

Reuven Amitai and Christoph Cluse (eds.), *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000-1500 CE)*. Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, 487 p. ISBN: 978-2-503-57019-8

The work, born from a conference, was enriched by research conducted as part of a German-Israeli program established in 2007 on the study of the slave trade between the three cultural areas - Christian, Muslim and Jewish - who shared the eastern Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. Long matured, this book is divided into four parts of unequal length: first a presentation of religious and cultural contexts; then a study of the Mamluk phenomenon which runs through the whole work; then an analysis of the place of the Latins (Italians and Catalans) in the slave trade; finally, a discussion of Andrew Ehrenkreutz's theses.

Reuven Amitai and Christoph Cluse pay tribute to the pioneering research of Charles Verlinden, who first drew attention to European traffic neglected by historians, but deliberately turned their backs on the analytical presentation adopted by the Belgian historian. They place slavery in the geopolitical context of the vast confrontations that shook the Eurasian and Mediterranean areas and opposed the Mongols to the Turks, then their heirs, the Mongolian Ilkhans to the Mamelukes, the Tatars to the Slavs, the Christians to the Muslims, the Latins to the Greeks, incidentally the Arabs to the Black Africans. Slaves were in the Middle Ages "human beings alienated from their native surroundings, bought and sold or sometimes given as presents, employed or rented out for unpaid, often hard labor, sometimes sexually exploited, and often eventually manumitted" (p. 14); the "ethnic (or racial) label reported in notarial acts [...] justified the enslavement of a person" (p. 17). The slave was a stranger, by language and by religion. If none of the three religions around the Eastern Mediterranean had adopted or recommended an anti-slavery policy, it was forbidden to enslave someone of their own religion: this prohibition was valid for Jews, Muslims or Christians. However, the Latin Christians had little scruples in enslaving the Orthodox Greeks subject to Byzantium or in buying them from Muslim intermediaries.

The first part of the work is devoted to the examination of the religious context. According to Norman Housley, "[...] the preaching of crusades was the occasion for the incessant denigration of Islam and the demonization of Muslims. The holy war initiated by Pope Urban II for the recovery of Jerusalem in 1095 had spread like a virus around the entire Mediterranean basin, affecting Muslims in Egypt, Iberia and North Africa. Like a secondary disease, slavery followed in crusading's wake, and it afflicted Christians and Muslims alike" (p. 32). Any capture that oc-

curred during the Holy War resulted in enslavement, unless the prisoner could be ransomed. To recapture lost Jerusalem, the economic weapon was used: the ports of the Nile Delta, where the Christian West could take advantage of its naval superiority, were blocked and, as stipulated in canon 75 *Ad liberandam* of the Fourth Lateran Council, in November 1215, and the bull *In coena domini* of 1363, an embargo on strategic products, of which slaves (notably soldiers-slaves) were part, was put in place. Following the path traced a quarter of a century earlier by Catherine Bracewell, Housley revises the judgment made on the piracy of the Uskoks who would have applied the bull *In coena domini* to the letter and received pontifical support by attacking merchant ships guilty of trading with Muslim Turks.

Miriam Frenkel raises the question of the participation in the slave trade of Jewish merchants from the *Geniza* community (*Geniza society*), a term which designates all the Jewish communities established in Muslim cities (p. 143). Ibn Khurdādhbih and Ibn Hawqal both testified that the Radhanite Jewish merchants were active in the slave trade captured in the Frankish countries between al-Andalus and the Orient in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. These would have continued their activity during the following two centuries. Frenkel cites rare correspondences, at the end of which she concludes that "the slave trade in the community of Geniza has always been on a small scale and led inside the circle of the close friends". The Jews had a duty of conversion towards the slaves who, after their emancipation, integrated the community. The acquisition of domestic and commercial slaves was sought for this purpose.

Between 1261 and 1281, the treaties concluded between the Mamluk sultans and Michael VIII Palaiologos established freedom of navigation in Byzantine waters for Egyptian merchants and opened the Bosphorus to ships, laden with slaves bought in Crimea bound for Egypt. The Byzantine aristocracy took a more active part in the trade of slaves as the Ottoman conquest reduced its properties in Anatolia or Thrace and invested its capital in this lucrative trade. Greeks were also enslaved by merchants or Venetian settlers installed in Romania who did not hesitate to sell them on the Egyptian markets. The Doge himself intervenes in connection with a batch of thirty-five slaves intended for the Mamluk Sultan in 1304.

From Kurt Franz's long and dense exposition, we must retain an examination of the normative sources of slavery in Islam: the Koran, the Constitution of Medina, the oldest hadiths and jurisprudence. The

author identifies four standards from this vast corpus: slaves are considered as human beings, not as furniture; their inferiority, which comes from their subjection to the legal institutions of slavery, and not from their human condition, allows their emancipation; the slave and his master are personally related in a domestic family context; the master behaves kindly towards the slave and freely chooses to free him. Since all Muslims are brothers, all had the same obligations to God and enjoyed the same religious rights; equality was the rule, whether free or slaves. The author's attention is focused on the case of the Zanj, black African slaves massively imported by the East African sea and employed, in the region of Lower Iraq and in neighboring Khuzestan, in the cultivation of fields and rice fields as well hydraulic works in the vast marshes of the delta. Their absentee masters resided in the cities, leaving it to the managers to direct their work. The absence of the direct master-slave relationship leads Franz to conclude that the Zanj lived outside the stipulations of Islam on slave ownership: "The slavery of the Zanj was obviously a customary practice", prior to Mohammed and Islam (p. 104-105). The articulation between religious and legal norms and social practice also encourages the author to consider the term Mamluk as improper, literally a slave "possessed" by a master. When the young man bought a slave in unfaithful territory (outside Dār al-Islām, the territory of Islam) had finished his military and religious education, he was freed and free, bound only to military discipline.

In the second, part devoted to the training of the Mamluks, Yehoshua Frenkel corroborates the thesis of Franz: at first - which corresponded to integration into the ruling military society of the Near East -, the young Eurasian slave was "socially dead", torn from his environment, his culture, his family, transferred to an urban Arab-Islamic world where he was subjected to a process of acculturation; secondly, after a period of training and assimilation also studied by Amir Mazor, the Mamluk soldier was freed. He was reborn as a devout Muslim, served in the armies of his adopted homeland, and bore an Islamic name in addition to his Turkish name. Having become the defender of Dār al-Islām, he enjoyed a high status which enabled him to adapt well to his new environment.

The third part returns to the role of the Latins in the slave trade. Georg Christ gives a useful warning to the proponents of quantitative history who would be relentless in presenting statistics on the number of slaves. The confrontation between the notarial sources and the contemporary correspondence of the Venetian merchant Biagio Dolfin, consul in Alexandria, highlights the disjunction between the two categories of sources. A search based on the examination of only notarial registers can no longer be validated. Danuta Quirini-Popławska and Annika Stello scrutinize Crimea, a major center for the slave trade fueled by raids carried out by the Tatars or the Mongols in Slavic territory. The first studies the Venetian colony

of Tana; the second studies Caffa and Genoese. Stello reminds an estimate by Sergey Karpov: only 3 to 5% of the written transactions concerning the Black Sea slave trade would have survived in the Italian notarial archives. These individual contracts do not provide any general information on the volume of this trade. In addition, merchants from Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and the steppes of Central Asia did not use Italian notaries. The presentation is structured in two points: the volume of slave exports; the merchants and the slave routes. It is based on the counting of eight annual registers kept (from 1410 to 1446) in the Genoese *massaria* (treasury) of Caffa, which list a total of 245 transports where slaves are mentioned, an average of about twenty-five transports by year. Michel Balard, in a very documented communication, points out a Genoese regulation of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century: traffickers were authorized to embark thirty "heads" on a small ship with a single deck, forty-five for a building with two decks and sixty for a three-decker ship, which meant it was a heavy tonnage. Light ships (traveling east), however, escaped these limitations.

To strengthen its army in order to wage the war which permanently opposed the Mamluk state of Syria-Egypt to the Mongols of the Ilkhanid state of Iran-Iraq, the sultanate needed military slaves whose trade played a great political-diplomatic role in the region. The Mamelukes turned to their region of origin: the steppes north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, inhabited by Turks (*qipchaq* in Arabic and Turkish, *cumans* for Westerners) but under the control of the Horde of gold, whose khan was scrambled with the Ilkhanids. The alliance of the Mamelukes with the Mongolian Golden Horde paved the way for the export of young *qipchaqs* and possibly of Mongols, then, at the end of the 14th century, of Caucasian Circassians who then formed the dominant political group in the sultanate: such was Ehrenkreutz's thesis in 1981. Have the Greeks and the Genoese been involved in this trade which took the Bosphorus seaway? Amitai tries to respond in a nuanced way: the sultans did not entrust the entire transport to the Genoese; Muslims had a much larger share. Stello shows that the traffic in these slaves destined for the Egyptian armies consisted of three segments: across the Black Sea to the ports on the Anatolian coast, then the continental routes to the southern ports of Asia Minor and, again, the seaway to Damiette and Alexandria. Among the rare names of slave traders transmitted by the chronicles, Jenia Yudkevich has noted only Muslims, in particular a familiar of Sultan Qalāwūn (1310-1341) who made frequent trips between Cairo and Tabriz to buy slaves from Mongols.

Cluse closes the work by studying the place of the slave trade in the treaties for the reconquest of the Holy Land between 1290 and 1320. The authors of these propaganda writings, the Franciscan Fidenzio de Padua, Raymond Lulle and Marin Sanudo called Torsello, were generally well informed, and if the Dominican

monk Guillaume Adam denounced in 1317 the action of the Genoese merchants, in particular the worst of them, Segurano Salvaygo, Arab sources at the time presented him not as a slave trader but as a skillful diplomat capable of intervening effectively in affairs between the sultan and the western powers to free Muslim prisoners held by the Franks or by Genoese corsairs. About the utility of confronting sources.

Some regrets in closing a work so rich and new: the map on p. 10 is too succinct; each author attaches his bibliography, which exposes him to multiple repetitions, especially when most of the communications pay tribute to Verlinden; the index suffers from gaps, in particular the names of Jacques Heers or Robert Delort, however cited in note. Finally, we would have expected a commentary from the Bible on the mod-

el of Franz's brilliant analysis of the founding texts of Islam. Indeed, it established a rule: "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. [...] If his master gives him a wife and she bear him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. "But if the servant declares, 'I [...] do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. [...]. Then he will be his servant for life" (*Exodus* 21, 1-7). The directors of the work had warned that the research was continuing.

Spyros P. Panagopoulos  
Universidad Jónica, Corfú, Grecia  
[spyrpan1@gmail.com](mailto:spyrpan1@gmail.com)