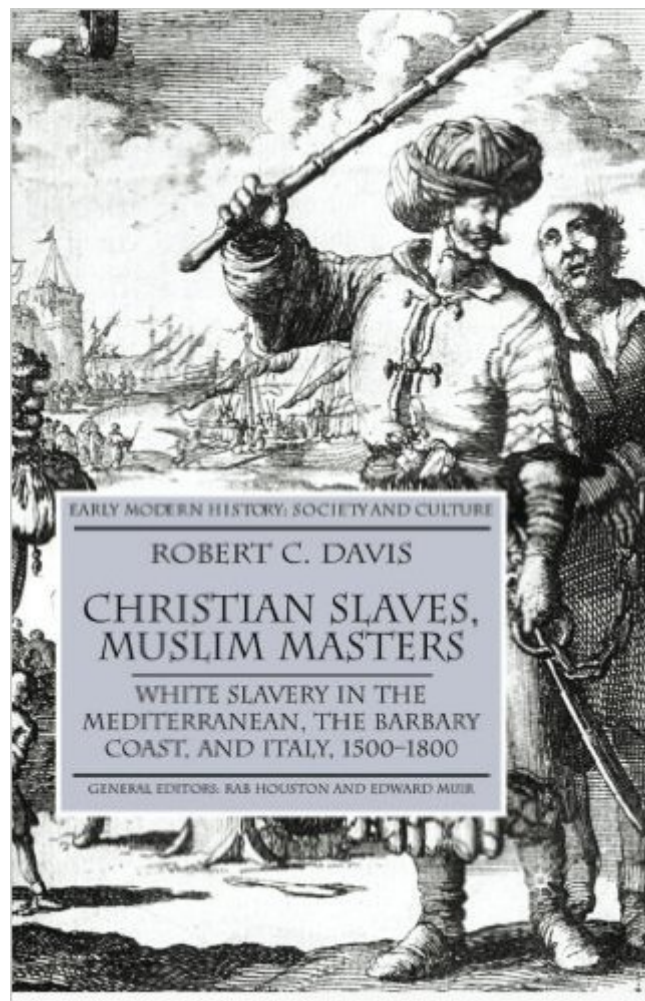


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Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery In The Mediterranean, The Barbary Coast, And Italy, 1500-1800 (Early Modern History Society And Culture)



Synopsis

This is a study that digs deeply into this 'other' slavery, the bondage of Europeans by North-African Muslims that flourished during the same centuries as the heyday of the trans-Atlantic trade from sub-Saharan Africa to the Americas. Here are explored the actual extent of Barbary Coast slavery, the dynamic relationship between master and slave, and the effects of this slaving on Italy, one of the slave takers' primary targets and victims.

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Customer Reviews

Mass slavery in the popular imagination had always been associated with the capture and subsequent enslavement of Africans. With good reason. The sheer scale of the African slave trade stretched the limits of imagination. Enslaved Africans were ubiquitous from Brazil to the Carribean to the plantations in the Southern United States. Slavery undergirded economies, dehumanized victims and victimizers alike and generated profits for those who benefited from this egregious institution. In the Western world, especially the United States, the history of slavery bares a black face. There is no denying the suffering of Africans in bondage. Robert C. Davis, author of Chritian Slaves, Muslim Masters, however, presents us with another picture of bondage, one no less brutal, repressive and disheartening. This bondage was experienced by Europeans at the hands of North African Muslims. Between 1500 and 1800, dates in the subtitle, corsairs sanctioned by the North African govenments of Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers and Morrocco attacked European ships in the Medditeranean and raided European shores. These plundering expeditions netted hundreds of

thousands of captives. As many as a million and a quarter Europeans, according to the author, were enslaved by North Africans. A small figure compared to the estimated twelve million Africans carried off to the new world over a span of centuries, but not an inconsiderable one by itself. The author channels a prodigious research effort into a detailed analysis of slave life, how they were captured, their national origins, the types of labor they were consigned to and their physical and mental states. Muslims' raids reached as far afield as Iceland, but the proximity of Italy to the North African coast made it a convenient and frequent target for Muslim slaving activities.

This is an eye-opening account of Barbary Coast slavery, American historians have studied every aspect of enslavement of Africans by "whites" but have largely ignored enslavement of "whites" by North Africans which flourished during approximately the same period as the trans-Atlantic slave trade. What is most striking about Barbary slaving raids is their scale and reach. Pirates took most of their slaves from ships, but they also organized huge, amphibious assaults that practically depopulated parts of the Italian coast. Italy was the most popular target, partly because Sicily is only 125 miles from Tunis, but also because it did not have strong central rulers who could resist invasion. The Barbary Coast extends from Morocco through modern Libya, was home to a thriving man-catching industry from about 1500 to 1800. The great slaving capitals were Salé in Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli, and for most of these periods, European naval protection was too weak to put up more than token resistance. The trans-Atlantic trade in "blacks" was commercial, but for Arabs, memories of the Crusades and fury over expulsion from Spain in 1492 seem to have fueled an almost war-like Christian stealing campaign. For example; when pirates sacked Vieste in southern Italy in 1554, they took an astonishing 6,000 captives. Algerians took 7,000 slaves in the Bay of Naples in 1544, in a raid that drove the price of slaves so low it was said you could "swap a Christian for an onion." Spain also suffered attacks. After a raid on Granada in 1566 netted 4,000 men, women, and children, it was said to be "raining Christians in Algiers". For every large-scale raid of this kind there would have been dozens of smaller ones.

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