



Slavery in the Mediterranean

Giulia Bonazza

INTRODUCTION¹

Slavery in the early modern Mediterranean world from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was characterized by a high number of slaves in circulation; the cultural and economic impact of the reciprocity of slave trade practices in coastal regions; and the centrality of the Mediterranean to other slave trading routes. The region witnessed enslavement due to war, privateering, piracy, and other slavery networks. Slaves from sub-Saharan Africa and the colonies passed through the Mediterranean en route to other parts of Europe. The practices of enslavement in Southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire with regard to war and privateering were similar, and the “slavery of reciprocity” was an important factor there as well. Slaves were brought to the Mediterranean world from other parts of Southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire along various routes. The majority of the Ottoman Empire’s slaves were from sub-Saharan Africa, Western Africa, and the Red Sea area. Slaves in Europe predominantly came from Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and the colonial world.

From a quantitative perspective, Mediterranean slavery involved an estimated 7–9 million people, with the number of slaves in Europe during the period from 1500 to 1800 estimated at just over 2.5 million. Data on the slave trade from Africa to the Ottoman Empire suggest that approximately 16,000–18,000 men and women were transported annually during the nineteenth

G. Bonazza (✉)
Ca’ Foscari University, Venice, Italy
e-mail: giulia.bonazza@unive.it

century. However, historians still lack the sources to calculate the number of slaves in each country or empire within the Mediterranean sphere with appreciable precision.² Available figures for the slave trade across the Atlantic and with the colonial world are more exact: 12 million people were involved in the Atlantic trade, and around 10.7 million arrived in the Americas.³ While these numbers are much higher than those for the Mediterranean, recent studies of urban settings such as Lisbon in Portugal and Bursa in the Ottoman Empire indicate that the proportion of slaves to inhabitants was similar in the Mediterranean and some colonial cities. Individual countries in Europe and in the colonial world are likewise comparable: Estimates suggest that around 400,000 slaves arrived in Portugal between the end of the sixteenth century and 1761, the majority of them in Lisbon.⁴ A further estimation assumes 700,000–800,000 slaves in the entire Iberian Peninsula in the period from 1450 to 1750—with again around 400,000 of them in Portugal—as well as 360,000 slaves sent to Spanish colonies during the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century.⁵ In Bursa, 7699 of 12,832 surveyed households had slaves between 1595 and 1603.⁶

The number of slaves in the Iberian Peninsula was greater than the number taken to the British colonies in North America at the time. Didier Lahon has shown how this significant cohort contributed to making slavery an omnipresent social phenomenon in early modern Portugal—one that touched all social classes directly or indirectly and influenced most economic, social, and cultural activities. For this reason, *ancien régime* Portugal is defined as a “slave society” as opposed to a “society with slaves,” as was the case elsewhere in Europe.⁷ In more general terms, the early modern Mediterranean world was long classified as being composed of “societies with slaves” rather than “slave societies,” but over the past twenty years the historiography has pinpointed several exceptions to this rule in both Southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Different systems of slavery can coexist in the same geographical area, and both “slave societies” and “societies with slaves” were present in the Mediterranean, just as they were in the colonial world. “Societies with slaves” are societies in which the institution of slavery is relatively peripheral to local economies and social status, like in New England and Canada. By contrast, the plantation system in the more southerly English plantation colonies such as Virginia and the Carolinas gave rise to “slave societies.” In the European context, Portugal can be defined as a “slave society,” while the same does not apply to the German states.⁸

The theory that slavery assumed a relatively mild form and was not practiced on a large scale in the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish societies surrounding the Mediterranean Sea has been disproved by new comparative research on other geographical spaces and other slave trading economies around the globe. This involves more detailed analysis of the living and working conditions of slaves in comparison to other coerced workers. In both the Mediterranean and the rest of Europe, the origin or point of departure of slaves was varied: There were “African-descended” slaves from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and

the Atlantic colonies as well as other slaves from the Indian Ocean region. This is exemplified by the story of Emanuel Fernandez: in 1641, the dark-skinned man from the city of Goa in the East Indies worked as an enslaved porter in Venice before eventually regaining his freedom after being baptized and integrated into the Venetian community. The inquisition in Venice later investigated him for committing blasphemy against the Christian God while intoxicated.⁹

In general, there is a theoretical distinction between captives and slaves in the Mediterranean and European contexts. The term “captive” does not feature regularly in the taxonomy of early modern sources in every country, whereas the word “slave” is invariably among the standard repertoire. In theory, captivity was a temporary condition of slavery from which a person could be freed by intermediaries, redemption institutions, or relatives. The captive became a forced worker upon being enslaved, but only for a certain period. The usual duration of the captivity of Christian slaves in North Africa was around 5 years, with only 2 percent held for more than 20 years. There is no comparable data on the duration of captivity in Europe, however. Most of the historiography suggests that the majority of captives eventually integrated into European society.¹⁰ The ransom of captives was also a vital factor in the Mediterranean economy,¹¹ a “lucrative business” involving many economic stakeholders: redemption institutions, religious orders, private merchants, municipalities and states, consuls, and bankers.¹²

Unlike the captive, the slave was unfree for an indefinite period from a legal point of view. In reality, slaves could also sometimes be manumitted by their owner or the state. Furthermore, a captive could be sold as a slave rather than being released for ransom; the conditions of captivity and slavery were thus at least partly commutable. Black captives in the Mediterranean were less likely to be ransomed than Levantine slaves because they often did not have family, an institution, or a state interested in their release.¹³

Captivity in the Mediterranean existed in a form of reciprocity between Southern European countries and the Ottoman Empire and its satellite states, including the regencies of Tunis, Algiers, Tripolitania, and Egypt. There were Muslim captives in the European countries and Christian captives in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire—as well as captives of other confessions, some of them Jewish. The ransom of captives remained an important business in the Mediterranean region until the mid-nineteenth century. There were also slaves from the colonial world, who were mostly owned privately rather than by a state. Following the juridical abolition of slavery throughout Europe, North African slave markets traded slaves from sub-Saharan Africa to Europeans, for example missionaries or nobles, who continued to ransom or buy them. The analysis of Mediterranean slavery in this chapter will focus on Southern European practices, especially those in the Italian states, France, Portugal, Spain, and Austria. Comparisons with the Ottoman world regarding forms of enslavement, slave labor and coercion, and routes to freedom will also be made.

FORMS OF ENSLAVEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

One of the principal reasons for enslavement in the Mediterranean was war. During armed conflicts, taking captives was legal and opportunities to do so were plentiful. Even during times of peace between the European powers and the Ottoman Empire, the capture of women and men by way of privateering and piracy was a common phenomenon. Privateering went on until 1856, and slavery continued illegally around the Mediterranean until the end of the nineteenth century. While it was an everyday practice, selling slaves was actually unlawful in most of Europe well before the nineteenth century. The presence of slaves was nevertheless widely accepted even where it was controlled or prohibited by law. Slaves from all parts of the colonial world were illegally brought to Europe via the Mediterranean by merchants and captains, and their slave status persisted in Europe. Introducing slaves from the colonial world was outlawed in France and Portugal when their numbers became too high; for example, colonial slaves were admitted to France only until 1738. Before that time, owners could bring their slaves from the Antilles to the motherland for religious education or to teach them a profession. If a slave married in France, he or she would become free on French soil. In 1738, however, the growing black population in France prompted the abolishment of marriage for slaves, and in 1777 the monarch declared that slaves could not be manumitted or sold by their owners. Furthermore, slaves could now only remain in France for a maximum of 3 years. Their arrival had to be declared immediately and was subject to taxation. Abandoned slaves or maroons were arrested. The legislation passed in 1777 prohibited all blacks and “mulattoes” from entering France.¹⁴

Taxation upon entry of a slave into a territory also occurred in Istanbul, where the Sultan tried to control the activities of slave traders through the *pencik*.¹⁵ The introduction of new slaves to Portugal was prohibited in 1761 even though slave labor was vital to the country’s economy. While slavery persisted, the new law limited the permissible numbers of slaves and reoriented the trade around northern Brazil. In 1801, the chief of police of Lisbon, Pina Manique, warned of labor shortages in the city. In 1773, the “Law of Free Birth” had targeted the hereditary element of slavery by automatically liberating fourth-generation slaves (*mulatos* and *pardos*).¹⁶

In the Italian states, there were no specific anti-slavery laws until the first half of the nineteenth century—although selling slaves was forbidden in the Republic of Venice in the early modern period, with only their presence being allowed. In general, the fluidity of the law was motivated by the fact that slavery was more or less explicitly permitted in Europe—in certain instances even in countries promoting the principle of free soil. During the eighteenth century, notions of the danger of “black” contamination and “racial” discourses became more widespread as well.

In terms of war captives, only non-Muslims were enslaved in war in the Ottoman Empire, and only non-Christians in Europe. Converted captives were

not automatically legally free after conversion—only after a certain period and under specific conditions. During the campaign to conquer Vienna in 1683, the Ottoman army took 6000 adult males, 25,000 females, and 50,000 children as captives, and the Republic of Venice apprehended numerous Ottomans during the Morea war (1684–1718) for use as rowers. In Venice—but not in Genoa or in Rome—the term “prisoner of war” was used instead of “slave.”¹⁷ Besides war, piracy was another common setting of enslavement; it accounted for a significant share of the total number of captured men, and Fernand Braudel referred to the ongoing phenomenon as a “minor war.” Unlike corsairs, pirates were not licensed by governments, so their captures were illegal. In the Adriatic Sea, the *Dulcignotti* from Ulcinj attacked many Adriatic and Ionian cities and villages. As Salvatore Bono argued, the greatest threat to Cirò, a small Calabrian village, were pirates from Ulcinj rather than those from North Africa. Furthermore, in a history of the village entitled *Sciagure di Cirò per le incursioni di Barbareschi*, the inhabitants declared that Cirò was swarming with French privateers in 1711, and later with *Dulcignotti* and Turks. Likewise in 1711, forty-four people were captured from the church in a small village close to Lecce.¹⁸

Moving on to other types of enslavement resulting from forced slave mobility around the globe, the Mediterranean trade also involved slaves brought to Italian cities from the Atlantic colonial world. The complexity of the global circulation of slaves between the ports of the Atlantic Ocean and the Italian territories is evidenced by documents produced by the Roman Holy Office in the eighteenth century. Slaves from ports in the Antilles and Brazil reached Italy, in one case via the Cape of Good Hope. Ship captains, merchants, missionaries, and nobles were all mediators in this process. The case of Martino, a black boy born on Saint Thomas Island in the Danish Antilles to a family originating from Guinea, is illustrative: Martino arrived in Genoa following several changes in his ownership and after traversing various Atlantic ports and the Mediterranean. On 8 November 1786, the Archbishop of Genoa wrote of doubts surrounding Martino’s baptism application received by the Holy Office in Rome; he made reference to information that the boy had communicated to the Genoese priest Nicola Maria Ferri, *penitenziere* of the Metropolitan Church of Genoa.

A young Moor named Martino, who was born on St. Thomas Island in the Antilles, and whose appearance suggests he is now around fifteen-sixteen years old, was nine years old when kidnapped by a French ship captain while bathing. He was then transported to the Cape of Good Hope and sold to a Genoese merchant, Pietro Paciugo, who lived there. After around three-four years serving him and obeying all his orders, he was sold to a Milanese man named Mr. Puglia. He was a ship captain and shopkeeper in Genoa who was passing through the Cape of Good Hope. The Moor served his second master both on sea and land, during the first journey to Genoa after his purchase, and then on another journey from Genoa to Spain and back. The second seller decided immediately to educate him when they reached Genoa for the first time, but then he departed

again and took the Moor with him, and therefore he lost all his learning. When he came back, he had to restart his lessons. His first master had never offered him an education and never talked to him about religion. After two years, his second owner sold him last March to the Knight of Malta Andrea di Negro, a Genoese patrician, with whom he still lives and who has paid close attention to his education.¹⁹

According to Martino, his father was a free man working on Saint Thomas Island and not a slave, given that he was paid. His mother had never spoken to him about baptism or the Holy Trinity, but she had often mentioned God. It seems that Martino spoke Genoese well; we can assume his owners had taught him the language. The Archbishop of Genoa asked the Holy Office whether the boy could be baptized after being educated in the Catholic faith. Martino's last owner, Andrea di Negro, who educated him in Catholicism, was born in Genoa in 1720 to Agostino Di Negro and Dorotea Lomellini. He was a patrician and a Knight of Malta.

Martino's case demonstrates circulation directly from the Cape of Good Hope to Genoa, but the main European recruitment channel for overseas slaves was through Portugal or Spain—as in the case of the *Hofmohren* (“court Moors”), the black servants at the court of the Habsburg Empire who worked as musicians, messengers, and horse grooms, or in that of the “Atlantic slaves” on Italian territory who worked for captains, merchants, or nobles. Countries that did not control a formal colonial empire in the early modern period were thus supplied with slaves by way of imperial trading routes and the intermediation of local shipowners who worked for imperial powers. In 1451, a man named Perablanco became the first slave gifted to an Austrian noble by a Portuguese owner, and Cassanth, a young African who reached Brazil and then Lisbon aboard a Portuguese frigate commanded by Captain de Bosa, arrived in Naples in 1826 on a frigate from Sorrento commanded by Captain D. Carlo Cilenti.²⁰ In sum, there were multiple forms of enslavement in the Mediterranean area, and the slaves present there originated not only in the countries of the Mediterranean itself but in various parts of the world.

SLAVES' EXPERIENCES

Captives and slaves were employed in various types of labor in Southern Europe. Public slaves primarily worked on galleys and construction sites, in manufacturing, or as soldiers. Private slaves were usually domestic for nobles and middle-class families, although they could also be employed in agricultural and production activities or rented out. Captives worked as rowers and builders in ports or *bagnini*, and they became soldiers or assumed more responsible roles after conversion. They could also open small shops in port cities or engage in smuggling. Slaves, on the other hand, were mainly domestic servants or agricultural laborers, although in the service of nobles or princes they could also become musicians, nurses, valets, or butlers. This latter minority

group enjoyed better working conditions than agricultural slaves. The same was true in other Mediterranean regions as well: In the Ottoman Empire, the demand for unfree labor was largely focused on domestic and menial workers, but agricultural slavery was also important. Furthermore, there were elite (military-administrative slaves and *kull* harem slaves) and non-elite slaves (domestic, agricultural, and menial workers). At least in theory, the “sultan’s servants” and “state servitors” were privileged compared to other slaves.²¹

In the Kingdom of Naples, numerous slaves were employed alongside convicts and free wage laborers in the construction of the Caserta royal palace (1753–1800). In 1765, Jérôme de La Lande reported that 600 men were working on the building, with 75 of them convicts, 165 Turkish slaves, and 160 baptized slaves. The others were free workers. Baptized slaves earned four *grane* more per day than non-baptized slaves, were well-dressed, and lived in separate districts. In Portugal, slaves were subjected to the most degrading conditions and functions, but the long-term mechanisms of exclusion were based less on physical violence than on discrimination. Enslaved men and women mostly worked in cities as domestic or menial laborers: water carriers, excrement drainers, sweepers, fish sellers, and hawkers. Performing skilled work allowed a certain social fluidity without disturbing the established hierarchies of Iberian society, but free white servants competed with the huge black community in Portugal. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, King Manuel prohibited black women, slaves, and freedmen from selling fruit, fish, and vegetables in the ports and streets of Lisbon, but the practice nevertheless persisted until the 1800s. In the city of Évora, it was common to find slaves working as cooks or sweepers. Some of them even earned money, such as the 50 *reais* paid each day for selling bread to Eva, who belonged to a goldsmith from Évora. Thanks to these earnings, Eva was able to pay for her own freedom and that of one of her sons in 1583.²²

Slaves experienced different forms of coercion related to the types of work they were employed in, as well as in relation to their skills, age, gender, and health condition. This coercion had an impact on their prospects for liberation and return to their native home. For instance, many captives who were unable to work due to age or disability were sent back home to the Regency of Tunis and Algiers. In 1762, 18 slaves were considered incapacitated, most of them because of their advanced age (they were at least 63 years old) and several due to blindness or asthma. Many younger slaves were also blind or had missing limbs. Under orders from Stefano Lomellini, the deputy of the Republic of Genoa, Dr Pietro Francesco Pizzorni categorized old slaves as unfit to work in galleys or attack minor Christian vessels. Since it cost around 2000 lire per year to keep a slave and incapacitated slaves were unproductive, Pizzorni recommended they be manumitted without compensation to their sellers. It was hoped that their return to Tunis and Algiers might help to redeem some Christian slaves in return. On 9 March 1764, for instance, the captive Gero-lamo Balbi, whose name before baptism had been Assona da Tunis, declared himself unfit to serve on galleys due to paralysis and sought to be ransomed.²³

Captives often experienced the most degrading conditions. The working and living environment on galleys was harsh, and captives' feet were often cuffed. In 1795, slaves in Civitavecchia submitted a petition to "not wear cuffs on their feet," as was the case with Christian slaves in Barbary regencies. Sexual crimes, theft, and terrible sanitary conditions were commonplace on ships.²⁴ While the atmosphere on Mediterranean galleys was generally one of violence and suspicion, galley slaves were generally not treated differently on the basis of ethnic origin or skin color. Captives who were considered effective skilled workers and behaved appropriately were more likely to receive better treatment and have their supplications heard; retaining good workers was a matter of exigence. For example, Mohamet and Hucherim were two slaves who arrived in Livorno in 1776 and 1777 and were considered very good workers. 30-year-old Mohamet was employed as a mason in the new *Lazzaretto*. He was a talented sailor and woodworker and an expert terracotta chiseler. Hucherim was 47 years old and had a strong physical constitution. Like Mohamet, he was versatile and skilled in masonry and sailing, and he likewise worked on the construction of the *Lazzaretto*. Both men were seen as responsible and productive, and their supervisor accordingly objected to their use in a ransom exchange to liberate two Christian slaves named Palma and Palmieri.²⁵

Slaves who lived or worked for noble families or royals were more likely to experience better living and working conditions than captives, and they also had the best chances of being set free. In these cases, being a slave not only meant work; these men and women could be used for representative or ornamental purposes as well. In 1786, for instance, a young girl named Ourika was purchased by the governor of Senegal, the Chevalier du Boufflers, on behalf of the Duchesse d'Orleans. Ourika was baptized in Paris and became Charlotte-Catherine-Benezet-Ourika. She was educated in the prominent noble Parisian De Beauvau family as though she were their own child, although she was treated as an exotic ornament in Parisian social circles. Her skin color is described as "black as ebony." Madame de Staël met Ourika at a salon and used her name for a character in *Mirza ou Lettre d'un voyageur* (1795). Ourika was manumitted and became free in 1794; she died in 1799 at the age of eighteen, presumably of pneumonia or tuberculosis, and was buried at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.²⁶

The relatively good treatment of slaves by nobles probably changed for the worse following the abolition of the slave trade and slavery around the Mediterranean. When keeping slaves became illegal in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, noble families continued to treat domestic servants bought in sub-Saharan African territories—in which slavery was still legal—as slaves in the Italian context. Bakhita, for example, was purchased as a slave by the consul Callisto Legnani in Khartoum. Her status was still uncertain when she arrived in Genoa in 1885. Under Italian law, Bakhita was free, but the Michieli family for whom she worked as a nurse regarded her as a slave under "African laws." It was only in the Venetian House

of Catechumens that Bakhita eventually discovered that she could not be kept as a slave according to Italian law and should have been free.

The types of work performed by slaves in Northern Mediterranean countries and the Ottoman Empire had certain commonalities, but also differed in some respects. In both territories, soldiering for the state and domestic slavery were prevalent, and domestic workers in elite urban households were generally treated better than enslaved individuals in other settings—especially captives on galleys and agricultural workers. In both regions, women were also more likely to suffer sexual exploitation, while men were more likely to be subjected to harsh physical treatment. Differences are evident in the contexts of ethnicity and gender. In the Ottoman Empire, Africans were less socially mobile than Circassians and Georgians. In Southern Europe, on the other hand, there were few Circassian slaves, and Africans were in no worse position than other slaves. In fact, “Moors” from Africa or blacks from the colonial world who were placed in noble courts were more likely to experience better working conditions and eventually attain freedom.

In the early modern Mediterranean, for example in Lisbon and Caserta, the remuneration of slaves was essential for their self-redemption when their owners or the state had no intention of liberating them. In other situations, there is no evidence that slaves were paid. Enslaved men and women salaried by private owners experienced better material conditions than state-owned slaves, though some publicly owned slaves in Italy—such as those in Livorno—were also paid. Furthermore, conversion was an essential aspect affecting the living and working conditions of slaves in Southern Europe, especially with regard to the likelihood of manumission. Slaves were pushed and pulled toward conversion as an exit strategy from their unfree status.

EXITS FROM SLAVERY

The condition of slavery could be escaped in different ways: under certain circumstances, by way of conversion; by running away; by ransom or self-ransom; as a result of being unable to work; and thanks to active petitioning where the laws were fluid.

While most European territories had their own specific legal systems and institutional practices, there were a number of shared features: Religious conversion uniformly involved the imposition of a new Christian name on a slave and initiated a process of cultural assimilation in the host society. Although slaves did not necessarily obtain legal freedom after conversion, they generally did benefit from better working and social conditions: In particular, they were allowed to live separately from other slaves and enjoy some degree of material support. This could lead to redemption by the state or liberation by a private owner, or to a slave earning sufficient money to buy his or her own freedom. Slaves were also occasionally freed immediately after baptism, as documented by a number of cases in Rome between 1516 and 1716, but this was exceptional in the Italian context.²⁷

In the majority of cases, slaves did not become legally free after baptism, as numerous petitions clearly show. In Rome, Giuseppe Bastoncelli, a renegade slave working in the fortress of *Castel Sant'Angelo*, petitioned for freedom five years after his baptism. In Livorno, slaves preparing to join the Catholic Church received a small daily payment from the state because they could not work. Immediately after conversion, they were still not allowed to perform real work—although they could be put in the service of officials and other workers at the *bagno*. Slaves' living conditions generally improved immediately after baptism since their feet were unchained. In Livorno, like in other cities in the Italian region, slaves were not automatically manumitted after baptism, and the chaplain of the *bagno* declared that religion could not be used as an instrument by slaves to obtain freedom.²⁸ Conversion was thus generally only a first step in an exit strategy from the condition of slavery.

Another frequently attempted manner of exiting slavery was escape. Many convicts and slaves absconded from galleys in Civitavecchia, for example: In July 1782, three slaves—Messana (known as the Tiger), Machmet from Tunis (known as Busolotto), and Machmet from Tripoli (known as Belbello)—ran away from the galley Capitana. Messana was found and returned to Civitavecchia, while the others made good their escape. Messana's defense was based on his claim that he was drunk when convinced to join the other men in escaping. He was already in a condition of perpetual slavery, the punishment for slaves attempting escape in the Papal States. Under the circumstances, the government of Civitavecchia accepted his statements as true.²⁹ Some slaves on Italian galleys tried to flee to other states in search of more promising ransom opportunities. In 1782, fugitive slaves from Livorno traveled to France because the latter had different agreements in place with the Barbary Regencies, which meant the escapees were more likely to be ransomed in France than in Tuscany.³⁰

Slaves could be ransomed by others or buy their own freedom. Southern European countries had various institutions (state institutions such as the *Magistrato per il riscatto* of Genoa or religious institutions such as the Mercedarians and Trinitarians) that worked to redeem Christian slaves in the Ottoman Empire and its satellite states. Slave ransom with its significant financial dimension was practiced more intensively in Southern Europe than in the Ottoman Empire—even though exchanges in the Mediterranean often favored Muslims because their economic value was lower than that of Christians (on average, 3 Muslims could be exchanged for 2 Christians, or 5 Muslims for 3 Christians). In October 1808 in Palermo, Father Paolo and Monsignor Castelli, who were in charge of ransom operations, exchanged 56 Turkish slaves for 28 Christian slaves. In this particular instance, we can calculate that the exchange rate was two Turkish slaves for one Christian slave. The exchange value of black slaves was even lower than that of Turkish Levantines: Two Christians “equaled” five blacks.³¹ Another document informs us that the Bey of Tunis did not accept the exchange of 18 “Moor” Tunisian slaves because they were black and therefore not regarded as Levantine:

n. 18 proposed Tunisians are Moors, and not Levantines. Such a distinction between Tunisian Moors and Tunisian Levantines is new since it has never been made in four different exchanges of Sicilians for Tunisians as warned by said Consul Oglander. In light of this recommendation, and in an effort to finalize the situation, I implore from His Majesty S.M. the grace to condemn them to the arsenal of the pier.³²

The fact that the value of a “Moor” slave (not necessarily black, but likely so in this context) was inferior to that of a non-black Levantine Tunisian proves that color and ethnic origin were commercial factors. One reason for this was that black slaves were highly unlikely to have family in the Barbary Regencies or any other nearby state that might have an interest in ransoming them. We may therefore conclude that it was not necessarily skin color itself that had an economic impact; rather, it was geographical origin that most affected the possibility of exchange.

Other exit routes from the condition of slavery involved age and health status, as we have seen in the Genoese context. In Livorno, ill and elderly slaves were likewise eventually allowed to return to North Africa. One group of Turkish slaves, for example, petitioned for liberation on the basis that they were too ill to work.³³

Slaves could also escape their condition through marriage, as well as by way of juridical scenarios where legal loopholes afforded room for maneuver. In France, slavery was theoretically not permitted in accordance with the legal principle of “free soil” that dated back to the fifteenth century: At least notionally, any slave landing in France was automatically free. But circumstances changed in the eighteenth century with the arrival of increasing numbers of slaves from the colonies. Royal legislation issued in 1716 established a right for colonial owners to bring slaves to France indefinitely for instruction in religion or trade, provided that they obtained permission and registered their slaves upon arrival. Under the more stringent act issued in 1738, slaves could be brought to France for only three years before having to return to their respective colonies. There were initially two ways in which they could attain freedom: Their owner could grant it to them in his or her will, or they could marry a free person. The law passed in 1738 abolished manumission altogether, however. Despite these restrictions, the black population in France continued to grow. Hundreds of slaves wrote petitions assisted by lawyers, requesting their freedom from the Admiralty Court of France in Paris because the king’s declarations had not been registered in the Parliament of Paris.³⁴ Interracial marriage was forbidden in 1778. This prohibition was also in force in other places at other times, such as in Venice during the Napoleonic period (where it was permitted during the period of Austrian rule, however). When and where it was legal, interracial marriage represented an important element of integration into Mediterranean communities and a means of securing the future of the children of slaves. It likely afforded more women than men an opportunity to exit slavery.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, the historiography of Mediterranean slavery has been revitalized thanks to important studies such as *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited* (2014) and *Les esclavages en Méditerranée* (2012). The study of Mediterranean captivity was transformed by Wolfgang Kaiser's *Le commerce des captifs* (2008). Another promising trend in research on slavery in Europe—and one in which the Mediterranean features prominently—concerns black slaves in Europe. Olivette Otele's recent work on *Black Mediterranean: Slavery and the Renaissance* (2020) is an example. The first task of this new historiography is to reduce the distance between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean worlds in terms of the importance of slavery practices. In the words of Ehud Toledano, Mediterranean slavery was long considered “milder” than its Atlantic counterpart, but this interpretation has been refined. Furthermore, slavery in the early modern Mediterranean has frequently been viewed as a declining phenomenon gradually overtaken by Atlantic slavery. Even within the Mediterranean world, the findings of new studies on slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its satellite states sometimes clash with older interpretations based on the situation in Southern Europe. Fresh debates may improve our understanding of both histories.

One new approach is to reduce the distance between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic by means of quantitative comparisons of slave numbers, particularly in urban settings, as well as through qualitative comparisons. It has become increasingly apparent that slavery was far more than a residual phenomenon in Mediterranean cities, sometimes as important as in the cities of the colonial world. Not all Mediterranean societies were “societies with slaves,” as has been traditionally held: There were “slave societies” in the Iberian Peninsula, particularly in Portugal. And although statistics on European and Mediterranean slavery are less precise than those available for Atlantic and colonial slavery, it seems that the number of slaves in Europe has generally been underestimated in research to date. Further work is required in this regard.

Slave labor and coercion were central to the functioning of the Mediterranean world. Captives and slaves were employed on galleys, on construction sites, in manufacturing, and as soldiers. Private slaves were usually domestic for nobles and middle-class families, although they could also be employed in agricultural and production activities or rented out. Captives could also open small shops in port cities or engage in smuggling. Slaves of nobles or princes, on the other hand, sometimes became musicians, nurses, valets, and butlers, or did not work at all; this minority group enjoyed better working and living conditions than agricultural or galley slaves. The situation was much the same in Southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In the latter, demand for unfree labor also focused on domestic and menial workers, and the slaves of elites likewise worked in better conditions than other types of slaves. The age, strength, health, and gender of slaves all influenced their working conditions

and the tasks they had to perform, as well as their prices. In Europe, ethnic origin and skin color did not impact living and working conditions as much as they shaped exit routes from slavery. Black captives were rarely able to return to their places of origin, while black slaves who worked for noble families were much more likely to be freed than other types of slaves.

Slaves could attain freedom through a number of different processes including religious conversion, escape, ransom, the inability to work, and successful legal petition. While they did not necessarily obtain legal freedom after conversion, they did benefit from better working and social conditions. As we have seen, they began to live separately from non-baptized slaves and enjoy greater material support. Under these circumstances, slaves could sometimes liberate themselves using their own earnings. They could also submit legal appeals for their liberation, which were sometimes successful in France as well as Italy. Marriage to a free person was another means of escape from the condition of slavery. Besides these institutional channels, slaves also tried to escape their bonds by absconding, just as they did in the colonial world. All these strategies for seeking freedom depended on multiple factors including individual slave initiative, geographic origin, work skills and contacts with other workers and slaves, the rank and status of private owners, and state laws.

Mediterranean slavery shows how strong the cultural and economic relations between the European countries and the Ottoman Empire were, as well as how these relations were linked to and influenced by other slave trading routes thanks to the global circulation of slaves and intermediaries of slavery. Slave practices in Europe and the Ottoman Empire need to be compared to and analyzed together with those in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds in order to better understand the common features and differences between these varied spaces and avoid crystallizing practices inside a specific geographical area.

NOTES

1. I am currently receiving funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 887152.
2. Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi. Una storia mediterranea (XVI-XIX secolo)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016), 73–75; Ehud R. Toledano, “Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, eds. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521840682.004>.
3. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>; Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 13; Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xviii.
4. Didier Lahon, “Être affranchi au Portugal (XVIe-XIXe siècle),” in *Sortir de l'esclavage. Europe du Sud et Amériques (XIVe-XIXe siècle)*, eds. Dominique Rogers and Boris Lesueur (Paris: Karthala-CIRESC, 2018), 132.

5. Alessandro Stella, *Histoire d'esclaves dans la péninsule ibérique* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2000), 64–65; Roger Botte, "Migrations forcées des africains subsahariens: Maghreb, Al-Andalus, péninsule ibérique. Une synthèse," *Journal des africanistes*, 90, no. 2 (2020): 41.
6. Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1900* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 17.
7. Lahon, "Être affranchi au Portugal," 130–32.
8. https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/africanpassageslowcountryadapt/sectionii_introduction/english_north_america_slave_so.
9. ASV, *Savi all'Eresia (Santo Ufficio)*, b. 97, unpaginated folios.
10. Cecilia Tarruell, "La captivité chrétienne de longue durée en Méditerranée (fin XVIe- début XVIIe siècle)," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 87 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.7175>; Bono, *Schiavi*, 222.
11. Wolfgang Kaiser, "Introduction," in *Les commerce des captifs. Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerranée, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Wolfgang Kaiser (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2008), 1–14.
12. Wolfgang Kaiser and Guillaume Calafat, "The Economy of Ransoming in the Early Modern Mediterranean: A Form of Cross-Cultural Trade Between Southern Europe and the Maghreb (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)," in *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000–1900*, eds. Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Cátia Antunes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 111.
13. Levantine slaves came from Anatolia or the Aegean Isles in the Ottoman Empire.
14. Pierre H. Boule, *Race et esclavage dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 93; Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
15. Suraiya Faroqhi, "Quis Custodiet Custodes? Controlling Slave Identities and Slave Traders in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Frontiers of Faith: Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750*, eds. Eszter Andor and Istvan G. Tóth (Budapest: Central European University, 2019), 125.
16. Lahon, "Être affranchi au Portugal," 50–51; Cristina Nogueira Da Silva and Keila Grinberg, "Soil Free from Slaves: Slave Law in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Portugal," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011): 431.
17. Luca Lo Basso, *Uomini da remo. Galee e galeotti nel Mediterraneo di età moderna* (Milano: Selene Edizioni, 2004), 29.
18. Bono, *Schiavi*, 97–99.
19. ACDF, Archivum sancti officii romani, (D.B D.B 9) 2, 1785–93, unpaginated folios. English translation by the author.
20. Walter Sauer, "From Slave Purchases to Child Redemption: A Comparison of Aristocratic and Middle-Class Recruiting Practices for 'Exotic' Staff in Habsburg Austria," in *Beyond Exceptionalism—Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, eds. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021); Giulia Bonazza, *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850* (Cham: Palgrave, 2019).
21. Toledano, "Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period," 27–28.

22. Antonio De Almeida Mendes, “Africaines esclaves au Portugal: Dynamiques d’exclusion, d’intégration et d’assimilation à l’époque moderne (XVe-XVIe siècles),” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 31, no. 2 (2008): 51–52; Jorge Fonseca, “Black Africans in Portugal during Cleynaerts’s visit (1533–1538),” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, eds. Tom F. Earle and Kate J. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 116–17.
23. ASG, *Archivio Segreto*, n. 292, n. 296.
24. Bonazza, *Abolitionism*, 119.
25. ASL, *Governo civile e militare di Livorno*, n. 940, c. 150.
26. Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 30–31.
27. Serena Di Nepi, “Saving Souls, Forgiving Bodies: A New Source and a Working Hypothesis on Slavery, Conversion and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome (16th–19th Centuries),” in *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome*, eds. Matthew Coneys Wainwright and Emily Michelson (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 272–97.
28. ASL, *Governatore civile e militare di Livorno*, n. 940, f. 487.
29. ASR, *Tribunale di Civitavecchia*, n. 666, f. 15.
30. ASL, *Governatore civile e militare di Livorno*, n. 896.
31. ASP, *Redenzione dei Cattivi*, vol. 298, f. 520.
32. ASP, *Redenzione dei Cattivi*, vol. 311. English translation by the author.
33. ASL, *Governo civile e militare di Livorno*, n. 940, c. 778.
34. Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves in France*,” 54–55.

FURTHER READINGS

- Bonazza, Giulia. *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850*. Cham: Palgrave, 2019.
- Bono, Salvatore. *Schiavi. Una storia mediterranea (XVI-XIX secolo)*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016.
- Botte, Roger. “Migrations forcées des africains subsahariens: Maghreb, Al-Andalus, péninsule ibérique. Une synthèse.” *Journal des africanistes* 90, no. 2 (2020): 6–86. <https://doi.org/10.4000/africanistes.9820>.
- De Almeida Mendes, Antonio. “Africaines esclaves au Portugal: Dynamiques d’exclusion, d’intégration et d’assimilation à l’époque moderne (XVe-XVIe siècles).” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 31, no. 2 (2008): 43–63.
- Guillén, Fabienne P., and Salah Trabelsi, eds. *Les esclavages en Méditerranée: Espaces et dynamiques économiques*. Madrid: Casa de Velazquez, 2012.
- Hanß, Stefan, and Juliane Schiel, eds. *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2014.
- Kaiser, Wolfgang, ed. *Le Commerce des captifs. Les intermédiaires dans l’échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerranée, XV^e -XVIII^e siècle*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2008.
- Otele, Olivette. *African Europeans: An Untold History*. London: Hurst & Company, 2020.
- Rogers, Dominique, and Boris Lesueur, eds. *Sortir de l’esclavage. Europe du Sud et Amériques (XIVe-XIXe siècle)*. Paris: Karthala-CIRESC, 2018.

Toledano, Ehud R. “Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period.” In *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, edited by David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, 3: 25–46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

