

slavery and islam

slavery and islam is a topic that has been discussed by historians, theologians, and scholars for centuries. This article explores the complex relationship between slavery and Islamic teachings, tracing its historical roots, examining the principles laid out in foundational texts, and analyzing how Islamic societies approached the institution of slavery. We delve into the Quranic perspective, the role of Hadith, reforms introduced over time, and the eventual abolition movements. Additionally, the article highlights the differences between Islamic slavery and other historical slave systems, addresses common misconceptions, and considers the legacy of slavery in Muslim-majority countries today. By providing factual insights and dispelling myths, this comprehensive guide aims to offer readers an authoritative resource on slavery and Islam.

- Origins of Slavery in Islamic Societies
- Quranic Perspective on Slavery
- Islamic Law and the Regulation of Slavery
- Social Roles and Rights of Slaves in Islam
- Movements Toward Abolition in Islamic History
- Differences Between Islamic Slavery and Other Slave Systems
- Common Misconceptions About Slavery and Islam
- Legacy and Contemporary Views on Slavery in Islam

Origins of Slavery in Islamic Societies

The institution of slavery existed long before the emergence of Islam in the seventh century. In the Arabian Peninsula, slavery was a socially accepted practice among various tribes. Slaves were typically acquired through warfare, trade, or inheritance. When Islam arose, it encountered a society where slavery was deeply entrenched and played a significant economic and social role. Rather than immediately abolishing the practice, Islamic teachings introduced new regulations and ethical guidelines that gradually transformed the treatment of slaves. Over time, these reforms laid the foundation for future movements towards abolition, but the initial acceptance of slavery reflected the realities of pre-Islamic society.

Quranic Perspective on Slavery

References to Slavery in the Quran

The Quran does not explicitly prohibit slavery, but it provides clear directives on the humane treatment of slaves and encourages their emancipation. Slaves, known as "abd" or "raqib," are mentioned numerous times in different contexts. The Quran emphasizes justice, compassion, and the importance of freeing slaves as an act of piety and charity. Verses often link the manumission of slaves to acts of repentance, atonement, and moral virtue.

Encouragement of Manumission

One of the distinctive features of Islamic teachings on slavery is the frequent encouragement to free slaves. The Quran associates the act of freeing slaves with spiritual rewards and social justice. For example, freeing a slave is prescribed as a way to expiate certain sins, such as breaking an oath. This approach gradually led to the reduction of slavery in Muslim societies over time.

- Manumission as a form of charity
- Linked to expiation of sins
- Protecting the dignity and welfare of slaves

Islamic Law and the Regulation of Slavery

Legal Framework in Sharia

Islamic jurisprudence, or Sharia, established specific regulations regarding slavery. These laws governed the acquisition, treatment, and emancipation of slaves. Slaves could not be enslaved arbitrarily; the primary sources of slaves were war captives and legal purchase. Islamic law mandated humane treatment, prohibited the separation of slave families, and afforded slaves certain rights, including the ability to earn wages and seek freedom.

Pathways to Freedom

Sharia provided multiple avenues for slaves to gain their freedom. The concept of "mukataba," a contract allowing slaves to buy their freedom, was widely recognized. Additionally, slave owners were encouraged to grant freedom voluntarily or as part of religious obligations. Manumission was often celebrated and supported by the wider community.

Social Roles and Rights of Slaves in Islam

Integration into Society

Unlike some other slave systems, Islamic societies often integrated slaves into daily life. Slaves could serve as domestic workers, soldiers, administrators, or artisans. Many slaves rose to prominent positions, especially those who converted to Islam and demonstrated loyalty or skill. Social mobility was possible, and freed slaves, known as "mawali," could participate fully in society.

Protection and Rights

Islamic teachings advocated for the humane treatment of slaves. Physical abuse, starvation, and unjust punishment were prohibited. Slaves were entitled to food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Marriage between slaves and free persons was permitted, and children born to slave mothers and free fathers were considered free. These protections distinguished Islamic slavery from harsher systems elsewhere.

1. Prohibition of physical abuse
2. Rights to sustenance and shelter
3. Potential for social mobility
4. Encouragement of manumission
5. Protection of family units

Movements Toward Abolition in Islamic History

Gradual Decline of Slavery

Over centuries, the ethical imperatives found in Islamic teachings contributed to the gradual decline of slavery in Muslim-majority societies. As economies evolved and social attitudes changed, the practice of slavery became less prevalent. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Islamic scholars and reformers played key roles in abolitionist movements, often citing Quranic values of justice and equality.

Modern Abolition and Legal Reforms

Most Muslim countries officially abolished slavery through legal reforms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. International pressure, shifting economic structures, and changing interpretations of religious texts all contributed to the end of institutional slavery. Today, slavery is universally condemned in Islamic law and by contemporary Muslim scholars.

Differences Between Islamic Slavery and Other Slave Systems

Comparative Analysis

The experience of slaves in Muslim societies differed significantly from those in other historical contexts, such as the transatlantic slave trade. While exploitation and hardship undoubtedly existed, Islamic laws provided certain safeguards and opportunities for upward mobility. The integration of slaves into social and political life, the encouragement of manumission, and the prohibition of racial discrimination set Islamic slavery apart from many other systems.

Role of Race and Ethnicity

Islamic slavery was not based primarily on race. Slaves came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Africans, Asians, and Europeans. The absence of a racial caste system meant that freed slaves could assimilate and achieve social success, a contrast to race-based slave systems elsewhere.

Common Misconceptions About Slavery and Islam

Misinterpretations of Sacred Texts

Some critics argue that Islam condones slavery, but this perspective often arises from misinterpretations of historical context and religious texts. While Islamic scripture acknowledges the existence of slavery, it simultaneously advocates for its humane treatment and eventual abolition. Understanding the gradualist approach of Islamic teachings helps clarify these misconceptions.

Contemporary Clarifications

Modern Islamic scholarship universally rejects all forms of slavery. The historical practice is acknowledged but not endorsed in contemporary religious thought. Efforts to conflate Islam with slavery ignore centuries of reform, ethical evolution, and present-day condemnation of the institution.

Legacy and Contemporary Views on Slavery in Islam

Historical Impact

The legacy of slavery in Islamic societies continues to influence discussions on race, social justice, and historical memory. While the institution is no longer practiced, its impact persists in cultural attitudes and legal reforms. Efforts to address historical injustices often include acknowledgment of the role of slavery in shaping societies.

Modern Perspectives

Contemporary Muslim scholars and communities actively condemn slavery in all forms, citing the foundational principles of equality and justice in Islam. Modern interpretations emphasize universal human rights and the importance of historical accountability. The commitment to eradicating exploitation remains a central aspect of Islamic ethics today.

Questions and Answers About Slavery and Islam

Q: What does the Quran say about slavery in Islam?

A: The Quran acknowledges the existence of slavery in society but encourages humane treatment and manumission of slaves. It frequently associates freeing slaves with acts of piety and moral virtue, making it a recommended practice for believers.

Q: Did Islam introduce slavery?

A: No, slavery existed in the Arabian Peninsula and other regions long before the advent of Islam. Islamic teachings sought to regulate, reform, and gradually diminish the institution rather than introducing it.

Q: Were slaves in Islamic societies allowed to gain their freedom?

A: Yes, Islamic law provided several avenues for slaves to obtain freedom, including through contracts (mukataba), voluntary manumission by owners, or as part of religious obligations and charity.

Q: How was the treatment of slaves in Islam different from other societies?

A: Islamic law mandated humane treatment, prohibited abuse, and allowed slaves to marry, own property, and pursue social mobility. The institution was not based on race, and freed slaves could integrate into society.

Q: When did Muslim-majority countries abolish slavery?

A: Most Muslim-majority countries abolished slavery between the late 19th and early 20th centuries through legal reforms, often influenced by international pressure and evolving interpretations of Islamic teachings.

Q: Is slavery permitted in Islam today?

A: No, slavery is universally condemned by contemporary Islamic scholars and is illegal in all Muslim-majority countries. Modern interpretations of Islam emphasize human rights and the abolition of exploitation.

Q: Did Islamic teachings encourage the freeing of slaves?

A: Yes, manumission was strongly encouraged in Islamic teachings, and freeing slaves was linked to expiation of sins and charity, making it a highly regarded act.

Q: Are there misconceptions about slavery and Islam?

A: Yes, common misconceptions include the belief that Islam endorses slavery. In reality, Islamic teachings provided a framework for humane treatment and gradual abolition.

Q: What is mukataba in Islamic law?

A: Mukataba is a contract between a slave and owner that allows the slave to earn and pay for their freedom over time, an established legal pathway to manumission in Islamic societies.

Q: How does the legacy of slavery affect Muslim societies today?

A: The legacy of slavery continues to influence social attitudes and historical memory, but modern Muslim communities actively work to address injustices and promote equality in line with Islamic ethical principles.

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Slavery and Islam: A Complex and Often Misunderstood History

The relationship between slavery and Islam is a complex and sensitive topic, often shrouded in misinformation and misunderstanding. This comprehensive exploration delves into the historical realities of slavery within Islamic societies, dispelling common myths and providing a nuanced perspective on a deeply troubling aspect of the past. We will examine the Islamic texts' perspectives

on slavery, the historical practices of enslavement within Muslim communities, and the eventual abolition movements within these societies. Understanding this history is crucial for a complete understanding of both Islamic history and the global history of slavery.

H2: Islamic Texts and the Institution of Slavery

The Quran, the central religious text of Islam, does not explicitly endorse or condemn slavery. Instead, it regulates the institution, outlining rules and guidelines for the treatment of slaves. These regulations, while far from eliminating the inherent injustice of slavery, did aim to mitigate some of its harshest aspects. For instance, the Quran emphasizes the importance of fair treatment, encourages manumission (the freeing of slaves), and outlines specific legal frameworks concerning slave ownership. However, it's crucial to understand that these regulations existed within a broader societal context where slavery was already deeply entrenched. The Quran's approach, therefore, can be interpreted as an attempt to regulate an existing social ill rather than advocating for its complete abolition.

H3: Interpretations and Divergent Practices

The interpretation and application of these Quranic verses varied widely across different Islamic societies and historical periods. Some scholars and rulers actively promoted the manumission of slaves, while others maintained robust systems of slavery. This diversity reflects the influence of pre-Islamic customs, local legal traditions, and varying interpretations of religious texts. The historical reality is therefore multifaceted, avoiding simplistic narratives of universal practice. Furthermore, the level of cruelty and exploitation varied drastically, influenced by regional cultural norms and economic conditions.

H2: Historical Context of Slavery in Muslim Societies

Slavery existed in various forms throughout the history of Muslim societies, mirroring patterns observed in other cultures across the globe. While the transatlantic slave trade is often associated with European powers, the Arab slave trade, predating and overlapping with the transatlantic trade, significantly contributed to the widespread enslavement of Africans. However, it's critical to differentiate between the motivations and characteristics of these different slave trades. The Arab slave trade involved various routes and diverse forms of enslavement, often connected to warfare, raiding, and economic exploitation.

H3: The Diversity of Enslaved Populations

It is crucial to recognize the diversity of enslaved populations within Islamic societies. Slaves came from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Africans, Europeans, and Asians. Their experiences differed based on their origins, skills, and the specific context of their enslavement. The widespread misconception that slavery in Islamic societies primarily involved Africans ignores the complexities of the historical record.

H2: Abolition Movements and the Decline of Slavery in Muslim Societies

While slavery persisted for centuries within Muslim societies, movements towards abolition emerged gradually over time. These movements were often influenced by religious reformers, social activists, and changing economic conditions. The Ottoman Empire, for instance, witnessed a gradual decline in the scale and acceptance of slavery, though complete abolition came later than in other parts of the world. Various factors, including the rise of abolitionist movements in the West and shifting economic landscapes, contributed to the eventual demise of slavery within predominantly Muslim nations.

H3: The Legacy of Slavery

The legacy of slavery in Muslim societies remains a complex and sensitive issue. It continues to impact social structures, cultural identities, and political narratives. Addressing this legacy requires acknowledging the historical realities, engaging in open dialogue, and promoting reconciliation and understanding.

Conclusion

The relationship between slavery and Islam is a multifaceted historical reality that resists simple categorization. While the Quran contains regulations concerning the treatment of slaves, it didn't lead to the immediate abolition of the practice. The historical experiences of enslaved people within Muslim societies were diverse and varied widely across time and geography. Understanding this complex history requires critical engagement with the historical record, acknowledging both the mitigating factors outlined in religious texts and the brutal realities of slavery's practice. Open and honest discussion is essential to confronting this troubling aspect of the past and working towards a more just future.

FAQs

1. Did the Quran justify slavery? The Quran didn't explicitly justify slavery, but it regulated it, outlining rules for slave treatment and encouraging manumission. Its approach is complex and open to interpretation.
2. How did the Arab slave trade compare to the transatlantic slave trade? Both were devastating, but the Arab slave trade operated on different routes and for various reasons, spanning centuries before the transatlantic trade and continuing concurrently.
3. When was slavery abolished in Muslim countries? The abolition of slavery varied greatly across different Muslim societies, with some countries abolishing it earlier than others. It wasn't a single

event but a gradual process occurring over different periods.

4. What role did religious scholars play in the abolition of slavery in Muslim societies? Some religious scholars played a crucial role in advocating for the abolition or reform of slavery, interpreting religious texts to support arguments for freedom and equality.

5. What is the ongoing impact of the history of slavery in Muslim communities? The legacy of slavery continues to shape social structures, cultural identities, and political dynamics in many Muslim communities today. Addressing this legacy requires ongoing work towards reconciliation and understanding.

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African people manifest itself well into the 21st century. Since its formal abolition in 1863, it has assumed a more devious face, in the form of refurbished slavery. Globalisation through the domination of the forces of production by Multi National cartels is a new form of slavery. Allamah Rizvi re-visits this contentious issue of the slave and defines it within its rightful context.

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slavery and islam: The Curse of Ham David M. Goldenberg, 2009-04-11 How old is prejudice against black people? Were the racist attitudes that fueled the Atlantic slave trade firmly in place 700 years before the European discovery of sub-Saharan Africa? In this groundbreaking book, David Goldenberg seeks to discover how dark-skinned peoples, especially black Africans, were portrayed in the Bible and by those who interpreted the Bible--Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Unprecedented in rigor and breadth, his investigation covers a 1,500-year period, from ancient Israel (around 800 B.C.E.) to the eighth century C.E., after the birth of Islam. By tracing the development of anti-Black sentiment during this time, Goldenberg uncovers views about race, color, and slavery that took shape over the centuries--most centrally, the belief that the biblical Ham and his descendants, the black Africans, had been cursed by God with eternal slavery. Goldenberg begins by examining a host of references to black Africans in biblical and postbiblical Jewish literature. From there he moves the inquiry from Black as an ethnic group to black as color, and early Jewish attitudes toward dark skin color. He goes on to ask when the black African first became identified as slave in the Near East, and, in a powerful culmination, discusses the resounding influence of this identification on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinking, noting each tradition's exegetical treatment of pertinent biblical passages. Authoritative, fluidly written, and situated at a richly illuminating nexus of images, attitudes, and history, *The Curse of Ham* is sure to have a profound and lasting impact on the perennial debate over the roots of racism and slavery, and on the study of early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

slavery and islam: Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism Benedikt Koehler, 2014-06-17 *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism* proposes a strikingly original thesis—that capitalism first emerged in Arabia, not in late medieval Italian city states as is commonly assumed. Early Islam made a seminal but largely unrecognized contribution to the history of economic thought; it is the only religion founded by an entrepreneur. Descending from an elite dynasty of religious, civil, and commercial leaders, Muhammad was a successful businessman before founding Islam. As such, the new religion had much to say on trade, consumer protection, business ethics, and property. As Islam rapidly spread across the region so did the economic teachings of early Islam, which eventually made their way to Europe. *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism* demonstrates how Islamic institutions and business practices were adopted and adapted in Venice and Genoa. These financial innovations include the invention of the corporation, business management techniques, commercial arithmetic, and monetary reform. There were other Islamic institutions assimilated in Europe: charities, the waqf, inspired trusts, and institutions of higher learning; the madrasas were models for the oldest colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. As such, it can be rightfully said that these essential aspects of capitalist thought all have Islamic roots.

slavery and islam: Misquoting Muhammad Jonathan A.C. Brown, 2014-08-07 AN INDEPENDENT BEST BOOKS ON RELIGION 2014 PICK Few things provoke controversy in the

modern world like the religion brought by Prophet Muhammad. Modern media are replete with alarm over jihad, underage marriage and the threat of amputation or stoning under Shariah law. Sometimes rumor, sometimes based on fact and often misunderstood, the tenets of Islamic law and dogma were not set in the religion's founding moments. They were developed, like in other world religions, over centuries by the clerical class of Muslim scholars. Misquoting Muhammad takes the reader back in time through Islamic civilization and traces how and why such controversies developed, offering an inside view into how key and controversial aspects of Islam took shape. From the protests of the Arab Spring to Istanbul at the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and from the ochre red walls of Delhi's great mosques to the trade routes of the Indian Ocean world, Misquoting Muhammad lays out how Muslim intellectuals have sought to balance reason and revelation, weigh science and religion, and negotiate the eternal truths of scripture amid shifting values.

slavery and islam: Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction Jonathan A.C. Brown, 2011-03-24 Drawing on traditional Muslim sources, Michael Cook describes Muhammad's life and teaching. He also attempts to stand back from this traditional picture to show how far it is historically justified.

slavery and islam: The Story of Rufino João José Reis, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, Marcus J. M. de Carvalho, 2019-12-09 Winner of the Casa de las Américas Prize for Brazilian Literature, *The Story of Rufino* reconstructs the lively biography of Rufino José Maria, set against the historical context of Brazil and Africa in the nineteenth century. The book tells the story of Rufino or Abuncare, a Yoruba Muslim from the kingdom of Oyo, in present-day Nigeria. Enslaved as an adolescent by a rival ethnic group, he was captured by Brazilian slave traders and taken to Brazil as a slave sometime in the early 1820s. In 1835, after being enslaved in Salvador and Rio Grande do Sul, Rufino bought his freedom with money he made as a hired-out slave and perhaps from making Islamic amulets. He found work in Rio de Janeiro as a cook on a slave ship bound for Luanda in Angola, despite the trans-Atlantic slave trade having been illegal in Brazil since 1831. Rufino himself became a petty slave trader. He made a few voyages before his ship was captured by the British and taken to Sierra Leone in 1841 for trial by the Anglo-Brazilian Mixed Commission to determine if it was equipped for the slave trade, since there were no slaves on board. During the three months awaiting the court's decision, Rufino lived among Yoruba Muslims, his people, and attended Quranic and Arabic classes. He later returned to Sierra Leone as a witness in a court case and attended classes with Muslim masters for almost two years. Once back in Brazil, he established himself as a diviner -- serving whites and blacks, free and slaves, Brazilians and Africans, Muslim and non-Muslims -- as well as a spiritual leader, an Alufa, in the local Afro-Muslim community. In 1853 Rufino was arrested due to rumors of an imminent African slave revolt. The police used as evidence for his arrest the large number of Arabic manuscripts in his possession, the same kind of material the police had found with Muslim rebels in Bahia thirty years earlier. During his interrogation, Rufino told his life story, which is used to reconstruct the world in which he lived under slavery and in freedom on African shores, aboard slave ships, and in Brazil. An extraordinary Atlantic history carefully pieced together from the archives, *The Story of Rufino* illuminates the complexities of slavery and freedom in Africa and Brazil and the resilience of ethnic and religious identities.

slavery and islam: Hadith Jonathan A.C. Brown, 2017-12-07 Contrary to popular opinion, the bulk of Islamic law does not come from the Quran but from hadith, first-hand reports of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds, passed from generation to generation. However, with varying accounts often only committed to paper a century after the death of Muhammad, Islamic scholars, past and present, have been faced with complex questions of historical authenticity. In this wide-ranging introduction, Jonathan A. C. Brown explores the collection and criticism of hadith, and the controversy surrounding its role in modern Islam. This edition, revised and updated with additional case studies and attention to the very latest scholarship, also features a new chapter on how hadiths have been used politically, both historically and in the Arab Spring and its aftermath. Informative and accessible, it is perfectly suited to students, scholars and general readers interested in this critical element of Islam.

slavery and islam: The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia Ismael M. Montana, 2013-08-06 In this groundbreaking work, Ismael Montana fully explicates the complexity of Tunisian society and culture and reveals how abolition was able to occur in an environment hostile to such change. Moving beyond typical slave trade studies, he departs from the traditional regional paradigms that isolate slavery in North Africa from its global dynamics to examine the trans-Saharan slave trade in a broader historical context. The result is a study that reveals how European capitalism, political pressure, and evolving social dynamics throughout the western Mediterranean region helped shape this seismic cultural event.

slavery and islam: Conquered Populations in Early Islam Elizabeth Urban, 2020-01-10 This book traces the journey of new Muslims as they joined the early Islamic community and articulated their identities within it. It focuses on Muslims of slave origins, who belonged to the society in which they lived but whose slave background rendered them somehow alien. How did these Muslims at the crossroads of insider and outsider find their place in early Islamic society? How did Islamic society itself change to accommodate these new members? By analysing how these liminal Muslims resolved the tension between belonging and otherness, *Conquered Populations in Early Islam* reveals the shifting boundaries of the early Islamic community and celebrates the dynamism of Islamic history.

slavery and islam: Slavery in the Black Sea Region, c.900-1900 , 2021-11-29 Slavery in the Black Sea Region, c.900-1900 explores the Black Sea region as an encounter zone of cultures, legal regimes, religions, and enslavement practices. The topics discussed in the chapters include Byzantine slavery, late medieval slave trade patterns, slavery in Christian societies, Tatar and cossack raids, the position of Circassians in the slave trade, and comparisons with the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This volume aims to stimulate a broader discussion on the patterns of unfreedom in the Black Sea area and to draw attention to the importance of this region in the broader debates on global slavery. Contributors are: Viorel Achim, Michel Balard, Hannah Barker, Andrzej Gliwa, Colin Heywood, Sergei Pavlovich Karpov, Mikhail Kizilov, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, Maryna Kravets, Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska, Sandra Origone, Victor Ostapchuk, Daphne Penna, Felicia Roşu, and Ehud R. Toledano.

slavery and islam: The Doctrine of Slavery Bill Warner, 2010-09 The modern historical theory of slavery is that white men brought Africans to the Western hemisphere, where they were sold for profit and put to work as slaves. The modern theory is true as far as it goes, but it does not go nearly far enough. Slavery goes far beyond the 300-year period when whites bought slaves from the Muslim wholesalers on the West coast of Africa. For 1400 years Islam waged jihad in Africa, India and Europe to enslave non-Muslims. Islam ran the slave markets, not only on the West coast of Africa, but in North Africa and East Africa. The foundation for this business was the Islamic doctrine that makes slavery a moral virtue. Mohammed's example established the way to be the perfect slave trader and slave owner. He sold slaves he captured to finance jihad. Islam has a highly detailed doctrine of slavery. This book is a fascinating study of the ideology that supported the world's largest slave culture and still sells slaves today.

slavery and islam: African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade: Volume 1, The Sources Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene, Martin A. Klein, 2013-05-13 Though the history of slavery is a central topic for African, Atlantic world and world history, most of the sources presenting research in this area are European in origin. To cast light on African perspectives, and on the point of view of enslaved men and women, this group of top Africanist scholars has examined both conventional historical sources (such as European travel accounts, colonial documents, court cases, and missionary records) and less-explored sources of information (such as folklore, oral traditions, songs and proverbs, life histories collected by missionaries and colonial officials, correspondence in Arabic, and consular and admiralty interviews with runaway slaves). Each source has a short introduction highlighting its significance and orienting the reader. This first of two volumes provides students and scholars with a trove of African sources for studying African slavery and the slave trade.

slavery and islam: Brownlie's Principles of Public International Law James Crawford, Ian Brownlie, 2019 Serving as a single volume introduction to the field as a whole, this ninth edition of

Brownlie's Principles of International Law seeks to present international law as a system that is based on, and helps structure, relations among states and other entities at the international level.

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