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“A Quest for Honour”:
Slavery, Islam, and the Contributions of Martin Klein to African History

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Résumé
La recherche de Martin Klein au sein de l'Afrique de l'ouest musulmane a révélé des sociétés modelées par des générations d'esclavage, des efforts de mise en esclavage et d'abolition. Son travail est essentiel à la compréhension de l'héritage de cette histoire. Que signifiait être esclave pour un musulman dans une société musulmane? Qu'est-ce que cela signifie-t-il pour les descendants d'un ou d'une esclave? “Être musulman” tout en faisant respecter la distinction d'avec “être esclave” était un concept central à l'identité des maîtres. Au fur et à mesure que se démantelait l'esclavage et que se redéfinissaient les identités, qu'est-ce que cela signifiait pour l'évolution même de l'Islam? Pour la signification du mot “liberté” à la fois pour les esclaves et les anciens esclaves? Pour le statut social de leurs enfants? Les travaux de Klein nous ouvrent sur l'Afrique de l'ouest une perspective devenue essentielle à la compréhension de son développement politique et social à venir.

Introduction
Martin Klein did not set out to write about “Islam and slavery,” about “Islamic slavery,” or about “Muslim slaves” per se. But over the course of his career, his research has unfolded within the heart of Muslim societies embracing modern Senegal, Guinea, Mali, and parts of Mauritania.1 These societies have been shaped, each in their own way, by generations of slavery, slaving, and, most recently, the colonial abolition of both.2 It is not surprising, then, that Klein's work has become essential to our contemporary conceptualization of these subjects.

This article approaches his contribution from a thematic perspective, taking as its point of departure its title, “a quest for honour.” Klein’s insights into Islam and slavery are articulated by
these words, paraphrased from the title of his own last chapter in *Slavery and Colonial Rule, "A Question of Honour"* (1998b). They are as much testimony to the cumulative and qualitative achievements of his research as they are acknowledgement of the continuing elusiveness of the Muslim servile past in Africa. To have arrived at this last chapter, both in its reading and its writing, is to have traversed more than a quarter of a century of intellectual distillation, the potency of which is indisputable. Klein's wide-ranging corpus of presentations and publications displays a strength and consistency of theme that magnifies its historiographical significance.

**Islam and Imperialism**

*Islam and Imperialism* (1968), based on Klein's doctoral thesis, was one of the first historical monographs to acknowledge Islam's importance as an African ideology, one which shaped African actions and reactions to European incursion. This work emerged as part of the 1960s growth of "African" history in the United States, which broke significantly with the British and French colonial traditions, and their Orientalist (Islamicist) academic extensions. Islam was African, and African Muslims deserved a distinctive historical role vis-à-vis non-Muslims (both animists and Christians). The initial linking of the subject matter to slavery arose from studying the challenges to traditional political power which local clerics (the marabouts of French colonialism) were able to organize around opposition to the Atlantic slave trade. Klein drew our attention to the fact that this stance was, first and foremost, a political statement and, moreover, did not constitute opposition to the exploitation of slaves themselves. Indeed, he carefully traced the growing power of Islam as a process reflecting the development of a particular political economy in which slaves captured in war were gradually integrated as labour, freeing up more indigenous peoples and, most importantly, the state, to specialize in war. This was not specific to Islam, he pointed out, but in the process Islam "gained" as a ruling ideology. Klein (1977) later began developing the idea that Islam, in its interrelationship with the penetration of French imperialism, provided an especially potent climate for the evolution of slavery among the Wolof and the Serer of Senegambia.
With Paul Lovejoy, in a joint chapter on “Slavery in West Africa” in Henry Gemery and Jan Hogendorf’s influential The Uncommon Market (1979), Klein honed one specific voice of Islam, namely jihad. This focus grew naturally out of Islam and Imperialism, as well as the more specialized work on Wolof and Serer slavery, as Klein (1977) pursued the question of how the dynamics of Islamization in the pre-colonial era influenced systems of slave trading and slave exploitation. He drew attention to the simultaneous impact increasing dependency on slave labour in rural areas had on the “creation” of learned marabouts. They and their communities fuelled new jihad movements. The battles (or raids, as they more often were), constituting the physical expression of jihad, shaped the production of slaves. The communities feeding jihad (both literally and figuratively) reinforced patterns of exploiting slaves as agriculturalists. In short, jihad by definition remained an articulation of religious goals (even if they led directly to new political formations), but during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was also becoming the single most important feature shaping local slave systems (Klein and Lovejoy 1979, 203-08).

Klein attributes this last insight to Claude Meillassoux (1976), but the historical specifics of the discussion in “Slavery in West Africa” move us considerably beyond Meillassoux’s impressive, but very schematic, model. The chapter goes furthest in arguing that where jihad provided the ideological base for the state (irrespective of the political power of that state), Islam was certain to have an impact on slavery itself. This argument then opened doors onto three inviting research paths: the “ideology of slavery” — the impact on slaves and masters of religious expectations promised by the state as interpreted in the household; the “political economy” — the impact of Islamic state-building and maintenance on the slave system which evolved; and shar’ia — the impact of Islamic law on the practice of slavery in both the public and private spheres. This chapter, reflecting a good deal of Klein’s wrestling with his own formulations of exactly what “guaranteeing the impact of Islam on slavery” really meant, nonetheless established “Islam” as a framework within which he sought to understand certain forms of slavery and to contrast them with others. The centrality of that framework, as much as the exploration taking place within it,
marks the legacy of *Islam and Imperialism* to the study of slavery.

**Political Economy and “Islamic” Slavery**

In the review article “The Study of Slavery in Africa,” Klein [1978] urged historians to look more at what he called “high density” slave systems. He suggested that the theory of slavery being an institution geared to reducing social and lineage marginalisation as premised in one of the books he was reviewing (specifically Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff’s *Slavery in Africa*), should not so convincingly hold sway. Klein argued that there might be legitimacy in this “lineage-system” analysis for areas where slave populations were low relative to the indigenous population, and where their value was measured principally in their contribution to building and “swelling” lineages (although, even here, he wanted more attention paid to labour). But he distinguished the case of more high-density slave systems that he argued constituted “slave modes of production” [Klein 1978, 601, 607-09] and asked for more research to be focussed specifically on areas where this appears to have been the situation.

This theme reoccurred in the important chapter Klein wrote with Lovejoy, where these high-density systems were described as being dynamically market-oriented, Islamic regimes, coincidentally situated in the west African savanna / southern Sahara [Klein and Lovejoy 1979]. In contradistinction were societies less market involved, with low slave densities, situated primarily in the forest and coastal regions; these were styled “lineage systems.” The former tended highly to rationalize slave exploitation — not, Klein and Lovejoy argued, because masters were Muslims, but because they were market-oriented producers, who tended to favour Islam. One could find comparable slave densities elsewhere, but distinctions were determined by the degree to which Islam did (or did not) provide the social and legal framework within which they operated. In short, this was an exploration into the political economy of Islamic slavery.

The exploration of a series of questions following from these observations ultimately led Klein and Lovejoy to associate Islam with a particular form of slavery that could be distinguished from lineage slavery. Although careful to avoid assigning religion a causal role, they identified Muslim traders [tentacles of the Islamic
system active in the forest and coastal areas], and Saharan Muslim lineage systems [intruders of the "lineage system" in the "Islamic regime"], as catalysts to a "dialectical" relationship between the otherwise contradictory systems [Klein 1978, 203]. This allowed, at least theoretically, for some "new" kind of slavery to emerge from the process [Klein 1978, 201-12]. What was most significant about the analysis was its effort to establish a framework within which we could undertake a more systematic investigation into what was Islamic about slavery in an Islamic regime, and the differences between principle and practice in a given historical situation. This constituted a major step beyond the simple application of the readings of Islamic texts to explain social formation and the experience of slavery.\footnote{5}

Indeed, Klein's own work had already taken us some distance in that direction. Reading the laws in place at a given historical moment may tell you something about the religious or ideological underpinnings of that society, probably tells you what the elite wished to control, and most often tells you something about political compromise. Only rarely [and often incidentally] do formal laws reveal anything about the reality of peoples' lives [Mann and Roberts 1991, 3-58]. Yet to the extent that most scholars studying slavery in Islamic Africa have asked about law and labour, they have done so with reference to Islamic texts (\textit{surat, hadith}), which tell them what Islam says slavery should be, rather than with reference to documents like \textit{fatwa} [legal opinions], which, by definition, are interpretations of what slavery was [in practice].\footnote{6} However, being neither Arabophone nor Islamicist, Klein's approach was to ask what the actual role of Islamic law was in areas where it [in theory] had the power to shape slavery. For example, in the context of his own research, he commented on a seeming lack of "piety" in the Senegambia in the early centuries, at least as one might have expected to have seen it expressed in manumissions. At the same time, he noted that evidence suggests post-sixteenth century "Islamization" may have eliminated practices of human sacrifice [Klein 1977, 348]. The relation of Islamic law to notions of improving or protecting the lives of slaves is one he follows into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the early piece on the Wolof and Serer, he had noted provocatively that in 1892, a French treaty with Saint Louis assured that all slaves were to be protected — not, as
one might expect, by the new Christian, French law, but by the Qur'an. Ironically, this state backing may well not only have had the impact of strengthening Islamic law where it was previously weak, but of actually reshaping the practice of slavery itself (Klein 1977, 353). And, therefore, the strong imposition and application of Islamic law to slavery might not always have been a by-product of indigenous resistance against French occupation, as we have tended to assume. Drawing our attention to the role of law within the larger political economy, Klein delineated a critical perspective that is still not well developed, but which is, nonetheless, essential to our understanding of what it means to operate a slave system within an Islamic social order.8

In his 1978 review article, Klein also drew attention to the need to look more at what slaves actually did in terms of economic activity and at how they reproduced, both biologically and socially. Women and Slavery, edited with Claire Robinson, was the result of this questioning (Klein and Robertson 1983a [1997]). The role of Islam was not assumed to be determinant; indeed, in their jointly written introduction, it is mentioned only obliquely, in conjunction with the specific demands of the “Arab” (as distinct from the “Atlantic”) world, for female and slave children (Klein and Robertson 1983b, 3-25). Klein’s individual contribution to the collection picked up the Islamic factor with respect to the shaping of demand for female slave labour by female Muslim mistresses, who were secluded. He thereby linked the idea of a growing penetration of society by Islam not only to how much labour was needed in general, but to how much labour was needed specifically for what and by whom (Klein 1983, 67-92). The questions of female ownership and female needs for slave labour are among the more interesting problems Klein raised, although they, too, remain under researched. The second focus of his contribution — reproduction — drew Klein’s attention to a function of female slaves which is not specifically Islamic in nature, but which is formally sanctioned by Islamic law, namely concubinage. Klein’s interest in the institution revolved around how it was used to free slave women and children sired by their masters. His exploration of that question also became an element of the important “Slavery in West Africa” (Klein and Lovejoy 1979) chapter delineating “Islamic” and “lineage” slave systems: whereas the latter absorbed slaves, the
former, through the many routes it offered to manumission, ultimately freed slaves. So, with this understanding of the law shaping his perspective,9 Klein identified Islamic concubirage as one of the key components making Islamic slavery in the western Sudan "Islamic." The importance of the argument lay in the fact that it began, finally, to integrate the debate over production, reproduction, and gender with the questions Klein incessantly asked: which slaves? what work? which masters? when? where?

Islamic Slavery and Colonial Rule

Klein's most recent work, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (1998), is the culmination of a quarter century of research. It is also the culmination of a quarter-century of wrestling with the results of that research. The book reflects the centrality that issues concerning slavery and Islam occupied in his thinking during these many years, as well as the degree to which they became integrated in his increasingly sophisticated approach to the larger themes of colonial and post-colonial life in Africa. In typical Klein fashion, of course, *Slavery and Colonial Rule* opens as many doors to future work as it closes on past debates.

From the moment "slavery" inserted itself into a study that was to be about Islam and French imperialism, it has been the critical medium through which Klein sought to understand French colonialism as it played out on the ground. Now in this masterly synthesis which, at the same time, bears the strengths of Klein's personal fieldwork,10 the role of Islam is identified forcefully as one of four central themes weaving the analysis together. Here, we see clearly the cumulative integration of Klein's thoughts on Islam, imperialism, political economy, and "Islamic" slavery. Klein writes:

I will argue that Islam played a complex role. Both slave holders and slave users found in Islam a justification for slavery. Islam recognized slavery, but also restricted the conditions under which persons could be enslaved and set restraints on exploitation. Both before and after the French conquest, some Muslims found in Islam a more egalitarian and revolutionary vision. Islam then played a crucial role in the emancipation process (Klein 1998b, 18).

Around the question of Islam and political economy, the role of
jihad in shaping slaving and slavery is reasserted and expanded: by the second half of the nineteenth century, Islam was the overwhelming ideology structuring social formation and instructing state building. Therefore, according to the logic of his earlier argumentation, this fact guaranteed the impact of Islam on most slave systems in the Western Sudan. However, Klein goes further by showing how the ideology of Islam invariably preached promises of liberty and equality in the recruitment phase of jihad and even in the early days of state consolidation. But then, as the maintenance of that state required ongoing slaving to acquire the currency needed to purchase arms, the contradiction between expectation and reality became a central tension in the state. Its citizens increasingly lost their liberty and experienced new forms of inequality.

Klein’s masterly grasp of a body of research on the subject, now substantially more developed than it was when he first raised the issue, gives new nuance and sophistication to his discussion of “Islamic slave systems.” The importance of high-slave densities in these jihad states is re-affirmed. But Klein defines them here more in terms of the political economy of the state and of ideological contradictions imposed by that political economy, than by a juxtaposition with “low-density” areas lying outside the “impact of Islam,” as he had in earlier work (Klein and Lovejoy 1979, discussed above). Indeed, an important shift in direction is signposted here in his statement that “the acknowledgement and management of slavery in Islamic law did not mean that enslavement or treatment of slaves necessarily met that law or that there was anything that could be called Muslim slavery” [my emphasis] (Klein 1998b, 14).

This is a significant conclusion, which leads Klein along a divergent, but fruitful, path. Drawing on Meillassoux’s work once again, he reiterates the fact that Islamic law provides parameters within which masters and slaves could negotiate their rights and responsibilities without necessarily determining them, but he shines light as well on another “factor” in the system — the traders. By combining Meillassoux’s theoretical insights on the “warrior-merchant” tension and its role as catalyst in long-term change — giving due attention to Islamic ideology, legal principles, and moral codes — Klein identifies a new arena in which the “Islamic impact” on the slave system may be located. Because it is a perspective
which allows for the intersection of the public and the private, the "overlap" between the larger political economy and the actions of individual traders, it is one promising of future development. It is also a perspective consistent in general terms with some concerns which arise from Klein's look at post-emancipation, "post-slave" relationships, a subject to which I return in the following section.

The issue of Islamic concubinage continues to play a role in Klein's observations here, and it is a particularly interesting one given his earlier analyses. In looking at the example of the Fulbe of Guinea, he comments on the tendency among the ruling elite to "blacken" — such that in popular parlance the general peasant population is referred to as "red" in contrast to the "black" clerical and noble elite. And he notes that the explanation for this is rooted in Islamic law: *sharia* recognized equal rights of inheritance among children of the master, including the progeny of black slave concubines. The importance of this for our larger understanding of slavery in societies where concubinage was practiced, I would argue, is that it reveals how Islamic "laws" actually achieved exactly the same outcome as lineage slavery: absorption of slaves into the family and even, when inheritance rights were recognized, into the lineage.

The importance of concubinage was precisely that. While simple manumission could keep the slave within the family orbit in some form of dependency, "freedom" born of a concubine was actually a certificate of lineage. And when concubines became wives, the conduit to heritage and identity widened. Although Klein does not press the point, the material he presents in *Slavery and Colonial Rule* goes well beyond the "text" of Islamic law and the discourse of manumission, to what both meant in reality. The assumption that "freedom" from slavery meant an alienation of people, and therefore that Islamic concubinage operated in opposition to the process of lineage slavery, as he and Lovejoy had earlier hypothesized (Klein and Lovejoy 1979, 209), simply misses the essence of this complex institution as it actually functioned.

**Post Emancipation "Slave" Identity and Islam**

Klein has always been committed to linking the past to the present. Although not necessarily articulated formally in print, this concern strongly influenced the structuring of his interviews, the
nature of his “informal” information gathering, and the personal commitment which continued (indeed continues) to drive Klein’s interest in African history.\footnote{14} And in this case, it was clear that Islam and/or the legacies of an Islamic past were strongly integrated with the process and the outcome of emancipation. When Klein first commented on the continuing “symbols” of Islamic slavery — the payment of zakat to former masters, the desire of freed slaves to make the pilgrimage, the efforts of former slaves to build community mosques, the continuing (albeit often hidden) benefits available to slaves who retained “socially subservient” relations with former masters — there was not a lot of relevant research to draw upon.\footnote{15} But his observations raised some serious doubts about the role of Islam in the process of emancipation: was it principally a means of social control, as was often assumed? Or something more pervasive and nuanced? The question posed a daunting empirical and theoretical challenge. And like many of Klein’s challenges, it was one he took up himself in *Slavery and Colonial Rule.*\footnote{16}

The role of Islam in shaping the cultural identity of master and slave is the focus in what may well prove to be the most significant part of the book. Klein goes so far as to argue that Islam was a “tool” in the hands of masters and colonial officials, used to forge new colonial cultural identities [Klein 1998b, 229-31]. It must be realized that Klein’s arrival in the arena of cultural identity has not been via the current theoretical debates and “cultural studies,” but rather by way of twenty-five years of experiencing the slave legacy in everyday life during repeated visits to Senegal, Mali, and Guinea. Klein’s convictions about the dynamic role of Islam are generated by observations of behaviour. He is largely convinced that the mosque has become the “battleground in class struggle” [Klein 1998b, 229]. In the early part of the century, Islam was “used” to distinguish slave from free. The region of wasulu, for example, was (and to some extent still is), believed to be “not really Muslim.” Why? Because it was largely slave in population and was the principal source of slaves in the later nineteenth century. By definition, “slave” meant non-Muslim. And, in opposition, Muslim meant free.\footnote{17} This definition suited the cultural and social needs of the slave-owning elites. The irony lies in the fact that in seeking “freedom” within this cultural discourse, one was also therefore seeking
to be Muslim. And Islam, in recognizing the mutually interdependent roles of master and slave, provided the ideological justification for continued acknowledgement of former relations of servility during colonial rule. In the post-colonial era, the logic of the process continued, and hence Klein’s observations that former slaves often “claimed their identity in the Mosque.”

Klein tells the story of an old male slave, who although no longer obliged to buy his freedom by law in contemporary Senegal, did so anyway — and then left on pilgrimage. The only flaunting of the new legal situation was expressed in the fact that he did not consult with his master as to the acceptable price (Klein 1998b, 250). This incident, however, speaks as loudly to the question of Islam, culture, and identity among slaves (and today, former slaves) as do the examples of former slaves paying “symbolic” zakat or, as among the Fulbe, training scholars and building mosques. What is most striking is the fact that it was not the purchase which brought freedom for the slave, it was the pilgrimage: one could redeem oneself with money — legal freedom did not necessitate the hajj. But one could not make the hajj without being legally free. Klein suggests that actions such as these may have been nothing more than an attempt to be heard, as it were, in the language of the masters’ society. Or that becoming Muslim was still an element of functioning within, if not a framework of Islamic social control, at least a framework of the former Muslim master’s world (Klein 1998b, 247-48).

I believe we are looking at a “genuine” cultural identity, rooted in slavery and rooted in slaves becoming Muslims in their own right. Just as Klein expresses some skepticism about the ability of the “social control” argument to explain the complexities of the reality he has observed (Klein 1998b, 240-41), my own (albeit limited) research to date would question some of his assumptions about role-playing and imitation of “the world the masters made” with respect to “being Muslim.” In examples I can draw on from other former French colonial regimes, “being Muslim” played a range of roles from providing the base of slave identity to an otherwise heterogeneous social group, to forging a very real role as social agent in the local society. To reference the seminal work of Eugene Genovese, this “world” was no more in the hands of Muslim masters than that of the white masters of the American south. The
centrality of Islam as an evolving social ideology may have been more critical than Christianity was in the "new world" situation (although I suspect that is debatable as well), but it was no less an integral part of a process.

What is most significant, however, is the attention this discussion forces us to give to the issue of what being a slave in an Islamic society actually meant for the slave — this not only in terms of his/her enslavement or treatment according to Islamic law, but in terms of becoming Muslim. The old slave who immediately put a priority on making the pilgrimage: did he do so because of its significance to his status as a free Muslim? Or perhaps because of his stage in life as a devout Muslim? Or perhaps, as Klein would suppose, because it would mark his entry into his master's world as a free man? Also, the fact that, as far as we know, most slaves were or became Muslims during their bondage should also push us to ask several questions: what did that mean for the Islam practiced by their masters? How did the experience of dealing with Muslim slaves, legitimizing the continued servitude of Muslims, for example, shape interpretations of Islam? 22 This question is surely crucial to understanding how Islam is articulated and practiced today. Equally important, of course, is understanding just which aspects of Islamic teachings were adopted by slaves:23 were there differences depending on their position in the socioeconomic system? On their gender? On their age? As Klein knows so well, only they can really tell us the answers to such questions. And only if they want to.24

There is another significance to be drawn from Klein's rich and provocative concluding chapter, "A Question of Honour." As he points out, much of the literature to date has assumed that the ending of slavery marked a decline in the "quality" of Islam practiced [Klein 1998b, 229-31]. This assumption is also predicated on the analysis outlined earlier that the growing use of slave labour allowed masters to devote more time to scholarship and learning — the keys to preserving Islam [Klein 1998b, 42, 169-70]. However, if we think more closely about Islamization and slavery, and how they intersected within the world of the slave, and then think about the world of the master in which both "being Muslim" and retaining distinction from "being slave" were essential, one could postulate that ultimately an expanding system of slavery put limits on
the growth of Islam. As masters increasingly defined themselves in
contradistinction to slaves, they may well have attempted to deny
the spirituality of slaves in a variety of concrete, as well as ideolog-
ical, ways — the most “concrete” of all, of course, being freedom
and the right to fulfill the obligation of all Muslims to make the
hajj.25

While this hypothesis is still speculative, the reverse side of the
coin is much more evident, as Klein convincingly shows. He begins
by simply looking at the labour issue and its relation to scholarship.
In the end, he shows that emancipation not only did not diminish
the quality of Islam among masters, but gave an enormous boost to
the quality of Islam practiced by former slaves and their children. In
many areas, they constituted the majority of the population (Klein
1998b, 229-31, 313, also 169-70). Whether or not we will ultimately
be able to argue that expanding slave systems constrained the
development of Islamic ideology and practice, it is clear that their
dismantling encouraged it. Moreover, the impact of that growth
among society’s principal workers (what we would call both “blue”
and “white collar”) has been felt in new Islamic movements and
tariq, and in new politics, often closely linked to these movements.
Both avenues have also been opened to women, who have a whole
set of issues to address: some derive from the legacy of slavery,
some from being female, some from being both — and all from
being Muslim.

Conclusion
Everything Klein’s scholarship has told us over the years reiterates
his personal commitment to understanding how African history
can promote an understanding of the African present. While he
continues to seek the truth, even in the culmination of twenty-five
years of searching, I doubt he feels he has produced the definitive or
seminal work. That would put an end to the search, as well as to the
hours of discussion and debate, and, in a way, relegate the people
who always remain alive for Klein, to a truly dead past. It is in this
spirit that I suggest the “evaluation” of Klein’s impact on the field
is still premature. The most important outcome of his work on
Islam and slavery will become apparent only in the pursuance of
issues arising from this concluding chapter.

The combined questions around Islamic slave systems and
political economies, attempts to reconcile "Islamic" with "lineage" in those contexts, and efforts to understand the meaning of being Muslim to a slave or former slave point to the need to see Islam from at least two perspectives. Klein's analysis as derived from Meillassoux's paradigm draws out the importance of acknowledging the "public" and the "private" Islam in the context of looking at the larger political economy and the trader. The evidence he presents here argues for pushing that conceptual distinction further. The public character of Islam provides an ideology, always debatable by the ulama, from which can be drawn direction and sustenance for societal development; this is an Islam articulated through very public political and social policy. The private Islam provides a spiritual path, at once all-encompassing and universal, as well as intensely personal, signposted by surat, hadith, and fatwa. Both expressions of Islam coexist in any given social formation at any given time, and, as such, they both give shape to the reality of slavery as lived by abid, haratin, and hurr alike. I believe this approach grows out of Klein's observations in his earlier work, but is most strongly required to make sense of the emancipation and post-emancipation realities he intrudes upon in the former slaves' and former masters' worlds of Slavery and Colonial Rule.

I close with reference to one such example. The final page of the book roots Klein as much as the slaves he has studied. He speaks of the celebration of heroes that America's slave experience has generated, in contrast to the silence imposed on that of Africa. It is clear by his noted reference to the role of Christian conversion, and his loud silence on the growing number of Muslims, that he believes Islam to have played a role in the complicated process of suppressing what should not be suppressed. His concluding sentence reads:

What is most important, however, is not the success of a few, but the unsung achievement of hard-working rimaihe, woloso, belia, horso and jaam, who became modernizing peasants and who earn more money than their former masters (Klein 1998b, 251).

In wanting to sing of the unsung in this fashion, however, Klein risks overlooking the legacy of his own analysis. For as long as former slaves and masters both turn to Islam in their quest for honour, both will measure honour and value in the terms available
to them in their spiritual, personal life. Wealth — making more money than someone else, whoever he/she may be — is not part of Islam’s discourse with reference either to honour or to freedom. One can be certain that the intersecting, constantly evolving paths of public and private Islam will find ways in which to acknowledge and redefine “freedom” for masters and slaves alike. How this happens will undoubtedly be the central dynamic shaping the emergence of democracy in former French West Africa in the next century. Whether Klein’s interpretation holds in this longer-term development remains to be seen. What is most important from the point of view of both those who attempt, like him, to understand the phenomenon, and those who currently live it, is that he has devoted his long and ever-active career to giving legitimacy to the struggle.

Notes

1 See the full bibliography of Martin Klein’s publications on “Slavery” prepared by Joe Miller in this volume.
2 In fact, in one of these countries, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the most recent abolition was the act of the Republic in 1980. On the question of abolition and the “ending” of slavery during colonial times, see Miers and Roberts (1988).
3 He credited an intellectual debt here to his friend, the outstanding Senegalese historian, Boubacar Barry.
4 In the case of Asante and Oyo, for example, they distinguished between the influence Islam exercised as a factor in an emergent slave consciousness and that which emerges when it is the basis for legitimizing slavery as an institution.
5 Credit is due here to Fredrick Cooper (1977), who posed this question in similar terms.
6 There are some very important exceptions to this generalization like the work of Allan Christelow (1985) using court records in Kano, and the current work of Richard Roberts drawing on records from the French courts (see his article in this issue, “The End of Slavery, Colonial Courts and Social Conflict in Gumbu, 1908-1911”).
7 More recently, Klein alludes to an insight developed by an Indian scholar of slavery, Gyan Prakash, as he writes: “by defining something as slavery, colonial officials could declare it abolished and not worry about the relations of power and exploitation that remained” (Klein 1998b, 242). This would not be the first or last time colonialism was able to employ Islam to this end, both to define what was and what was not slavery!
I have attempted to explore this topic briefly in my contribution to Finkelman and Miller (McDougall 1998b, 434-39).

His co-author, Paul Lovejoy (1988), has developed the argument even further.

This is no small feat. Klein draws on the full field of research available, published and unpublished, as all syntheses should. Yet it is unusual in the extent to which all chapters are underpinned by Klein's own fieldwork, archival and oral. This is not a book that could or should have been written by any lesser scholar.

The most recent and sophisticated being John Hanson's (1996) study of al-Hajj Umar's legacies and his contribution to this collection, "Islam and Imperialism: Martin Klein's Contribution to an Understanding of the History of Senegambian Muslim Communities."

Richard Roberts' (1987) work has perhaps taken this furthest.

"Whereas Islam required that the children of concubines, and indeed the concubines themselves, be free, lineage structures guaranteed that elders and the wealthy acquired most women, slave and free, and that offspring were absorbed within the family."

I once had the pleasure of sharing several weeks of Marty's company while we were both doing research in Dakar. I realized, as I never had before, just how "seamless" was his conception of the past and present, of his role as historian and colleague, of his love of research and life. There are many ways to learn from a mentor.

The issues are raised pari passu in Klein (1977, 1988, 1989).

The question is addressed first in Klein (1977, 355-58), but it is clearly one which continued to occupy him over the years.

The argument in general permeates the final chapter of the book Klein (1998, especially 244-48; on the Wasulu, 229, 313).

I would argue that this is not necessarily synonymous with the notion of masters exercising "social control"; it is synonymous with the notion of everyone recognizing Islam as a framework of social stability.

See also Klein (1989, 221, 241-51).

In looking at data regarding former slaves' behaviour among the Fulbe of Mali, he suggests in some cases a large dose of "role-playing."

See, for example, the case of the freed-slave in Colonial Mauritania who certainly climbed the social and economic ladder as far as society would permit, but was also conscious of doing the "right thing" as a benevolent Muslim (McDougall 1988). And from another perspective, a female slave who made sense of herself and her identity primarily through her relationships as defined by Islamic stricture (McDougall 1998a).

There are several places where Klein (1998b) speaks to these questions both directly and indirectly. For example, whether one accepts Ames' argu-
ment or Klein's, the information cited from Ames 1953 thesis speaks to exactly what Fulbe slaves understood by "being Muslim" in terms of prayer, tithe (zakat) payment, and respect (240); elsewhere, evidence is cited which indirectly notes that being Muslim to slaves meant having Allah to care for you when you were sick (244), and, elsewhere again, reference is made to the lack of Qur'anic education slaves in Futa Jallon received and its effectiveness in delaying assimilation as Fulbe (245-47).

The issue of zakat is a case in point. Klein indicates that while some former slaves still pay assaka, which is "derived" from the Islamic tithe, they no longer recognize it as anything but custom. However, evidence he cites from other research [Klein 1998b, 220-21, 240] clearly indicates that for slaves, payment of the tithe was tied to Islam and to being a good Muslim. For at least some former slaves [221], assaka is still linked to religious obligation in payments to marabouts. The analysis cannot be pushed further without a better understanding of exactly what kind of question was being asked to determine assaka payments in some of Klein's comparative materials. I remain skeptical about the value of "household budget analyses" for revealing this kind of information. More to the point, one might want to ask that where assaka had become divorced from its Islamic origins, was this an example of deliberate attempts to dampen slaves' Muslim identity in contradistinction to that of their masters?

On the difficulties of getting answers from people who do not want to remember [Klein 1998b, 246]; even more extensively in Klein (1989).

And, indeed, Klein has evidence to this effect, which he cites with reference to the Fulbe of Futa Jallon (where they could, and could not, sit in the mosque; what they could, and could not, wear to the mosque; which functions they could, and could not, perform in the mosque, 230); and elsewhere, where rumaibe [former slaves] built their own mosques (195).

Terms from Arabic: "Slave," "freed-slave," and "freeman," respectively.

Klein notes that one of his friends, in referring to the fact that the capital city of Senegal (like the capital cities of Mauritania, Mali, and Guinea) is "large enough" for slaves to become anonymous, proffered the insight that: "Dakar, that is democracy!" [Klein 1998b, 251]. On this subject, see McDougall, Bhrane and Ruf forthcoming.

Bibliography


McDougall, E Ann, Mesky Bhrane and Urs Peter Rüf. Forthcoming.

