the meritorious deeds of some well-known persons of African origin in the Islamic world. At the time of writing this book, Baghdad was becoming colour conscious and racism was beginning to set in, deviating from the justice and equality that Islām emphasizes and as seen during the epoch of the Salaf.

Before the contents of the book are looked at, it must be noted that Ibn ul-Jawzī was not just any simple Muslim scholar writing a book to be pious rather he was one of the most prolific writers and erudite scholars to have existed in Islamic history. He was a specialist in *hadeeth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and history. He was also famed for his *da’wah* activities (calling to Islām), teaching and writing. In 1965 CE, ‘Abdul-Hameed al-’Ajūli produced a comprehensive account of Ibn ul-Jawzī’s works, wherein he classified them and stated where they could also be found, he listed 384 books to Ibn ul-Jawzī’s name.⁹ Shaykh ul-Islām Ahmad Taqiyyuddeen Ibn ‘Abdul-Hameed Ibn Taymiyyah (*rahimabullāh*) said that Ibn ul-Jawzī wrote over one thousand books.¹⁰

Ibn ul-Jawzī in *Tanweer* tried to restore the purity of Islām and raise the morale of some of the black community in Baghdād at that time by extolling the black contribution and role in

⁷ Abu’l-Faraj ‘Abdur-Rahmān ibn Hasan ibn ul-Jawzī (597 AH/ 1114 CE – 1200 CE). He was raised in the ‘Irāqī metropolis of Baghdād where he was educated by his family who were scholars and other scholars of the Hanbalī school of Islamic fiqh. He became outstanding in the fields of Qur’ānic commentary, Arabic language, history and hadeeth. His works cover diverse areas and among the most notable of his published works are: *Sifah us-Safwah*, a biography of the companions of Prophet Muhammad and the early scholars of the Salaf; *Taqseem ul-Lisān*, in Arabic language and linguistics; *Zād al-Maseer fi ‘Ilm ut-Tafseer*, commentary on the Qur’ān; *al-Mawdū’āt*, in hadeeth; *Talbees Iblees*, about extreme and heretical understandings and practices; *Rūh ul-Arwāh* and *Sayd ul-Khātir*.

⁸ It has been edited by Mohamed Barakat (Sudan: Omdurman Islamic University Printing and Publishing House, 1412 AH/1993 CE). It has also been translated into English as a Ph.D degree thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, by Imran Hamza Alawiye. It was translated by Dr. Alawiye as *Ibn al-Jawzi’s Apologia on Behalf of the Black People & Their Status in Islam: A Critical Edition and Translation of Kitab Tanwir al-Ghabash fi Fadl as-Sudan wa’l-Habash* (August 1985). It is in the SOAS library thesis section.

⁹ Arabic text entitled *Mu’allaqāt Ibn ul-Jawzī* [A Study of the Works of Ibn ul-Jawzī] 1965.

¹⁰ Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī, *Kitāb ad-Dayhl ‘Alā Tabaqāt ul-Hanabilah*

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Islamic history. The contents of the book are as follows (translation of chapter headings are from Dr Imran Alawiye’s Phd thesis):

- (a) *Those Who Belong to the Sudan*
- (b) *The Cause of Their Dark-skin*
- (c) *The Enlivening of Shem, the Son of Noah, by Jesus the Son of Mary*
- (d) *The Kingdoms of the Black People and Their Extent*
- (e) *The Collective Moral Excellence of the Character of the Black People*
- (f) *Things Distinguished by Darkness from Amongst Animals, Trees and Plants*
- (g) *The Obviousness that there is no Preference for Light-Skinned Peoples Over Dark-Skinned People Based Upon Colour; Indeed Preference is Based Upon Piety*
- (h) *The Companions Who Migrated to Ethiopia*
- (i) *The Deputation of Quraysh to the Negus (Najāshī) to Retrieve the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh*
- (j) *The Correspondence of the Prophet with the Negus (Najāshī)*
- (k) *The Arrival of the Ethiopians to the Messenger of Allāh...And Their Play With Hirāb (Lances) in the Mosque During His Presence*
- (l) *Qur’ānic Words of Ethiopian Origin*
- (m) *What the Messenger Heard of the Ethiopian Language That Pleased Him*
- (n) *The Assignment of the Call to the Ethiopians*
- (o) *The Prophets Who Were Black*
- (p) *The Eminent King of Ethiopia*
- (q) *The Distinguished Black Males Amongst the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad*
- (r) *The Distinguished Black Females Amongst the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad*
- (s) *Prominent Learned Black People*
- (t) *Poets and Those Who Composed Poetry Amongst the Black People*
- (u) *Groups of Clever, Intelligent and Generous Black Males and Females*
- (v) *The Pious and Ascetic of the Black People*
- (w) *The Famous Black Females*
- (x) *Those Who Preferred Black Concubines to Light-Skinned Ones and Who Loved and Died From Their Love of Them*
- (y) *Qurayshīs Who Were Sons of Ethiopian Women*
- (z) *Some Exhortations and Injunctions*
- (ā) *Some Invocations and Glorifications of Allāh, Mighty and Majestic*
- (bb) *Some Transmitted Supplications*

All of this from a Muslim scholar writing in the 12th century C.E. and by the contents one could assume that Ibn ul-Jawzī is even more ‘Afrocentric’ than the Afrocentrics, without even once having to refer to European Christians, Freemasons and other Eurocentric sources!! Rather, Ibn ul-Jawzī was writing from Islamic sources, thus the incredulous statement of John Azumah is totally untrue, that: “...blacks are stereotyped and demonised in Muslim sources as sub-human, at best, non-human at worst.”¹¹

Indeed, the scholar Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shanqīti (*rahimabullāh*)¹² in his *Adwā’ ul-Bayān* refutes the opinion that mixed-race marriages are not permitted by highlighting that such a position goes against the practice of the Prophet Muhammad who married his freed-slave Zayd ibn Hārithah (who was a black Arab) to Barakah Umm Usāmah who was a black woman from Ethiopia. Also the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alayhi wassallam*) married Usāmah ibn Zayd (*radi Allahu ‘anhu*) who was black to Fātimah Bint Qays, who was a woman from the Quraysh. Also Bilāl the black Ethiopian married the sister of ‘AbdurRahmān ibn ‘Awf who was from the tribe of Banī Zahra bin Kilāb.

Imām Shanqīti also mentioned in the context of refuting racist rulings that were made by some Mālikī scholars about allowing black women to marry without a guardian as they are intrinsically ugly and lowly, he noted the fact that there are black women who are noble and beautiful and as a result some Arab literary authors and poets extolled the virtues of the black women that they loved, Imām Shanqīti mentions these lines of poetry in *‘Adwā’ ul-Bayān*.¹³ The poetry that Imām Shanqīti brings are the poetry and stanzas which Ibn ul-Jawzī also mentioned in his *Tanweer al-Ghabash*, which was transmitted in the works of poets such as Ibn Marzubān.¹⁴

¹¹ John Alembillah Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa: A Quest for Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Oxford: One World, 2001), p.233

¹² Shaykh Muhammad al-Ameen bin Muhammad al-Mukthār al-Jaknī ash-Shanqīti al-Mauritānī al-Mālikī al-Afrīqī (1320-1393 AH/d. 1974 CE), *rahimahullāh*, a famous scholar and Mālikī jurist in his homeland, Mauritania. He taught *tafseer* in the Prophet’s Mosque in Madeenah and Usūl ul-Fiqh in Riyādh and Madeenah. His books are used in the college of Sharee’ah in Saudi Arabia. The most notable of his works is *Adwā’ ul-Bayān li-Tafseer al-Qur’ān bi’l-Qur’ān*.

¹³ Muhammad al-Ameen bin Muhammad al-Mukthār al-Jaknī ash-Shanqīti al-Mauritānī al-Mālikī al-Afrīqī, *Adwā’ ul-Bayān fi Idāh al-Qur’ān bi’l-Qur’ān*, vol.1 (Beirut: Ihyā Turāth al-Arabī, First Ed., 1996 CE/1417 AH), p.247.

¹⁴ See Mohamed Barakat (ed.), *Tanweer ul-Ghabash*, pp.185-195; quoting from works of Arabic poetry such as *al-Aghānī* by Abu’l-Farj al-Asbahānī, edited by ‘AbdusSatār Ahmad Farrāj (Beirut: Dār uth-Thaqāthah, 1401 AH/1981 CE, Fifth Edition). Muhammad Ibn Khalaf Ibn Marzubān also authored a work which today is very pertinent entitled *Fadl ul-Kilāb ‘ala Katheerin min man Labisa Thiyāb* [The

Other Muslim scholars who wrote similar books include Jalāluddeen as-Suyūṭī (*rahimahullāh*)¹⁵ who wrote three books about black people which were: *Raf' Sha'n al-Hubshān* [Raising the Status of the Ethiopians], *Azhār ul-'Urūsh fī Akhbār ul-Hubūsh* [The Flowers of the Thrones Concerning Information About the Ethiopians] and *Nuzhat ul-'Umr fī't-Tafdeel Bayna al-Bid wa's-Sūd wa's-Sumr* [The Promenade of a Lifetime Concerning Preference for Light-Skinned, Dark Skinned and Brown Skinned Peoples].¹⁶ These scholars were arguing and writing as Muslims using the Qur'ān and Sunnah as their main sources. J.A. Rogers thus mentions in his book *Sex and Race*:

In short, the Negro¹⁷ was discriminated against in no phase of Mohammedan life on the ground of color alone. Islam was the greatest and freest of all great melting pots.¹⁸

Other Arab scholars who made racist and so called ‘rationalist,’ comments were not basing their foolish claims on the Qur'ān and Sunnah, but rather upon the ideas and methods of Hippocrates,¹⁹ Herodotus,²⁰ Tacitus,²¹ Galen,²² Strabo²³ and Ptolemy²⁴ and their notions related

Superiority of Dogs Over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes!] Translated and edited by GR Smith and MAS 'AbdulHaleem (Warminster, UK: Aris and Philips, 1978).

¹⁵ 'AbdurRahmān ibn Abī Bakr, known as Jalāluddeen as-Suyūṭī (1145 CE – 1505 C.E./ 911 A.H.) was a hadeeth scholar, historian, linguist and *Faqeeh* (jurist). He was born in Asyūt (Assiut) in Upper Egypt and was of Persian and Circassian origin. He flourished in Cairo during the declining years of the Mamluk dynasty. In that city, as-Suyūṭī was taught by some of the most prominent scholars of his time and he became known for his erudition at an early age, later becoming a teacher of high repute himself. At the age of forty he was a leading scholar in all of the various Islamic sciences, secluding himself and devoting his time to writing. About 400 works are attributed to him the most notable are his Qur'ānic commentary that he wrote along with Jalāluddeen al-Mahālī, the famous commentary known as *al-Jalālayn*. As-Suyūṭī's other noted works are *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm il-Qur'ān*, *Tadreeb ur-Rāwī*, *al-Jāmi's-Sagheer* and *ad-Durr al-Manthūr fī't-Tafseer bi'l-Ma'thūr*.

¹⁶ For more info on these works see: Akbar Muhammad, “*The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature – Some Unpublished Manuscripts*,” in John Ralph Willis (ed.) *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa, Volume 1 – Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London and New York: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1985), pp.67-65.

¹⁷ During the time J.A. Rogers was writing, the Spanish word ‘*Negro*’ was used to describe people of African origin in the West.

¹⁸ J.A. Rogers, *Sex and Race* (New York, 1967), p.108.

¹⁹ An ancient Greek doctor and medical expert, he has many works attributed to him that were written circa 400 BCE.

²⁰ The ancient Greek historian who was born in Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum in Turkey) lived in the fifth century CE, 484-425 BCE. He was a contemporary of the philosopher Socrates (470-399

to the climes and how this supposedly impacted temperaments. Medieval Arabic geographical, historical and medical texts, with Ibn Khaldun being the most prominent, described the world as comprising seven latitudinal climes and the ‘median clime’ was portrayed as being the Middle East, while Africans, Turks and Europeans were framed as all residing in harsh and extreme climes which impacted their thinking, bodies and sexuality.

This Greek notion would also later impact on environmental determinism a discredited precursor to the Darwinian theory of natural selection. Humoral pathology was also linked to this,²⁵ however Muslim scholars would mention humoral pathology in their writings, such as Ibn ul-Qayyim Jawziyyah (*rahimabullāh*), did not mention anything about climatic theory and race as they were aware that it was in full contradiction to the teachings of Islam about racial brotherhood. It may also have been the case that Ibn Khaldun influenced European thought, such as that of the French enlightenment political philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755) during the 18th century who himself was impressed by the ideas of the French traveller Jean Chardin who had been in Persia had begun to also utilise climatic determinism.

Similarly, some scholars and writers relied heavily on the *Isrā’īliyat* (Jewish sources) and they thus regurgitated distorted ideas from the Biblical and Talmudic sources.²⁶ Thus, we find that

BCE), Thucydides (460-400 BCE), often dubbed as “the father of scientific history” and the “the father of political realism”, and Euripedes (480-406 BCE), the Greek tragedian. Cicero conferred upon Herodotus the title “the father of history”. He is seen as being the first historian to have broken from Homeric tradition in that he treated historical subjects as a method of investigation and critically assessing his materials and then arranging them in to a historiographical narrative. The *Histories* is the only book which he is known to have authored in which he also studies the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars and assesses the lives of Darius, Xerxes, and the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea and Mycale.

²¹ In his book *Germania*, authored in 98 CE, the Roman historian Tacitus (56-120 CE) refers to the cold environment impacting the Germanic tribes and their temperament. The surviving portions of his two major works, *Annals* and *Histories*, examine the reigns of Roman Emperors Tiberius, Claudius and Nero.

²²An ancient Greek physician who died circa 199 CE.

²³A famous ancient Greek geographer and traveller, died circa 24 CE.

²⁴Greco-Egyptian geographer, astronomer and mathematician of the 2nd century CE.

²⁵ Humoral pathology, also referred to as Humorism or Humoralism, is based on the idea that the human body has four important fluids or humors: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. It is also referred to as the ‘Hippocratic doctrine of the four humors’. After Hippocrates the theory was adopted by ancient Greek, Roman, Islamic and then European physicians.

²⁶ For example, scholars such as Ibn Khaldūn, al-Mas’ūdī (in *Murūj ul-Dhahab*), Ibn Qutaybah (died 276 AH/ 889 CE), Avicenna/Ibn Sīnā (died 1037 CE), al-Ya’qūbī (died circa 284 AH/ 897 CE) contain

scholars who lived in the Muslim world in the past and relied on Greek and biblical-Talmudic sources echoed racism in their writings like the unacceptable statements found in works such as *Murūj adh-Dhahab* of al-Mas’ūdī²⁷ and *al-Iqd al-Fareed* of Ibn ‘AbduRabbih. But this racism could not have been justified from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. It is odd that some scholars rely on works such as *al-Iqd al-Fareed* and *Murūj adh-Dhahab wa Ma’ādin al-Jawbar* [Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems] to try and prove that Islām teaches racism when these two particular works have been rejected as unreliable by Muslim scholars in any case!²⁸

John Hunwick also notes that racist prejudice did not formulate into a systematic doctrine amongst the Arabs as it did in Europe. Neither was there any Muslim to come and use the Qur’ān as the basis of inferiority of races and peoples, as happened with the Bible and the *Hamitic myth* in which Ham is cursed and thus made black. Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī (*radi Allāhu ‘anhu*) said that he heard the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) say, “*Allāh created Ādam from a handful which He gathered from throughout the earth, so the sons of Ādam vary as the earth*

many unacceptable stories and analysis. This was due to their over-use of non-Islamic sources in order to understand certain phenomena.

²⁷²⁷ The author of *Murūj adh-Dhahab* is ‘Ali bin al-Husayn al-Mas’ūdī (d.346 AH) who was born in Baghdad and died in Cairo. According to al-Mamqānī in *Tanqeeh al-Maqāl*, vol.2, pp. 282-283 he was a *Shī’ī* of a somewhat extreme nature who used to accept the infallibility of the Shi’ite Imāms. Adh-Dhahabī stated about al-Mas’ūdī in *Siyar ‘A’lam un-Nubalā*, vol.15, p.569: “**He was a reporter and a person of strange and odd reports and arts, he was a Mu’tazilī.**” He also spoke against the four righteous Caliphs as well as against the Umayyads and the Abbasids as indicated by Dr Sulaymān ‘Abdullāh al-Madeed as-Suwaykat in his book *Manhaj al-Mas’ūdī fī Kitābihi at-Tārīkh* [The Methodology of al-Mas’ūdī in his Book of History]. Also Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī in *al-Lisān al-Mizān* (vol.4, p.225) stated about al-Mas’ūdī that:

His book of history is full of foolish and insignificant things because he was a Mu’tazilī Shī’ī! To the extent that he claimed that Ibn ‘Umar (radi Allāhu’anhu) refused to pledge allegiance to ‘Alee and then pledged allegiance to Yazeed ibn Mu’awiyah, al-Hajjāj and ‘AbdulMālik ibn Marwān instead.

²⁸ See for example Shaykh Abū ‘Ubaydah Mashhūr Hasan Āl Salmān, Shaykh Bakr Abū Zayd, intro., *Kutub Hadhara minha al-‘Ulama* [Books Which the Scholars Have Warned Against], vol.2, 3rd Edn. (Riyadh, KSA: Dār us-Samī’ī, 1426 AH/2005 CE), pp. 44-5; 53-7 for a critique of the “historical” writing of al-Ya’qūbī, Ibn ‘AbduRabbih and al-Mas’ūdī.

*varies; some are red, some are white, some are black, and some are of colours in between. Some are easy-going, some are harsh, some are evil and some are good.*²⁹

A factual study by Ephraim Issac examines the relevant Judaic commentaries and reveals that the Jewish sources contain no link between the Biblical ‘curse of Noah on Ham’ and the changing of skin colour.³⁰ Furthermore, Issac indicates that the Rabbinical literature mentions that Canān not Ham was cursed as was thought by many Jewish, Christian and Arab ignoramus throughout history in order to justify slavery, racial superiority and colonialism. Issac demonstrates that Cush is the traditionally accepted father of African peoples in the Jewish scriptures. The blackness of Cush was associated with purity and beauty with no racial stigmas attached. Thus, we find in some Jewish sources descriptions of the Children of Shem (which includes the Israelites) as being “*black and beautiful.*” Though the description of Canān as being “black and ugly” is puzzling, yet it is clear from this passage that ‘ugly’ and not ‘black’ is the pejorative word.

Now let’s get in to the issue with the young Birmingham preacher, Abu Ibrahim Husnayn:

ONE

There have been some instances over the last 15 years or so when someone, associated with Islamic preaching, let alone with the blessed Sunnah, has taken it upon himself to boldly and ignorantly issue anti-black sentiment:

- ❖ It has reached us of those who have pompously asserted: **“I do not want my kids to be black”**.
- ❖ It has reached us of those who ignorantly assert **“marrying a black woman to my family would be like fasting for a lifetime and then breaking my fast on onions”** (!!?)
- ❖ It has reached us of those who have stated, openly in a talk to a crowd of black Salafi brothers in Brixton **“brothers don’t worry if you marry a sister and she is not white”** – making the statement due to ignorance about British society and inter-racial

²⁹ Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd (*Mishkāt ul-Masābīh*, vol.1, p.36, *hadeeth* no. 100). At-Tirmidhī says the hadeeth is hasan saheeh and Ibn Hibbān also deemed it as saheeh as did al-Hākīm. While al-Albānī held it as saheeh in Saheeh Abī Dawood, no.3926.

³⁰ Ephraim Issac, “*Genesis, Judaism and the ‘Sons of Ham’*,” in John Ralph Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa, Vol.1 – Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London and New York: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1985) pp.75-91.

relationships, as he thought that black brothers were bypassing black Muslim women on account of their blackness!?

- ❖ It has reached us of some Arab students of knowledge in Madeenah saying to a white brother: **“why do you marry these people for (i.e. Eritreans), as your kids will turn out funny anyway”**.
- ❖ It has reached us of those who have said **“don’t focus on the blacks, work with the Asians who have money and ability”**.
- ❖ And the likes of such foolish statements which have reached us, by individuals whom we do not blindly follow and are not Shaykhs, and even if they were Shaykhs we still throw such statements against the wall and refute!

These samples are not only in utter contravention of hikmah in da’wah, to which these individuals have ascribed themselves to, but also demonstrates that such people review their suitability to put themselves forward to preach. Also note, that in some of the above cases, I have advised such individuals also and it is their statements and the origin of such sentiments which are troubling, offensive and unjust. Furthermore, none of the statements above were uttered by any British-Pakistanis who adhere to the Sunnah, rather they were made by Arabs and others.

TWO

As for the brother Abu Ibrahim Husnayn, may Allāh reward and rectify him, then he is apparently someone who has only emerged very recently to give da’wah, we neither know him nor is he is any kind of Islamic authority to be blindly followed. Additionally, such a method of da’wah, preaching on the streets on the day of ’Eeid, is questionable as it is not known that this is from the Sunnah on ’Eeid when the day is one of celebration or that this was a practice of the Salaf.

THREE

In the statement, or rant, then its style was actually reminiscent of the racial street corner microphone rants of cults such as the Hebrew Israelites and their **“you are not African”** diatribes.³¹ To grab the mic and then rant to Muslim youth of Pakistani origin **“stop acting black”** is not only an odd form of da’wah, lacking hikmah, exacerbated given the prevalence of oddball preachers from Birmingham, but also given the latent racial tensions in the city between

³¹ To be soon thoroughly assessed in a separate paper soon insha’Allāh!

black and Asian is a very racialized approach inclining towards *Qawmiyyah* [nationalism], *'Asabiyyah* [group-think] and *'Unsurīyyah* [racism], which Abu Ibrahim Husnayn's statements unfortunately appear to have been based on. Allāh Says,

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way which is best.”

{*an-Nabl (16): 125*}

Imām as-Sa'dī states in his tafseer of the verse that one's da'wah has to include beneficial knowledge and righteous action, and that the da'wah should be with knowledge and not jahl. Al-Baghawī in his tafseer of the verse notes that “good instruction” refers to gentleness and softness not harshness and aggression; and that **“argue with them in a way which is best”** means **“stay away from harming them and do not fail to convey the message...”**.

FOUR

His initial apology was totally undone him then trying to justify his first remarks.

FIVE

If one wants to focus to da'wah to a particularly ethnicity, then this should be made clear and with adequate language, hikmah and research utilised.

SIX

It is important to be connected to the people of knowledge, and be very careful when opening one's mouth to speak.

So the question has to be asked who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the impeccable decent manners of Luqman the Wise (*'alayhi salām*)?! Who was a Nubian and given such hikmah in preaching that Abu Ibrahim Husnayn and many of us are in dire need of also having.

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the immense decency of, Bilāl ibn Rabāh (*radi Allāhu 'anhu*)?! The one who was tortured on account of Tawheed and the first Mu'addhin in Islamic history appointed by the Prophet (*sallAllāhu 'alayhi wassallam*).

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Ammār ibn Yāsir (*radi Allāhu 'anhu*)?! Who was tortured for Tawheed and Islām, and about whom Allāh revealed:

“Whoever disbelieves in Allāh after belief except who is forced and whose heart is still content with faith...”

{*an-Nabl (16): 106*}

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Usāmah ibn Zayd (*radi Allāhu 'anhu*)?! Who led an army against the disbelievers at the age of about 18 on the orders of the major Sahābah while he was still “a young black boy with a flat nose”, as Hishām bin 'Urwah reported from his father.³²

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Muhammad ibn Maslamah (*radi Allāhu 'anhu*)?!

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the utmost decency of, Imām Nāfi', the Imām in the Qira'āt (*rahimahullāh*)?!

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Atā ibn Abi Rabāh (*rahimahullāh*)?! The Nubian Tābi', Mufassir, Muhaddith, Faqi and Muhaddith of Makkah during his time, and student of Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn 'Umar (*radi Allāhu 'anhum*). Described by adh-Dhahabī as being “a freed-slave, black skinned with a flat nose and curly hair.”³³

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Said ibn Jubayr (*rahimahullāh*)?! One of the students of Ibn 'Abbās in tafsir.³⁴

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Shaykh 'Umar Falātah (*rahimahullāh*)?!

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Shaykh Muhammad Amān al-Jāmī (*rahimahullāh*)?!

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency of, Shaykh AbdurRahmān al-Afriqī (*rahimahullāh*)?!

Who wouldn't like to act like, and speak with the decency and eloquence of, Shaykh AbdurRahmān bin 'Awf Kūnī (*hafidhabullāh*)?! Of the contemporary scholars of Arabic grammar and morphology today in Madeenah, originally from Burkina Faso and a student of Shaykhs Muhammad Ameen ash-Shinqītū and Hammād al-Ansārī (*rahimabumullāh*).

Now, if it is said “**Abu Ibrahim Husnayn was not talking about such illustrious black notables from Islamic history and was rather talking about thug gang culture**”, then in reply:

³² Darusalam Research Division (trans. Sameh Strauch), *Child Companions Around the Prophet* (Riyadh, KSA: Darusalam Publishers, 2003), p.234.

³³ See adh-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat ul-Huffādih* (Hyderabad, 1333 AH/1915 CE, vol. 1, p.84).

³⁴ Said ibn Jubayr, rahimahullāh, was tested by the rule of Hajjāj bin Yusuf ath-Thaqafī and was involved in the revolt against him. After this revolt, Imām an-Nawawī, Ibn Hajar and Shaykh ul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah noted that the Ijma' of Ahl us-Sunnah was concurred that revolts against the leaders are not to be conducted.

- He made a very ambiguous and general statement, in front of many people, on the mic, in public, with no nuance, detail or elucidation whatsoever. This is inappropriate for one who has put himself to give da’wah, let alone ascribe himself to the blessed Sunnah. He could have sufficed with merely saying “stop being gangsters”. Indeed, the major criminals in the world, drug cartels, mafias and organised gangsters are largely non-black.
- Whoever errs openly, can be corrected openly. The Messenger of Allāh (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) also invalidated this by refuting the one who erred openly. A group of men came to the Prophet (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) as relayed in Saheeh Muslim in the *hadeeth* of ‘Adiyy ibn Hātim where a speaker of this group stood and spoke saying: “Whoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger, then he is guided, and whoever disobeys the two of them, then he is misguided.” Do you find that the Messenger of Allāh (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) was courteous with him because he was with a visiting group and their representative speaker? No not at all! Rather, when the man’s error was overt, the Messenger of Allāh (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) censured the error openly. The Messenger of Allāh said (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*): “*What a bad speaker you are! Instead say: “And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger”.*” As a result, Imām Abu’l-‘Abbās Shaykh ul-Islām Ibn ‘Taymiyyah mentioned in *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā*, and as did Shaykh ‘Abdul’Azeez bin Bāz (*rahimahumullāh*), that: **Whoever errs openly is to be corrected openly.** It is not to be said **“Leave him and do not criticise him because he has good in him”** and the likes of such unacceptable proofs. Also from such unacceptable proofs are that some of them say: **“His intention is good”**, in response to this it should be said: **“His intention could be good and he could desire the good yet you have to know that acts of worship have to have two conditions: ikhlās, a sincere intention and (in) following of the Messenger of Allāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam).”** Allāh says,

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.’”

{*al-Kahf (18): 103-104*}

Their intention is good, yet when they were in opposition to the way of the Messenger (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) their action was evil. Ad-Dārimī reported a *hadeeth* which

mentions that some people were gathered praising Allāh ten times while using stones to count the *tasbeeh* and *tableel*. When Abdullāh ibn Mas’ūd saw them, he forbade what they were doing. One of them said: “Yā ’AbdarRahmān, by Allāh, we did not intend except good!” The intention is good, Ibn Mas’ūd (*radi Allāhu ’anhu*) however said: “How many desire the good yet never gain it?” So a good intention is not sufficient, rather it has to be accompanied by good action in line with the Prophet (*sallallāhu ’alayhi wassallam*).³⁵

- He did not make any distinction whatsoever, and used simplistic racial language, and here he should have been more thoughtful. The Prophet (*sallAllahu ’alayhi wassallam*) stated:

«إن العبد ليتكلم بالكلمة ما يتبين فيها، يزلُّ بها في النار أبعد ما بين المشرق والمغرب»

“A servant may say a word without thinking about its implications, and because of it he will plunge into the Hellfire the distance between the East and West.”³⁶

Imām an-Nawawī (*rahimahullāh*) stated in explaining this hadeeth:

في هذا الحديث حث على حفظ اللسان فينبغي لمن أراد أن ينطق أن يتدبر ما يقول قبل أن ينطق فإن ظهرت فيه مصلحة تكلم وإلا أمسك عنه، لأنه قد يتحول الكلام المباح إلى حرام أو مكروه.

“This hadeeth exhorts to preserving the tongue. A person who wants to speak must reflect about what he says before he speaks it. If it then appears that to have some benefit he may say it, if not then he should refrain as he has changed permitted speech into impermissible or disliked speech.”³⁷

- Some have noted, if a black brother made a statement, while addressing black Muslim youth, such as **“Brothers! Stop acting Pakistani! Desist from grooming and exploiting young white girls!”** there would be outrage, quite rightly, about such a statement for being racist, simplistic, prejudice and foolish, feeding in to predominant stereotypes.
- Now it could also be suggested that some British-Pakistani youth *aspire* to be like thugs and roll in gangs, whereas black youth are not aspiring to be like Asian grooming gangs. This is a fair point, about the issue of aspiration, however I maintain that to say to a group of young black Muslim youth, in order to warn them from paedophilia and

³⁵ I gained this benefit from our Shaykh ’Abdul’Azeez ar-Rayyis in his refutation of ’Aa’id al-Qarnī.

³⁶ Bukhārī and Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (*radi Allāhu ’anhu*).

³⁷ Imām an-Nawawī, Sharh Saheeh Muslim, *Bāb Hifdh ul-Lisān* [Chapter on Protecting the Tongue]. See for example vol.18, p.117 of the 1349 AH/1930 CE Cairo Print.

grooming gangs, “**stop being like Pakistanis, and grooming young white girls**”, is akin to Abu Ibrahim’s rant. Due to British-Pakistani males being overrepresented in the crime, even though the majority of grooming gangs in the UK involve white men and women.

- Following on from the above, one could then argue that British-Pakistani youth are following an aspect of black culture which is negative. Firstly, the statement was not uttered with this nuance. Secondly, while black British youth are overrepresented in the urban cultural landscape since the 1970s, in the 2000s *all* youth in the UK urban areas, regardless of ethnicity have a share in urban criminality and culture. Aspects of language (UK Ebonics for instance) and black culture is strongly represented in this and has now become pervasive in the modern urban landscape in the West. It is important to note that aspects of black slang and Jamaican Patois have now become pervasive among modern youth raised in the urban estates and inner city conurbations. To the extent that the slang now is quite far from Patois and is now its own black British urban slang with *some* Patois influences as now more African-American slang influences are being utilised in Britain. There is not necessarily any problem in this if these are mere terms and expressions devoid of vulgarity, as language is fluid, in flux and not a static monolith and there will always be influences. And even terms such as “ting”, are actually the manner in which many non-white and non-British born people pronounce the word in any case! While, “bruv”, is merely another abbreviation of ‘brother’, just like how many would use ‘bro’. Many non-Pakistanis in London greet non-British born Pakistanis with “teek”, to show affinity and proximity. In Jamaica, the Maroon communities still utilise aspects of Ghanaian Twi in their slang and vocabulary. Many non-Muslims in Northern England use the word “bint” for instance, with its clear Arabic origins, to describe a female. Or how Arabic terms over the last 10 years are utilised and pervasive into British Muslim Sunni lingua, terms and expressions such as ‘masha’Allāh’, ‘akhī’, ‘deen’, ‘bātil’, ‘harām’, ‘halāl’, ‘wallāhi’ are all so common, that in some cases even non-Muslims utilise the term. Indeed, in South London at one stage non-Muslims were even using the terms “akhī” and “kuffār”! This has also been seen in parts of America, in New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey. And in any case, different regions and areas have their own slang mixed in with all of this. So language exchange and linguistic shifting is not necessarily a negative development as in some instances it can aid in da’wah. Indeed, in Allāh’s Book there are words, which though entered the Arabic, had Ethiopian roots.³⁸ I say this, as some may

³⁸ For more on this see: http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_ArabicWords.pdf

pompously argue, as if they themselves possess some sort of high calibre English rhetorical proficiency, **“you have to speak proper English”**. I have heard such suggestions made on a few occasions by brothers, yet such a notion disregards contexts and situations. Yet this notion contains both an inferiority complex and a contradiction, as it asserts that one should “stop talking black” or with any other slang, yet puts on a pedestal white upper-middle class ways of speaking English! Moreover, ‘proper English’ is far from what many people articulate and the very reason we are at this juncture at present is because one has exactly demonstrated that he does not have the articulation to convey adequately *in English!* Also, in some urban areas, the youth simply will not understand, or could be distanced, if not addressed in a direct manner with some slang interwoven which will initially gain their attention, and if this is what they understand and speak with then there is no problem in this so long as vulgar language is utilised. So how I address a teenager in a gang on a housing estate in Brixton, Leyton, Walthamstow, Hackney, West London, the Blackbird Leys Estate, Toxteth, Handsworth, Bury Park, Highfields, Moss Side, Chapeltown etc. – is not going to be the same as when I am addressing a professor, academic, researcher or journalist. This however is if one is able and familiar to *naturally* switch diction and grade language for the context without coming across as forced or fake. In Saheeh Bukhārī, in *Kitāb ul-’Ilm* from ‘Ali (*radi Allāhu ‘anhu*) in Mawqūf form, that he said **“speak to the people according to what they know.”** Al-Bayhaqī in *Shu’b ul-’Imān* reports from al-Miqdām bin Ma’diKarib, in a Marfū’ form, that he said **“if you speak with people of anything from your Lord then do not address them by that which will be absent from them or difficult for them.”** If I wanted to be even more pedantic I could assert that many do not even speak English at all with precise grammar, syntax, diction and eloquence! Indeed, with some Salafī brothers even speaking with an unnatural and obscure diction, contrary to English wherein they have Arabised English, with examples being how many brothers use **“...the likes of...”** and **“...and other than them...”** [which is an English transfer of the Arabic expressions ‘ka mithli’ and ‘wa ghayrahum’] repeatedly in their rhetoric and in translation this is regard as indicating poor and weak English.

- Therefore, Abu Husnayn’s statement is remarkably similar to Dr David Starkey’s comments after the 2011 UK riots that: **“the whites have become black, with this false culture”**, hereby racializing the matter. However, to suggest that an aspect of black culture *alone* is detrimental is folly, as grooming white girls for sex via plying them with alcohol is a crime which British-Pakistani men are overrepresented in, and that has been

even more detrimental on young British-Pakistani youth in terms of crime, reputation, stereotyping, driving people away from Islām and giving ammunition to anti-Islamic elements.

- Some brothers have posited, and this is also in the context of a growing shift among the black conscious community, that Hip-Hop culture is not an adequate or viable vehicle in which to convey positivity or community change or via which serious issues can be addressed. This has some aspects of validity to it as the harms of the Hip-Hop culture outweigh any benefits generally, and it could also be argued that this sentiment has gained further over the last few years due to the growth of the internet and social media which has allowed for increased spaces for issues to be thrashed out and discussed seriously, without the need for recourse to Hip-Hop any more. Yet in the 1980s and 90s that whole scene had more positivity and was the reason for many black youth in the urban landscapes of the UK, US and Canada to initially hear about and read about Islaam. Indeed, during that era some black rappers would condemn other rappers for imitating “gangsters” with the intimation being that gangsterism is a non-black phenomenon rather associated with Italian-American culture from the 1920s to the 50s, exemplified by the likes of Al Capone.
- His statement may have been something of a Freudian slip, showing just how ingrained and entrenched such sentiments about black people are among many Muslims of North African, Arab and Asian origins. All the more the case for the context in Birmingham.
- The issue is very sensitive and one has to be nuanced if you want to go there, or simply do not speak as knowledge comes before speech and action.

To compound the matter further, Abu Ibrahim Husnayn, in his initial response, then described some of the reactions to his statement as being “oversensitive” and a “victim mentality” on the part of some sections of the black Muslim community:

One

Indeed, some of the reactions have been totally jāhil, such as the remarks of the likes of another young speaker known as Nabil AbdurRasheed an-Nigiri from South London, who stooped to referring to Abu Ibrahim Husnayn vile racial epithets and even called Abu Ibrahim Husnayn “**the son of Vishnu**” (!!?). A`ūdhubillāh, this is ghulū, jahl and takfeer. Such a vile riposte and demonstrates the time we are in with all and sundry rising to speak with emotion, racism and comedy, this is far from the Sunnah. Allāh Says,

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allāh, witnesses in justice and do not let your hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allāh, indeed Allāh is Acquainted with what you do.”

{*al-Mā'idah (5): 8*}

Nabil will do well to read this article if he has misunderstandings of Salafiyyah and dealing with the issues of race and culture. And this is all the more contradictory in light of him apparently having Pakistani in-laws!?

Moreover, it has reached us that Nabil 'AbdurRasheed has also mocked aspects of the Prophetic Sunnah and this is kufr, indicating that he is not speaking from Islām but rather from his own desires.³⁹ Nabil should also refrain from speaking about Islām and leave off being a comedian, he needs to decipher is he a comedian or trying to speak for black Muslim issues. He is failing miserably at both and also needs to review his communication skills. He is not ascribed to the Sunnah and this will only result in his approach resulting in utter failure. Indeed, Nabil's ignorance is exemplified in his mocking the ahādeeth regarding not rebelling against the rulers, which are authentic narrations from the Prophet Muhammad (*salAllāhu 'alayhi wassallam*). How this Nabil 'AbdurRasheed thinks that he is in some way contributing constructively to this issue with his remarks are beyond me.

Two

There is no **“oversensitivity”** when terms such as “Shiddi” and “Kāla” have been the bane of black Muslim relations with sections of the British-Pakistani community across the UK over the last 25 years. This has not only blocked people from Islām but has also seen people moreorless feel unwelcome within certain communities.

Three

So what many black Muslims experience, and have experienced in history, is not a mere **“victim mentality”** or **“oversensitivity”**. So among juhāl in parts of the Gulf region, black people, due to the historical context and situation of black people within their history of context, are often referred to as **“Abd” [slave]!!?** This is not a **“victim mentality”** therefore and anyone who thinks so should reconsider putting themselves forward to speak on Islam and such sensitive matters.

³⁹ This in one of his live facebook broadcasts, in the wake of the Abu Ibrahim Husnayn Controversy, wherein he mocks a principle from the Sunnah about obedience to the rulers. This been relayed to me also by some of the trustworthy Brixton Salafis.

Four

There is a very interesting example from the time of the early Muslims, the *Salaf us-Sālih*, found in the book *Zuhūr ul-Basāteen Tārīkh as-Sawādeen* [Flowers in the Garden Regarding the History of the Blacks] by Shaykh Mūsā Kamara (*rahimabullāh*).⁴⁰ He quotes a passage from a book by Muhammad Ibn Mūsā Ibn ‘Īsā Kamāluddeen ad-Damīrī⁴¹ called *Hayāt ul-Hayawān al-Kubrā*.⁴² In

⁴⁰ He is Shaykh Mūsā Ibn Ahmad al-Habeeb Kamara of Senegal, 1864 – 1945 CE. He was born in Gouriki, Samba-Diom, in a small village in the Damga encompassed by the Futa-Toro region in Senegal. He studied Arabic and the Qur’ān at a young age in his village and he also studied with scholars of the region and Mauritania. He is regarded as an heir to the literary traditions of Timbuktu and Songhay and he lived at a period which witnessed many Islamic confrontations with the encroaching European penetration into West Africa. His book *Zuhūr ul-Basāteen* is his most voluminous work and is a massive ethno-historical study of his region in West Africa. Another historical work authored by him was *al-Majmū’ an-Nafees Sirran wa ‘Alāniyya ‘an ba’d as-Sādāt al-Baydāniyya wa’s-Sudāniyya* [The Precious Collection, Secret and Public, on Some White and Black Notables] which is a history of the scholarly Torodbe clan in West Africa and parts of it have been translated by Constance Hilliard. Hilliard says, “**His works offer the most sizeable unpublished reservoir of indigenous intellectual history and commentary existing today in West Africa.**” For an English translation of parts of *al-Majmū’ an-Nafees* by Hilliard see the French journal/periodical *Islam Et Societies Au Sud du Sahara* (Paris: Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l’-Homme, 1997) p. 175.

⁴¹ Abu’l-Bakr Muhammad Ibn Mūsā Ibn ‘Īsā Ibn ‘Abdul-Qādir Kamāluddeen ad-Dameerī, born in Cairo in 750 AH/ 1349 CE or 742 AH/ 1341 CE. He was from Dameerah in Egypt and studied under numerous teachers, principally focusing on the sciences of *hadeeth*, *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *sarf* (philology). He went on to lecture in Cairo and delivered sermons and exhortations in many other places in Egypt. He composed several works, mainly commentaries including a four volume work on the methodology of Imām Yahyā an-Nawawī called *an-Najm ul-Wahhāj* [The Shining Star], and a commentary of the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah. He became one of the main scholars of the *al-Azhar University* and died on the 3rd of Jumadā 808 AH/ October 26 1405 CE at the age of 58 or 66.

⁴² *Hayāt ul-Hayawān* is probably the most important work that gained ad-Dameerī his recognition. It was the first attempt to give in a systematic form the mass of knowledge of the nature of the animal and plant kingdoms in Arabic literature. The book is mainly a para-zoological encyclopaedia but it is also full of detailed accounts from the early Muslims. It has been translated into English as *Hayat al-Hayawan – A Zoological Lexicon*; trans. ASG Jayakar of *Bombay University* (London: Luzac & Co., Bombay: Fort Printing Press; Volume 1: 1906 CE/ Volume 2: 1908 CE).

Hayāt ul-Hayawān, ad-Damīrī in turn quotes the *Riḥlah* of Ibn as-Salāh⁴³ who narrated a report from az-Zuhrī (*rahimahullāh*), who related as follows:

“I introduced myself to ‘Abdul-Mālik.

“Where do you come from, Oh az-Zubri?” he asked me.

I responded, “From Makkah.”

“Whom have you left in your place to lead (as Imāms and teachers) their inhabitants?” he asked me.

“‘Atā Ibn Abee Rabāh,” I answered.⁴⁴

“Is he an Arab or a freed slave?” he asked.

“A freed slave,” I said.

“How can he lead the Makkans?” he asked.

“By Deen (religion) and Sunnah,” I replied.

“Certainly it is suitable that those who possess Deen and Sunnah lead men. But who then leads the people of Yemen?”

“Ta’oos Ibn Kaysān,” I answered.

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

“A freed slave,” I responded.

“How can he lead them?” he asked.

“In the same way as ‘Atā,” I responded.

He then said, “It is suitable that people of this kind lead men, but then who will then lead the people of Egypt?”

I replied, “Yazeed Ibn Abi Habeeb.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Abdur-Rahmān Salāhudden Ibn ‘Uthmān Ibn Mūsā ash-Shahrazurī. Born in Sharkhān in 577 AH/ 1181 CE and he was of Kurdish descent. He was a *hadeeth* scholar and studied in Mosul, Baghdād, Nishapūr, Merw and in Damascus under Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī. Ibn as-Salāh composed many works on *fiqh* and excelled in other areas. He taught at the *Salāhiyya* School in al-Quds (“Jerusalem”) and then later went on to teach in the *Dār ul-Hadeeth* in Damascus. He died in 643 AH/ 1245 CE.

⁴⁴ ‘Atā ibn Abī Rabāh (*rahimahullāh*) was described by adh-Dhahabī as being “a freed-slave, black skinned with a flat nose and curly hair.” See adh-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat ul-Huffādh* (Hyderabad, 1333 AH/1915 CE, vol. 1, p.84). He was a freed black slave of the Abū Khuthaym al-Fihri al-Qurashī. He was a *faqeeh* of Makkah and heard directly from Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ansārī, Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn ‘Umar, Abū Hurayrah, ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and other companions (*radi Allāhu ‘anhum*). He is cited as an authority by ‘Amr bin Dīnār, az-Zuhrī, Mālik bin Dīnār, al-‘A’mash, al-Awzā’ī and others (*rahimahumullāh*). During his time he was the main Muftī of Makkah who was to be referred to. See *Ibn Khallikan’s Biographical Dictionary* [Wafayāt ul-‘A’yān] – (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842), trans. Baron MacGuckin de Slane, vol.2, pp.203-205.

Advising Abu Ibrahim Husnayn to “act black” (!!)
Reflections on the Statement “stop talking black”

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

It was the same response as for the others. Then who will lead and command the people of Syria?” he asked.

I said “Makbūt ad-Dimishqī.”

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

I replied, “He is a Nubian that was a slave and released by Hadooyl.”

The same discussion continued, then ‘Abdul-Mālik asked, “Who will then lead (in prayer as Imāms and teachers) the people of Irāq?”

The response: “Maymoon Ibn Mabram.”

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

[The same discussion]

Then who will lead the people of Khurasān?”

“Ad-Dakhāb Ibn Muẓāhin,” I replied.

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

“A freed slave,” I replied.

[Same discussion]

“Then who leads the people of Basrah?” ‘Abdul-Mālik asked.

I responded, “al-Hasan Ibn Abi’l-Hasan.”

He asked, “Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

“A freed slave,” I responded.

“And who leads the people of Kūfah? Is he an Arab or a freed slave?”

“An Arab,” I replied.

Abdul-Mālik said, “Oh aẓ-Zuhri you relieve me. By Allāh the freed slaves rule the Arabs to such an extent that they preach to them from the pulpits whilst the Arabs remain beneath them.”

“Oh commander of the faithful,” I responded, “such is the will of Allāh and such is the Deen. Whoever practices it is the leader and whoever ignores it shall fall.”⁴⁶

Even though it is unlikely that this word-for-word conversation took place,⁴⁷ the scholars mentioned are an example of the historical reality of Islām as it was practiced by the early

⁴⁵ Abū Rajā’ Yazeed ibn Abī Habeeb al-Azdī was an Imām of Egypt, he was born in 50 AH and was from the younger Tābi’een, he was of the illustrious scholars and was mentioned by Abū Hātim al-Bustī in his book *ath-Thiqāt*. Muhammad bin Sa’d said: **“Yazeed bin Habeeb was a freed slave of ‘Āmir bin Luwayy’, who was from the Qurasyh. He was thiqah and reported many hadeeth and died in 128 AH.”** Others reported that he died aged 75 years of age.

⁴⁶ *Hayat ul-Hayawan* (Vol.2, Part 1), pp.224-225

Muslims, *as-Salaf us-Sālib*. This archetype represents the veracity of how Islām liberated people from slavery to men to scholastic height and achievement. Islām took people out of the degrading servitude to men to servitude to Allāh with knowledge and scholarly endeavour. A contemporary Muslim scholar, Shaykh Mashhūr Hasan āl Salmān of Jordan notes: **“The freed slaves during the Umayyad period had the highest positions and most noble status.”**⁴⁸

Five

In Muslim history, after the illustrious epoch of the Salaf, a focus turned on East Africa, Congo in particular, as a source of slave labour for the Middle East. Moreover, in instances in Muslim history, many African slaves were castrated to serve as eunuchs in parts of the various empires:

Castration and Slavery in the Muslim World

The huge ‘trading,’ kidnapping,⁴⁹ castration and enslavement of free people outside of warfare with Muslims has nothing to do with Islām at all. Nadia Maria El-Cheikh (2005)⁵⁰ notes, in quoting from Hilāl as-Sābī:

It is generally believed that in the days of al-Muqtadir billāh...the residence contained 11,000 eunuch (khādīm) – 7000 blacks and 4000 white Slavs – 4000 free and slave girls and thousands of chamber servants.

⁴⁷ It is also mentioned by Imām adh-Dhahabī (*rahimahullāh*) in *Siyar ‘A’lam un-Nubalā*, vol.5, p.85-6 but the conversation is baseless. See Shaykh Abū ‘Ubaydah Mashhoor Hasan Āl Salmān, Shaykh Bakr Abū Zayd, intro., *Kutub Hadhara minha al-‘Ulama*, vol.2, 3rd Edn. (Riyadh, KSA: Dār us-Samee‘ī, 1426 AH/2005 CE), p. 76

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ An example of this is in 1961 CE when the former editor of the Arabic *al-Ahram* newspaper (of Cairo) was present at a conference in Casablanca when Libya’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi from the Malian delegation who were pressing for the extradition of a Malian citizen who was then living in Libya. The editor of *al-Ahram* heard Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi say: “The man in question is wanted in my country, he was the chief of a Mali tribe. A little before my country’s independence (in 1960), he called upon the members of his tribe to undertake the pilgrimage to Makkah. Many listened to him, among them were men and a large number of women accompanied by their children. After much excitement they arrived at Makkah, and they were sold to many slave-traders. After having gained money by selling his own people, this man left Makkah, and instead of returning to Mali, he went to Libya where he opened a business.” (*al-Ahrām* newspaper, January 27, 1961 CE)

⁵⁰ Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, “Servants at the Gate: Eunuchs at the Court of Al-Muqtadir.” *JESHO*, 48, 2, p.1.

This would suggest that 4th century AH/10th century CE already eunuchs were being used in huge number. Nicolini (1999) states:

Another ‘speciality’ was the eunuch, especially appreciated in the Ottoman Empire. **The organ mutilation was carried out in totally unhygienic conditions, resulting in a survival rate of one in ten of those eunuchs transported from Africa.**⁵¹

Cheney (2006) stated in *A Brief History of Castration*:

Eunuchs were employed not only in the palace, but in more common residences. In fact, they were found throughout Ottoman society. It has been noted that the Ottomans preferred black eunuchs who had been “castrated completely and who were physically ugly.” **And black eunuchs generally remained in the majority. “By the force of the circumstances, the white eunuchs were always less numerous than the blacks, and from the 16th century, they became more rare at the Ottoman court; the supply ceased completely with the annexation of the Caucasian regions by the Russians at the beginning of the 19th century.” Black eunuchs were imported from Egypt, usually between the ages of eight and 11. The mortality rate was very low for young boys castrated before puberty, but rose to high levels for those castrated after maturity.** As noted previously, most of the operations were done in Upper Egypt, although a group of professionals worked in Egypt during the 17th century djerrah-i djellabis, because “a private person had no legal right in the empire to castrate his slave.”⁵²

Cheney then states that the Ottomans issued a *firman* [royal decree]⁵³ in 1857 outlawing the practice, however questions can be raised about some of Cheney’s statements in his book, though he was writing in 1955. Middleton (2005) states in *World Monarchies and Dynasties* under ‘eunuchs, royal’:

Castrated men who served as advisors and top officials for monarchs and in many countries and periods. **The cruel practice of castrating men in order to provide pliable slaves or loyal servants for royal masters occurred in many**

⁵¹ Beatrice Nicolini, ‘Religion and Trade in the Indian Ocean: Zanzibar in the 1800s’, *ISIM Newsletter* (Leiden), no.3, vol.1, 1999, p.28.

⁵² Victor T. Cheney, *A Brief History of Castration* (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2006, 2nd Edn.), p.55.

⁵³ A ‘*farman*’ (also *firman*), is a word of Persian origin meaning “edict” or “directive”.

civilisations. Many died during the painful and unsanitary removal of the testicles (and sometimes the penis as well), and most of the rest lived miserable lives. But oddly, small numbers of royal eunuchs were able to use their peculiar status to amass and wield great power, even controlling the destiny of empires.

Middleton continues under ‘Slave Eunuchs in Turkey’:

In contrast, the eunuchs of the Ottoman Empire were generally of slave origin; by the sixteenth century, most Ottoman eunuchs were black Africans. Neither their race nor their legal status prevented some of these eunuchs from rising to positions of great power. The Chief Black Eunuch was often one of the most powerful officials at the Ottoman court. In fact, the only blacks ever to rise in the Ottoman imperial service were eunuchs. In the early nineteenth century, **European observers reported on castration “factories” in southern Egypt, where several hundred young black boys were prepared each year for sale as eunuchs. When castration was banned in Egypt around 1860, the operation moved south to the Sudan. According to informants, a large majority of the boys (from 97 to 99 percent) survived...**⁵⁴

Somel (2003) stated in *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* under ‘Eunuchs’:

In Ottoman Turkish, *hadim ağast* (castrated agha). Eunuchs were castrated male slaves of the sultan’s palace who acted as functionaries in the inner part of the palace. **Eunuchs were divided into white and black. White eunuchs were mostly of Caucasian origin; one of their functions was to educate and drill slave boys levied from Christian villages. The head of the white eunuchs (*kapt ağast*) was the supervisor of the whole palace. Black eunuchs were usually brought from the region around the Sudan and acted as functionaries in the imperial harem.** The head of the black eunuchs (*dâriissaâde ağast*) was under the command of the *vâlide sultan* (mother of the sultan). When, after the 16th century, sultans increasingly ascended to the throne as minors, the valide sultan and the chief black eunuch emerged as major political figures. In the political conflicts that dominated the central administration, the chief black eunuch often represented the “palace party”. Though their power faded in the 19th century, black eunuchs continued to exist until the dissolution of the empire.

⁵⁴ John Middleton, *World Monarchies and Dynasties* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.291-292.

In some of the Muslim Empires, slaves were linked to race in that some of the slaves were of a different race of the host empire and its majority. Tougher (2009) states in *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*:

Less well known, perhaps, is that the Ottoman court also employed white eunuchs. The Ottoman case exemplifies the fact that in Islamic states court eunuchs tended to be ethnic outsiders.⁵⁵

This indicates that there came to be a racial association in some parts of the Muslim world in regards to slavery and that racism in some instances may have played a role in how different races were perceived. Michael Winter (2003) states in *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798*:

The black aghas, eunuchs, sent from the sultan’s palace to Egypt to act as directors of *naqf* were a special group that was paid salaries and pensions in Egypt. The Egyptian soldiers resented them bitterly and were jealous of the strength of their high income and connections in Istanbul. It was primarily from Egypt and through Egypt that the black aghas were sent to the imperial harem in Istanbul. Since the beginning of Ottoman rule, the pasha of Egypt was required to send ‘black, nice-looking foreign (*ajemi*) aghas who do not understand Turkish.’ At least twice in the eighteenth century the Porte sent out strongly worded circulars forbidding the mutilation of young boys destined to become eunuchs in the harems. **In 1127/1715 an imperial edict was sent to the *vali* and the *qadi* of Egypt declaring that castrating young boys to turn them into eunuchs was inhuman and violated the Shari’a law and the sultan’s orders. The decree stated that the boys were castrated in ‘terrible places, resembling slaughterhouses, in Jirja, Fayyum and Cairo itself.’ The edict cited the fatwa issued by Sheyhül-Islam ‘Abdürrahim, the Grand Mufti of Istanbul, who declared this kind of mutilation a forbidden innovation (*bid’a*). He said that many of the unfortunate boys died after castration; the survivors were doomed to be deprived of progeny and had to spend their lives in the company of women.** The edict should be made public and the original kept in the Citadel of Cairo. This impressive edict would have been more convincing had the Porte not kept demanding a fresh supply of eunuchs from Egypt a short time before and *after* the document was issued. We have at least three edicts, dated

⁵⁵ Shaun Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p.45.

1124/1712, 1133/1722 and 1150/1737 addressed to the governor of Egypt urgently requesting aghas for the sultan’s harem.⁵⁶

Toledano (1998) states in *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*:

I could not find any specific indication that during the second half of the nineteenth century, young boys were being made into eunuchs on Ottoman territory. The fact that the anti-slave trade conventions signed between Britain and both Egypt (1877) and the Porte (1880) included clauses prohibiting castration is not sufficient proof that such operations were actually still being performed within the empire.⁵⁷

Favazza (1996) stated in *Bodies Under Siege: Self-Mutilation and Body Modification in Culture and Psychiatry*:

The early Arabs did, however, purchase castrated slaves, who were employed as harem keepers. Beginning with the mid-thirteenth century Mameluke period in Egypt and with the fourteenth-century Ottoman Empire in Turkey, eunuchism flourished. Eunuchs not only served in harems but also married and held the highest political positions. **The Muslims did not perform the castration themselves but rather purchased eunuchs. Some monasteries in in Egypt supported themselves by becoming “eunuch factories.” Another center for the production of eunuchs was Khartoum, where slave raiders brought their captives to barbers, monks and physicians to undergo castration. The trade in eunuchs was brisk and extremely profitable, fully castrated slaves being the most desirable harem employees.**⁵⁸

Kia states in *Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*:

The white eunuchs were mostly white men imported from the Balkans and the Caucasus and served the recruits at the palace school. **The black eunuchs “underwent the so-called radical castration, in which both the testicles and**

⁵⁶ Michael Winter, *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.41-42.

⁵⁷ Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998, 2012), p.45

⁵⁸ Armando R. Favazza, *Bodies Under Siege: Self-Mutilation and Body Modification in Culture and Psychiatry* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.182

the penis were removed,” whereas in the case of eunuchs from the Balkans and the Caucasus, “only the testicles were removed.”⁵⁹

Hathaway and Barbir (2014) state in *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800*:

By 1800, the majority of African slaves entering the Ottoman domains came from what are now Sudan and Ethiopia, and a majority of these were women.

They then state:

As noted above, a portion of the African slaves incorporated into ayan households were eunuchs. In Egypt, however, eunuchs delivered to the province by the trans-Saharan slave caravans or by Red Sea ships were augmented by eunuchs exiled from the Ottoman imperial harem in Istanbul. These two groups of eunuchs, in point of fact, represented different stages of the eunuch career. **Because castration is against Islamic law, young male slaves from Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Nubia were castrated in Coptic Christian villages in Upper Egypt, then transported to Cairo for sale in the slave markets.⁶⁰**

Abbott (2001) states in *A History of Celibacy* in the chapter entitled ‘Coerced Celibacy’:

Later, eunuchs were brought into households as servants and into the Ottoman sultan’s palace, **despite Islamic law’s proscription of castration.** At first, the Ottoman eunuchs were white, bought from European dealers. Vienne, in France, was the center for the actual surgery. Later, most eunuchs were either Ethiopians or black Africans, enslaved and mutilated outside the boundaries of the empire to avoid legal problems. by the reign of Suleiman (1520-66), black eunuchs were more powerful than white. The African eunuchs’ behaviour could be peculiar, petulant, and socially inept, and they were known as eccentrics.

Well, maybe Abbott should have added that undergoing such a brutal and savage procedure involving the removal of their genitalia may have had a slight impact on their behaviour, somewhat. Toledano (1998: 44) states in *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*:

Dr Louis Frank, in a report written in 1802, states that these operations were performed in the Upper Egyptian village of Abu Tig. **The Swiss Arabist J.L.**

⁵⁹ Mehrdad Kia, *Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (Santa Barbara, California and Oxford, England: ABC-CLIO, 2011), p.42.

⁶⁰Jane Hathaway and Karl Barbir, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p.102.

Burckhardt adds the village of Zawiyat al-Dayr near Asyūt in Upper Egypt, where Coptic monks regularly “manufactured” eunuchs at the time of his travels in 1813 and 1814. He also mentions a place west of Darfur whence some eunuchs were being imported into Egypt, but most were sent to the Holy Cities in the Hijaz...Sultan Ahmet III ordered the governor of Egypt in 1715 to put an end to the castration of Ethiopians in Egypt and the surrounding area. However, the vezir died a while later and his order was never implemented.

Rodriguez (1997) states in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*:

Since castration violated Muslim law, eunuchs destined for Islamic lands were occasionally castrated by non-Muslims outside Islamic territory. Castration could entail removing only the testicles, or it could mean removing the entire genitalia, as was the case for Chinese eunuchs and African eunuchs in the Ottoman Empire. In the latter method, the threat of death from blood loss or infection was proportionally greater, and even if the eunuch survived, he often suffered painful complications, most commonly urinary tract infections. Nonetheless, many eunuchs lived to quite advanced ages: some Chinese and Ottoman eunuchs died in their nineties.⁶¹

Rodriguez also notes, as does Hathaway (2002: 139),⁶² that East Africans were utilised more as due to them coming from a dense disease pool they would have more likely survived he castration operation more so than Caucasian slaves. Also they were regarded as physically unattractive and as a result of that it would have educed opportunities for infidelity with women. Thus, eunuchs were neither a sexual nor political threat and this also explains why they were given political position within the imperial courts.

This grotesque description reveals how far from Islam this barbaric savagery, child mutilation and slavery was and that it was in total opposition to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam*). Moreover, it also demonstrates that it is folly to merely regard any black Muslim who brings these abuses of Allāh’s Divine Legislation as in someway being “pro-black” or “oversensitive” or having a “victim mentality”. As history has shown that black people were often specifically targeted for slavery and the interior of Africa, mainly East and

⁶¹ Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara, California and Oxford, England: ABC-CLIO, 1997), vol.1, p.261.

⁶² Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2002).

Central Africa, was also viewed as being a reserve for slaves, ripe, in some cases, to be mutilated. Although the al-Murābitūn may have used military slaves this system itself was far different to that which affected East Africa and there was no concept of castration of slaves, which appears to have been rife from the 16th century CE.

West Africa was not affected by Middle Eastern slavery and this was largely due to having strong and established Muslim Empires which were powerful way before the Ottoman Empire or the Mamluk Empire were even established. Empires such as the Ashanti Empire, Dahomey, Sokoto Caliphate, Songhai, Ancient Ghana, the Yoruba and others. These were highly efficient and organised empires which had a military tradition which would not have tolerated outside encroachment. The only instance where this happened in West African medieval history was in the case of the Songhai Empire which was in 1591 CE at the Battle of Tondibi. Morocco, under the order of the tyrannical ruler, Ahmad al-Mansūr as-Sā’dī, attacked the Songhai Empire, a Muslim nation, and sacked the ancient cities of Islamic learning such as Timbuktu, and then began enslaving the population. A Spanish Eunuch named ‘Judar Pasha’ led the expedition for the Saadi dynasty against the Songhai Empire. The ‘Ulama and scholars of Timbuktu were captured and enslaved, including Ahmad Baba at-Timbuktī who would later write a treatise on the prohibition of enslaving another Muslim. This will be mentioned later.

In a hadeeth *Qudsi* the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wassallam*) stated that Allāh said: “Three types of people will stand apart on the Day of Resurrection as My enemies, and an enemy of Mine will be doomed. A man who vowed in My name then betrayed; a man who sold a free person as a slave and gained a price for selling him and a man who employed a worker and had him do the assigned work then failed to pay him his wages.”⁶³ As for castrating slaves in order for them to be eunuchs, then this is totally against

⁶³ Bukhārī on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radi Allāhu’anhu*) and also reported by Ibn Mājah and Imām Ahmad in his Musnad. There is another hadeeth wherein the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallāhu alayhi wassallam*) stated: “Three types of people will not have rewards for their prayer: a man who forces himself as an Imām on a group of people; a man who postpones prayer until its time has gone and a man who enslaves a free person.” This hadeeth is reported by Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah, however both on the authority of ‘AbdurRahmān bin Zayd bin Aslam al-Ifriqī who is very weak due to his fabrication of narrations attributed to his father, as mentioned by al-Hākīm in his book of weak narrators entitled *ad-Du’afā*. Imām al-Bukhārī stated about ‘AbdurRahmān ibn Zayd that “**his hadeeth are not authentic**” as relayed in *at-Tārīkh al-Kabeer*, vol.1, p.618; Ibn Hibbān stated about ‘AbdurRahmān ibn Zayd that “**he deserves to be abandoned**” as stated in *al-Majrūheen min al-Muhaditheen wa Du’afā wa’l-Matrūkeen*, edited by Mahmūd Ibrāheem Zāyid (Halab: Dār ul-Waī, 1396 AH, 1st Edition and 1402 AH for the 2nd Edition), vol.2, p.57; Ibn Sa’d stated that ‘AbdurRahmān ibn Zayd “**reported many hadeeth and was very weak**” as found in *at-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol.5, p.413; al-Fasawī noted in *al-Ma’rifah wa’t-Tāreekh*, vol.3, p.43 placed

the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*), for he said in a hadeeth which has been reported in Abū Dāwūd, “*whoever castrates his slave, we will castrate him.*”⁶⁴ Ibn 'Abbās stated: **“Allāh’s Messenger (salallāhu 'alayhi wassallam) absolutely forbade castrating animals”** and in this narration are the words ‘Nahyan Shadeed’ [i.e. ‘with a severe prohibition’].⁶⁵ Muslim scholars mentioned this, such as Ibn Hajar, an-Nawawī and as-San’ānī. Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalānī stated in *Fath ul-Bārī*:

It is prohibited, therefore it is haram, and there is no difference of opinion concerning that in the case of the sons of Adam [i.e. humans].

Ibn Hajar also said:

The wisdom behind the prohibition of castration is that it is contrary to what the Lawgiver wants of increasing reproduction to ensure continuation of jihad against the disbelievers. Otherwise, if permission had been given for that then many people would have done that and reproduction would have ceased and the numbers of Muslims would have become less as a result and the numbers of disbelievers would have increased, and that is contrary to the purpose for which the Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) was sent. It also has a number of negative consequences: self-injury, deformity and causing harm which may lead to death. It also eliminates the quality of masculinity that Allāh created in the man, and it is changing the creation of Allāh and it is a kind of ingratitude for blessings.

'AbdurRahmān ibn Zayd amongst those who should not be narrated from; Abū Hātim stated that **“he is not strong in hadeeth but was righteous”**. The only scholar who graded 'AbdurRahmān bin Zayd as above the level of *da'eef* [weak] was Ibn 'Adī who stated that **“there are hasan [good] hadeeth from him and some of them (i.e. scholars) attested to his truthfulness, and he was from those who they recorded hadeeth from.”** For more see Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalānī, *Tahtheeb at-Tahtheeb*, vol.6, p.178. Ibn Taymiyyah has also highlighted his weakness in narration.

⁶⁴ The *hadeeth* is also reported by an-Nasā'ī but with some additions to it and al-Hākim authenticated it, as mentioned in *Subul us-Salām*, vol.3. However, Imām al-Albānī graded it as weak in *Silsilah ad-Da'eefah*.

⁶⁵ Ash-Shawkānī, *Nayl ul-Awtār* and also relayed by Imām Ahmad.

Ash-Shawkānī said the narration has an authentic chain of transmission however al-Albānī stated that this wording is not authentic however there are supporting narrations which raise it to the level of hasan. Bin 'Umar stated that Allāh’s Messenger (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) prohibited the castration of horses and cattle. It is reported by Ahmad in his Musnad and Ibn 'Adiyy in *al-Kāmil* though this is weak

Moreover, it is imitation of women and finally it is choosing that which is imperfect over that which is perfect.⁶⁶

Ibn Muflih in his book *al-Ādāb ash-Shar'iyyah wa'l-Minh al-Mar'iyyah* stated in vol.3, p.129-130 under the sub-heading of ‘Castration of Cattle and Humans’:

Imām Ahmad said: “It does not please me that a man castrates anything.”

Qādī [Abū Ya'la] stated in *Abkām us-Sultāniyyah*: “it is prohibited to castrate humans and cattle and one is to be punished for doing so”...ash-Shāfi'ī prohibited the castration of humans and animals...⁶⁷

In all of these examples, slavery was merely via kidnapping non-Islamic tribes, and in some cases even enslaving Muslims! As occurred in the 16th century when Mali was sacked by the Moroccan and Portuguese forces. The *Lajna ad-Dā'imah* [Permanent Committee for Islamic Research] of the top Islamic scholars in Saudi Arabia issued a *Fatwa* wherein they were asked about the issue of slavery and why does not Islām outlaw slavery, from their reply:

By this it is known that the basis of slavery is only through prisoners-of-war or captives obtained when fighting Jihad against the disbelievers. Its purpose is to reform those enslaved by removing them from an evil environment and allowing them to live in a Muslim society, who will guide them to the path of goodness, save them from the clutches of evil, purify them from the filth of disbelief and misguidance, and make them deserving of a life of freedom in which they enjoy security and peace.

They furthered stated:

And if there are no lawful Islamic wars, then it is not permissible to establish or institute slavery.⁶⁸

In 1935 CE, Prince Faisal bin 'Abdul'Azeez expressed a distaste for slavery and never had any; he told a Western journalist that some two thirds of the slaves in Saudi Arabia had probably lost their freedom in non-scriptural ways (i.e. via kidnapping).⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath ul-Bārī*, vol.9, p.119

⁶⁷ Al-Imām al-Faqeeh al-Muhaddith Abū 'Abdullāh Muhammad ibn Muflih al-Maqdisī, *al-Ādāb ash-Shar'iyyah wa'l-Minah al-Mar'iyyah* (Beirut: Mu'assisat ur-Risālah, 1419/1999, 3rd Edn., eds. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt and 'Umar al-Qayyām), vol.3, p.129-130.

⁶⁸ *Fatawa Islamiyah, Islamic Verdicts, Vol. 5* (Darussalam: 2002), pp.96-99.

⁶⁹ Mohamed Awad, *Report on Slavery* (New York: UN, 1966), p.121.

Six

The main instances of where black people, in cases even black Muslims, as in the case of the sacking on Mali in the 16th century all indicate that there has been an issue with how black people are viewed by some Muslims, as being lowly, third rate and not “decent”:

- ❖ **Slavery in the Ottoman Empire**, of Circassians but mostly of sub-Saharan East Africans
- ❖ **Slavery in Morocco**, which I will touch upon below.
- ❖ **Slavery in Mauritania**, which is more of a caste system not necessarily just based on colour, though the majority of the ‘Haratin’ are black, and this is only among the Berber Mauritians and not the African Mauritanian tribes such as the Bambara.
- ❖ **The Zanj Rebellion of the 9th century**, which effectively ended the usage of plantation based slavery systems in the Middle East.
- ❖ **The Omani-Zanzibari slave trade**, which was the largest in the history of the Middle East.
- ❖ **Modern Libyan Slavery**, exacerbated by the civil war which has led to the rise of various militias who, when not fighting and butchering each other, have participated in a range of illegal and illicit activities including human trafficking of vulnerable illegal immigrants largely from various parts of Africa and apparently selling them in markets. Though this appears to be more of an illicit type of human trafficking rather than “slavery” as such, and also included the capture and selling of Moroccan illegal immigrants who were in Libya, indicating that it is not a race-based issue more of a criminal human trafficking issue.

The above instances are far too detailed to be addressed here, I explored them all thoroughly in a separate work soon to be published insha’Allāh. Yet I will address both the Moroccan and Omani-Zanzibari instances:

Slavery in Morocco

Morocco began enslaving from the epoch of Yūsuf ibn Tashfeen (1061-1106 CE) who used military slaves from the sub-Saharan regions south of Morocco. Rodriguez (1997: 305) noted, basing this on Levtzion (1973), in regards to Ancient Ghana and its trade that:

Gold remained the primary commodity in this trade from Ghana, but slaves, destined for faraway markets in North Africa and elsewhere, were also sold.

Ancient Ghana obtained slaves through purchase and by raiding neighbouring peoples and states. The Arab scholar al-Idrisi, writing in the twelfth century, confirmed that “the people of Barisa, Silla, Takrur and Ghana raid the country of Lamlam, capture its inhabitants, and bring them to their own countries, where they sell them to merchants who come there. The latter export them to other countries”.

Then again in 1591 CE, Morocco, under the order of the tyrannical ruler, Ahmad al-Mansūr as-Sā’dī, sacked Mali, a Muslim country and then began enslaving the population of Mali. The Moroccan ruler Mulay Ismā’īl, the second ‘Alawī Sultān (1672-1727 CE), whose mother was a slave from sub-Saharan Africa, also began an unjust program of forced conscription and enslavement of black Moroccans. When black children reached the age of ten, they were forced to join the army. Under the rule of Mulay Ismā’īl many white European Christians were also enslaved along what is known in the West as the ‘Barbary coast’, the North African coastal ports. The main difference in the slavery that occurred in 16th-18th century Morocco however, than what occurred in the Middle East and Ottoman Empire, was that the savage and brutal act of castration was not utilised. Also there is the fact that they still remained within Africa and hence still connected to Africa.

Shaykh Sidi ‘AbdusSalām bin Jāsūs of Fās (Fez, Morocco) objected to the slavery system in later seventeenth century Morocco as free Muslims were enslaved purely due to the fact that they were black. He stated:

This is unashamed enslavement of freemen and reducing them to servitude with no Divinely Legislated justification. The Harateen of Fes are free like all other free born Muslims. Their free status is unquestionable. Therefore, any admission by them that they are slaves of named or unnamed persons, or any testimony given by others accusing them of being slaves, irrespective of why such testimony was presented, is indeed the result of pressure and coercion. This is witnessed and seen and there is no lack of evidence to support it. Their admission to slavery, even if it was of their own volition and not forced on them, is invalid. According to the Divine Legislation they cannot be subjected to slavery nor bound by their own

admission. Their freedom is a right Allāh bestowed on them. Therefore, they have no right to choose to be slaves.⁷⁰

Ibn Jāsūs noted that the enslavement of free Muslims was tantamount to rejection of the Islamic *Share'ah* or at least bringing it into disrepute; he was later executed by the Sultān for sticking to the truth and evidence and not blindly following the erroneous ruling. Another Muslim scholar Abu'l-'Abbās Ahmad bin Khālid an-Nāsirī⁷¹ condemned the erroneous, invalid and racist

⁷⁰ Adapted from A.A. Batran, “*The Ulamā of Fez, M. Ismail and the Issue of the Harātīn of Fas*” in John Ralph Willis (ed.) *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol.2 (London: Frank Cass, 1985) pp.9-13

⁷¹ He is Abu'l-'Abbās Ahmad bin Khālid bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Muhammad an-Nāsirī and his lineage goes back to 'Abdullāh bin Ja'far bin Abī Tālib, husband of the sister of Hasan and Husayn (*radī Allāhu 'anhum*). An-Nāsirī was from a family that was known for virtue and knowledge which had migrated to the city of Salā (Salè), near Rabat in Morocco in 1220 AH/1805 CE. He was born on Saturday 22 Dhu'l-Hijjah 1250 AH/March 1835 CE in Salā, which at that time was a city that was known for Islamic sciences, Arabīc language and the study of Islamic texts.

He studied the Qur'ān (Warsh 'an Nāfi') with al-Hajj Muhammad 'Alawī as-Salāwī and Muhammad bin Jīlānī al-Hāmidī. He also studied the works of ash-Shātībī, Ibn 'AbdulBarr, Ibn Mālik and Ibn Subkī with his cousin 'AbdusSalām bin Talhah. An-Nāsirī studied the sciences of the Arabīc language with his teacher 'Allāmah Muhammad bin 'Abdul'Azeez as-Salāwī and studied a number of works on grammar, *balāghā* (rhetoric), logic, *fiqh* and *usool ud-deen*. He was pivotal in disseminating knowledge, conducting research and benefiting the general masses of people in Morocco, excelling in historical works. He was also concerned with socio-religious issues moreso that most scholars of the time. He was very eloquent and as a result his lessons would be full and would have an effect on those present. He was strongly influenced by the *sunnah* in all affairs and strongly opposed the people of innovation and refuted them, exhorting them to refer back to the Qur'ān and *sunnah*. He opposed the leaders and sects of desires who had entered into the *deen* that which was not from it, **“He also strongly safeguarded waking the Muslims from their heedlessness to the clear manhaj”**, (Biography by Ja'far and Muhammad an-Nāsirī, *Kitāb ul-Istiqsā' li-Akhhbār Duwal al-Maghrib al-'Aqsā* (Dār ul-Baydā [Casablanca]: Dār ul-Kitāb, 1954), vol.1, pp.14-15).

From his most correct and authentic books in particular are his historical *magnum opus*, *Tārikh ul-Istiqsā'* and *Ta'dheem ul-Minnah bi'n-Nasrati's-Sunnah* which according to Ja'far and Muhammad an-Nāsirī in their biography of him in the first volume of *Kitāb ul-Istiqsā'*, **“are filled with warning against this disease and these (false) opinions by paying attention to spreading authentic Islamic knowledge amongst the ummah and referring people to study from the books of the Salaf.”** He advised a number of governors in Morocco during his era on issues related to governance, economics and the *deen*, he thus travelled to the cities of Tanger, al-'A'rāish (Larache), Marrākush (Marrakech), Dār ul-Baydā' (Casablanca), Salā (Sale), Tetwān (Tetoun), Ghumārah etc. initially he refused the posts as he thought that they would avert him from his scholastic efforts. He died on Thursday 16 Jumadā Ulā 1325 AH/12 October 1897 CE. He authored

practice of enslaving Muslims from sub-Saharan Africa as it contradicted the Islamic *Sharee'ah* and was an incorrect belief regarding slavery. In his book *Kitāb ul-Istiqsā'*⁷² he notes:

It will be clear to you from what we have related of the history of the Sudān (Black lands, i.e. sub-Saharan Africa) how far the people of these lands had taken to Islām from ancient times. It will also be clear that they are among the best peoples in regard to Islām, the most religiously upright, the most avid for learning and they have love for the people of (Islamic) knowledge. This state of affairs is found in most of their kingdoms bordering on the Maghrib, as you know. Thus, will be apparent to you the severity of the affliction which has beset the lands of the Maghrib since ancient times in regard to the indiscriminate enslaving of the people of the Sudān (the black lands) and the importation of droves of them every year to be sold in the market places in towns and countries where men trade in them as one would trade in beasts or way worse than that. People have become so inured that generation after generation, even the common people believe that the reason for bring enslaved according to the Divine Legislation is merely that a man should be black in colour and come from those regions.

over thirty books (see *ibid.* pp.27-34) and his two main students were the jurist and author of *Salā*, al-Hajj Tayyib 'Awād and the historian Abū 'Abdullāh Muhammad bin 'Alī ad-Dakālī as-Salāwī. From the titles of the works that he authored, there is nothing whatsoever that shows that he was *Sūfī* and in fact the lengthy biography of him by Ja'far and Muhammad an-Nāsirī, there is no reference made whatsoever to Sufism. Furthermore, from the thirty works that he authored, none of the books have anything to do with Sufism, the contrary in fact, in the form of his books *Ta'dheem ul-Minnah bi'n-Nasrati's-Sunnah*. There may have been some members of his extended family and clan that were *Sūfīs*, but as for Abu'l-'Abbās there is nothing to suggest that he was. Kurt S. Vikør in his book *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Sanusi and his Brotherhood* (London: Hurst & Co., 1995) refers to Ahmad bin Khālid an-Nāsirī as being an historian and no where mentions him as being a *Sūfī*, and refers to others from the Nāsirī family as clearly being *Sūfīs*. An-Nāsirī died on 16 Jumadā al-Ulā 1315 AH/October 12 1897 CE, *rahimahullāh*.

⁷² There is also a new annotated edition by M. Hajji, B. Boutaleb & A. Tawfiq (Dār ul-Baydā' [Casablanca]: Mansurat Wizarat al-Taqaafa wa-l-Ittisal, 2001-2005 CE) in 8 volumes. The oldest edition is the 1949 CE edition which is in nine volumes. A summarized edition was also published into three volumes in 1418 AH/1997 CE again by Dār ul-Kitāb in Casablanca. An-Nāsirī himself published it himself in four volumes in Cairo in 1894 CE which was translated into French by the Orientalists Grauille in 1906 CE, G.S. Colin in 1923-25 CE and Fumey in 1934-36 CE. This 1954-5 edition which is used for these quotes is available from the library at *SOAS, University of London* and the fifth volume discusses sub-Saharan Africa.

This, by Allāh, is one of the foulest (afshahu) and gravest evils perpetrated upon Allāh’s religion, as the people of the Sudan (the black lands, i.e. Africa) are Muslims who have the same rights and responsibilities as ourselves. Even if you assume that some of them are pagans or belong to a religion other than Islām, nevertheless the majority of them today, as in former times, are Muslims, and judgement is made according to the majority and that Islām and kufr (unbelief) claim equal members there, who among us can tell whether those brought here are Muslims or unbelievers. To sum up: as we have said, the innate condition of humankind is freedom and lack of any cause for being enslaved, whoever maintains the opposite is denying the basic conditions. And since it has known from time before that the people of the Sudan who border us are mostly or wholly Muslims, and since men of integrity and others have frequently made the point that they wage war against each other and kidnap each other’s children and sell the, unjustly. And we see that those who enslave them are those with no manners and no deen, the time is as you know and its people are as you see. We should therefore have no hesitation in declaring that anyone who enters into a transaction of this forbidden nature in hindering his salvation. As for the claim that the slave-traders have laid their hands upon them, this is not sufficient reason in the Divine Legislation to allow one to buy slaves from them, since it is weak evidence which amounts to a lie.⁷³

He concludes his condemnation of the slavery of Muslims on racial grounds by saying:

...we ask Allāh to grant success to whom He has charged with the affairs of His servants, in order to bring an end to this corruption; as the reasons for Divinely Legislated slavery which was prevalent during the period of the Prophet (sallallāhu ’alayhi wassallam) and the righteous forefathers (Salaf us-Sālih) has been lost today. The main reason being jihād to establish the Word of Allāh as the most high and guiding the people to the deen which Allāh has chosen for His servants. This is our deen which our Prophet (sallallāhu ’alayhi wassallam) has legislated for us. Opposing it, is opposing

⁷³ Shaykh Abu’l-’Abbās Ahmad bin Khālīd an-Nāsirī, *tahqeeq* (verifying and checking) by Ja’far and Muhammad an-Nāsirī, *Kitāb ul-Istiqsā’ li-Akhhbār Duwal al-Maghrib al-’Aqsā* (Dār ul-Baydā’ [Casablanca]: Dār ul-Kitāb, 1955), Vol.5, abridged from pp.131-134.

the deen and other than this is not legislated, and success is in the Hand of Allāh.⁷⁴

Shaykh Ahmad Bābā at-Timbuktī (*rahimabullāh*)⁷⁵ a Muslim scholar of Berber origin from Mali wrote a book on slavery in 1614 CE called *Mi'raj us-Sūd illa Nayl Hukm Majlūb us-Sūd*⁷⁶ in which he condemned the enslavement of Muslims, being captured and enslaved himself by the Saadi rulers of Morocco at the Battle of Tondibi in 1591 when they sacked Timbuktu, then under the rule of the Songhai Empire. A Spanish Eunuch named 'Judar Pasha' led the expedition for the Saadi dynasty against the Songhai Empire. Furthermore, a Moroccan Islamic scholar, Muhammad as-Sanūsī bin Ibrāheem al-Jārimī, wrote a treatise attacking Moroccans who considered black Africans to be intrinsically slaves. The treatise was entitled *Tanbih Abl ut-Tughyan 'alā Hurriyyat is-Sudān* [Alerting the People of Tyranny to the Free Status of the People of the Black Lands], which was written between 1312 AH/1894-95 CE and 1316 AH/1898 CE. He quotes from an-Nāsirī for example whose work was only available around the latter date indicating that he was probably written around the latter date. Al-Jārimī says:

When I travelled to the land of the Further Maghrib I found some of the uncouth Moroccans claiming that all blacks without exception were slaves who did not deserve to be free. For how should they deserve that, being black of skin? On this matter they relate fantasies that have no foundation to them in the Legislation or the natural order. As for the Divine Legislation, nothing came down from the Lawgiver (Allāh) that would explain why among all peoples they should be enslaved rather than others. With regard to nature, (such an argument is unacceptable) because the natural order rejects blacks being slaves without a compelling legally justified reason.⁷⁷

This clearly indicates that the Muslim scholars condemned the racist brand of slavery that linked race to slavery as it had no Islamic basis to it. Thus, we do not find a bona-fide Islamic scholar in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ 1556 – 1627 CE

⁷⁶ Also known as *al-Kashf wa'l-Bayān li Ansāf Majlūb us-Sudān* [An Explanation and Clarification of the Types of People that can be Enslaved from the Black Lands].

⁷⁷ J. Hunwick, “Islamic Law and Polemics over Race and Slavery in North Africa (16-19th Centuries)” in Shaun E. Marmon (ed.), *Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies: Slavery in the Islamic Middle-East, vol.7*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), p.62. The copy of this manuscript of al-Jārimī is preserved in the *Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmed Baba*, Timbuktu (Mali), ms no.1575.

history trying to bring proofs from the Qur’ān and Sunnah that such a racist form of slavery is justified, as opposed to other religions wherein they actually twisted, quoted and utilised their religious books as source references to justify slavery. Al-Jārimī then reaffirms this by concluding that:

This contradicts the view of the mass (jūmhūr) of the Islamic scholars to the effect that the innate condition of people is freedom; indeed, some have stated that there is consensus over this...the one who denies something over which there is consensus and which is known by necessity, is certainly a disbeliever.⁷⁸

Interestingly, in modern day Morocco this entire history is effectively either unknown or denied, yet it is more than likely that due to lack of education generally, not to mention of history specifically, this aspect of Morocco’s history has effectively been erased from the modern Moroccan psyche. To the extent that Morocco is considered one of the most racially tolerant North African country today.

The Omani-Zanzibari Slave Trade

The slave trade conducted by Oman was rampant, interestingly in terms of the history and religious context, Oman is an Ibadite-Kharijite sect. This may explain why there has been little in the way of any Omani religious scholarly discussion or condemnation of slavery. Moreover, out of all the Gulf states, Oman profited the most from slavery and its trading, with Zanzibar being the main port for acquisition of slaves from the East African interior. In the mid-14th century CE, the traveller Ibn Batootah, claimed to have visited the east African coast and noted that the region had become prosperous due to the trade in ivory, gold and slaves. The Portuguese conquest of the coast in the 16th century aimed to cease control of resources for themselves.

Zanzibar became a Sultanate in 1840 when the ruler of Oman, Said bin Sultan, moved his capital from Muscat in Oman to Stone Town, Zanzibar after defeating the Portuguese at Mombasa, Kenya. Said bin Sultan viewed Zanzibar as being conducive for clove growth and clove plantations, to be worked by slaves. When he died in 1856, his son Majid assumed control and consolidated his power on the slave trade while his successor Barghash bin Said helped to abolish the slave trade and established Zanzibar’s infrastructure. This was done through a treaty with the British in 1873 that aimed to replace slave revenue with legitimate economic activities such as the trade in coir, coconuts, rice, rubber and ivory. In 1886 both the British and the Germans sought to gain control over Zanzibar’s trade routes and agreed on dividing the

⁷⁸ Ibid.

territories. Both countries leased coastal territory from Zanzibar and established trading stations which they later used to take over mainland possessions.

In 1890 the United Kingdom and the German Empire signed the Helioglan-Zanzibar Treaty which made Zanzibar a British protectorate which lasted for several decades, during which time the power and authority of the Sultan was greatly diminished and the country's slave trade curtailed. Most of the sultans were aligned with the British except for Khalid bin Barghash and in 1896 when he seized power over that of the British-supported candidate, Hamood bin Muhammad, he was given a choice to either give up power or go to war against the British. He opted for war and this ignited the Anglo-Zanzibar War which has been dubbed as “the shortest war in history”, lasting less than hour before his forces surrendered!

The British Protectorate ended on 10 December 1963 through the 1963 Zanzibar Act which made provision for full self-government in Zanzibar as an independent country within the British Commonwealth. When the British Protectorate ceased, Zanzibar became a constitutional monarchy under Sultan Jamshid bin 'Abdullāh, would be overthrown a month later in the Zanzibar Revolution. Not long after in April 1964, Zanzibar united with Tanganyika to become Tanzania. An interesting paper by an Omani academic, Yusuf A. al-Ghailani, has been written on the topic of the slavery in Oman entitled *British Early Intervention in the Slave Trade, 1822-1873*.⁷⁹ Al-Ghailani states:

In fact the traffic in this business was considered illegal by most of the people who were involved in it. It was certainly not favored by Islamic law, which encourages at belief in freedom, justice, and equality. However, those who were involved in the trade were illiterate in Islamic thinking and as result of the harsh circumstances of their lives, the demands of their societies, and the small size of the population; they found themselves in absolute need to have these people to help them either in overseas trade or working on the land. A proportion of the slaves were brought from their original lands for the purpose of trading in them. There was another fact which persuaded the Arabs to become involved in this illegal trade, which was that slaves had been brought to the markets of East Africa by the black people themselves, who sold them either for money or goods to the Arab traders.

⁷⁹ Yusuf A. Al-Ghailani, 'British Early Intervention in the Slave Trade, 1822-1873' in *History Research*, Oct.-Dec., 2015, Vol. 5, No. 4, 225-238.

The trade in black people from the East African Coast was mainly considered as a form of trade between Zanzibar and its dominions on one hand and the coasts of Arabia and the Persian Gulf on the other hand; and by far the largest portion of the traffic was taken to the Arabian Peninsula through three different stages, before it reached its final destination. These were the land journey from their original homes inland to the coast; secondly a short trip across the sea to Zanzibar, where the main open slave market was held; and thirdly the final sea journey from Zanzibar to Arabia or any other part of Asia.¹ In fact this was the case with the traffic in Zanzibar, where these three stages were sometime reduced to two only, when slaves passed from Mozambique, Pemba, Dar-es-Salām, Kilwa, and Mombasa to Zanzibar. Kilwa was the principal port of shipment for Zanzibar and its dominions, but sometimes they could be shipped directly from Kilwa to the northern Po.

Al-Ghailani therefore notes that those involved in the trade were devoid of both Islamic knowledge and understanding. However, his assertion that Africans, possibly as a result of intra-tribal warfare, delivered captives to Omani traders, with neither Omani raiding nor demand is questionable. As Al-Ghailani makes no referral whatsoever to the likes of Tippu Tip who was of mixed Omani and Black East African origin. Tippu Tip (1832-1905) was the one who embarked on slave raids in to the interior of East Africa as far in as Congo and is well known. Tip was an Ibadi-Khārijī who was totally ignorant of Islam and motivated by wealth, status and position. His whole life, from even a young age, had revolved around slave raiding and trading and also the ivory trade. He had met European travellers such as David Livingstone (the Scottish reverend, explorer and British missionary) and Henry Morton Stanley (who in 1887 proposed that Tip be made governor of the Stanley Falls District, Leopold II and Barghash bin Said both agreed to this).

In 1886 Tip organised resistance against Leopold II's Congo Free State and enlisted the help of Gongo Lutete, himself an individual who had been enslaved by the Swahili and Omani slave traders and then had gained freedom and aligned himself with the Batetela and Bakussu tribes of Congo. The Congo-Arab War, largely between the Belgians and Swahili slave traders, saw the death of Tip's son, Sefu in October 1893, meanwhile Lutete had betrayed Sefu and joined the Belgians. Sefu crossed the Lomani River with 10,000 men, only 500 of these were Zanzibari officers while all the rest were Congolese. He set up two forts there which were attacked and forced Sefu to retreat. The war itself was a proxy war and a farce in that most of those actually doing the fighting were Congolese on both sides.

Rumaliza (born circa 1855), a Qādirī-Sūfī, was another figure during the Congo-Arab War and was on the side of Tip, having formed trading alliances with him. Rumaliza was another slave and ivory trader who dominated Tanganyika from his base at Ujiji, where he was also proclaimed ‘sultan’ and led a Swahili community, on an old slave route that led from Stanley Falls up the Lualaba River to Nyangwe. He was defeated by the Belgian forces led by Baron Francis Dhanis in January 1894.

It was during both Tip’s and Rumaliza’s watch that slave traders massacred 400 women of the Manyeme tribe in Nyangwe (modern-day Maniema in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo) which was a slave trading centre in eastern Congo controlled by the Zanzibari/Omani Arabs and Swahili peoples according to David Livingstone’s diaries on July 15 1871, Arab slavers massacred 400 women and children within a couple of hours.

East African slaves were therefore from Mozambique, Pemba, Dar es-Salām, Kilwa (was the main port town on the coast between Mozambique and Zanzibar, from which slaves could be transported directly to Zanzibar) and Mombasa. The British pressure to reduce this traffic continued effectively and was demonstrated by the Political Resident in the Gulf, Lewis Pelly who forced Sayyid Majid of Zanzibar to be more active in his opposition to the activities of the trade. In 1822 the Moresby Treaty was signed between the British and the Sultan of Zanzibar and by its terms the British had the right to stop the trade in slaves between East Africa and the European countries, mainly France and Portugal.

Seven

Moreover, despite many practising Muslims today having romantic notions about the role of Muslims in regards to slavery during the initial epoch of Islam, relaying the story of Bilāl ibn Rabāh (*radi Allāhu ‘anhu*), while also at the same time condemning trans-Atlantic slavery, the reality is that the vast majority of modern Muslims are totally ignorant about the reality of slavery in the Muslim world over the last 1000 years and that over the last 200 years. It is important therefore that Muslims do not, out of ignorance, become apologists for slavery and downplay the reality of how it actually manifested in the Muslim world. Murray Gordon in his book *Slavery in the Arab World* (1989: xi) argues that there is a “conspiracy of silence” which has “blocked out all light in this sensitive subject”.

Though there is an aspect of truth in this as it relates to the Arab world, due to ignorance, lack of education and historical denial in some instances, within the Islamic tradition and Muslim scholarship the matter of slavery has been addressed frankly and in detail, as will be evident in this section. A non-Muslim academic Bernard Freamon for instance stated in a lecture held at

Yale University in 2008 entitled *Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean and Arab Worlds: Global Connections and Disconnections*:

I begin by noting that, in spite of the rich and rapidly developing historiography in the Western academies on slavery and abolition in the Muslim world, discussion and understanding among Muslims of that history remains deeply impoverished and shockingly uninformed. There is effectively no real knowledge of the modern history of slavery or its abolition, especially in the realms of popular knowledge and in the content of educational curricula in secondary schools and universities, particularly in the Arab world. **The modern Muslim mind is essentially in denial when it is asked to reflect on the Muslim world’s long and deep connections with slavery and slave-trading systems. Many Muslims do possess a kind of superficial, idealized and normatively instrumental knowledge supplied by certain aspects of their religious history but this knowledge simply will not support the kind of critical analysis required if Muslims are to truly understand and benefit from their history.**⁸⁰

Though this is somewhat of a generalisation, as although Freamon himself is perhaps also unaware of the critiques of slavery which abound, and which have been brought to light here especially from classical Islamic scholars and the Shari’ah tradition, he is correct to note that in the Muslim world in particular there is an acute silence on the topic yet this is largely due to a limited understanding of history as if history of their countries started post-colonialism.

As a result, it may be the case that this limited historiography can be due to not only ignorance, but also denial, in cases, but also largely due to poor education and the fact that many countries which were pivotal in slavery in the Muslim world experienced upheaval during colonialism and many of the existing counties retrace their main history to only the last one hundred years or so in keeping with the current regimes and their relationships with colonial powers. Any history prior to these times is either not known, not studied, ignored, denied, brushed under the carpet, not seen as important, distant, non-existent and irrelevant. Freamon continues:

⁸⁰ Bernard K. Freamon, *Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean and Arab Worlds: Global Connections and Disconnections*, pp.3-4, see:

<https://glc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/indian-ocean/freamon.pdf>

Accessed March 2018.

From The Gilder Lehrman Center’s 10th Annual International Fall Conference Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean and Arab Worlds: Global Connections and Disconnections November 7-8, 2008 Luce Hall Auditorium, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

In point of fact, the horrific thirteen hundred year history of the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and trans-Saharan slave trades, and of chattel slavery in Muslim communities belies the strident Islamic egalitarianism that characterizes the normatively top-heavy uses of history noted above. **Even though this strident egalitarianism is, in many ways, one of the hallmarks of the Islamic religion, the historical evidence, it is argued, suggests that Islamic egalitarianism, in spite of its success as a powerfully galvanizing force in spreading the religion, made virtually no contribution to the closing of the slave trades and the eventual widespread elimination of chattel slavery in Muslim communities.** Slavery in the Muslim world was never really abolished, the argument runs, it just disappeared, largely as a result of pressure from Western governments, including British naval anti-slaving patrols, treaties with and financial reward schemes for local indigenous Shaykhs, and the shaming exhortations of European and American abolitionist movements. It was the hegemony of colonialism that ended slavery in the Muslim world, substituting one pervasive regime of inequality and hierarchy for another. Now that the colonialist legacy has receded, it is argued, slavery may indeed reappear in Muslim communities. **Recent events suggest that chattel slavery and apartheid-like inequalities are still a problem in some Muslim communities in the Sahel, Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the Persian Gulf.**⁸¹

This is the unfortunate viewpoint which many non-Muslims have of Muslims, that Muslims have done little to challenge such inequalities in the world and have been passive observers of such abuses of not only people but of Islam itself. However, Freamon tries to utilise to buttress his argument, that slavery and inequality is apparent in the contemporary Muslim world, by making reference to the situation in Sudan – however, as has been noted earlier in this book, there are some huge issues in the ‘slavery in Sudan’ narrative which was widespread throughout the 1990s. Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Bassām (*rahimabullāh*) stated in *Tawdeeh ul-Abkām min Bulūgh il-Marām*:

So after all of this how can the Westerners, and pseudo-Westerners, come and criticise Islām for having slavery? Claiming to have freedom and human rights, when they are the ones who enslave peoples, lower nations, take their homes, consume their wealth and occupy their lands?! Look at the equality of Islām compared to what America did with the blacks by not allowing them to enter the

⁸¹ Ibid. p.9.

same schools as them and not allowing them to find work, making them like animals! Where is the merciful Islamic state which made different types of people, of different religions and races as one Ummah compared to what France did to Algeria on the land of Algeria?! So their claims are nothing but false propaganda!⁸²

Nevertheless, what Freamon posits is absolutely true, that it was only due to pressure of the British colonialism that Muslim countries (such as Oman, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco) abolished the mass slavery of predominantly black people from the interior of Africa. Then Freamon notes:

These facts should be deeply disturbing to Muslims and others sympathetic to the Islamic project. **They suggest that the Islamic conceptions of equality are not truly universal and may not be very useful to Muslims seeking to establish egalitarian political and social orders in the modern world. This leads to the further intimation that Islamic egalitarianism is nothing more than a rhetorical device in the hands of the proponents of the religion, useful for political propaganda and religious proselytizing but without real moral force in influencing the everyday behavior of observant Muslims.**

As I noted above, mere regurgitation of simplistic notions of the equality of Islam are not enough and Muslims have to also take action in the face of oppression, transgression and injustice on all levels in society. However, Freamon must also take into consideration that the 'Ulama made huge efforts in condemning slavery and the trade in people and the barbarity involved which totally contravened Islam.

Conclusion

So I advise the brother Abu Ibrahim Husnayn, to look at the illustrious examples from the black contribution to Islaam from among the Salaf mentioned by the scholars and **“act black”** and to also **“talk in a decent way, with decent manners”** (!!) and not speak without knowledge and manners, in opposition to the example of the Luqman and the Wise Nubian mentioned in Allaah’s Book. Allaah does not burden a soul with more than it can bare, so if Abu Ibrahim Husnayn and other brothers are unable to articulate themselves adequately when giving da’wah in front of masses of people, are naïve about just what impact their statements may have, possess problems in their communication skills and their level of knowledge, and have a lack of nuance

⁸² See 'Abdullāh bin 'AbdurRahmān al-Bassām, *Tawdeeh ul-Ahkām min Bulūgh il-Marām* (Makkah al-Mukarramah: Maktabah al-Asdī, 1423 AH/2003 CE), vol.7, p.242.

Advising Abu Ibrahim Husnayn to “act black” (!!)
Reflections on the Statement “stop talking black”

on more complex and sensitive issues- then they should not put themselves forward to speak on sensitive matters of Islam, history, race and identity. For indeed Abu Ibrahim caused a travesty with his remarks. He should benefit from the people of knowledge and their works on the matter and have knowledge before speaking, and Allaah knows best.

Written by the one in need of Allāh’s Aid,

'AbdulHaq ibn Kofi ibn Kwesi ibn Kwaku al-Ashanti

Brixton, London.

21st June 2018/8th Shawwal 1439 AH