KANÛNÎ SULTAN SÜLEYMAN VE DÖNEMİ

Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar

SULEYMAN THE LAWGIVER AND HIS REIGN

New Sources, New Approaches

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AFRICAN SLAVES IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN ANATOLIA

Suraiya FAROQHI*

African slaves and freedmen living in the Ottoman world during the early modern period, put differently in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, have not attracted much attention apart from a few exceptional individuals who achieved outstanding careers.[1] Typically, the Africans who entered the chronicles worked for the sultan's court as eunuchs, or at least they enjoyed the patronage of powerful courtiers, as happened in the case of Mullah ʿAlî, a religious scholar who was likely a slave at some point in his career. Apparently, this personage arrived in the Ottoman lands in the mid-1500s and became part of the circle of the Chief Black Eunuch Mehmed Ağa. The support of this influential figure allowed the young man to complete his studies in Islamic law and divinity; afterward, Mullah ʿAlî began what was to become a highly successful career in the hierarchy of madrasa teachers and judges (*ʿilmiyye*). In the reign of ʿOsmân II (r. 1618-22), Mullah ʿAlî reached the peak of his career, becoming the army judge of Rumelia, the second-highest position in the hierarchy of Ottoman scholar-officials.[2] Mullah ʿAlî owes much of his recent fame to his defense of Black people against spurious negative traditions, wrongly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, which had gained currency within certain circles in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere.

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1 Jane Hathaway, *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power Broker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

2 Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Inquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Baki Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: The Politics of 'Race' in the early Seventeenth Century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali," in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Madison, Wisconsin: The Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin & the University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), pp. 73-96.

However, in this study we deal not with members of the elite, but with ordinary people of African backgrounds. On these men --and perhaps women, although they remain undocumented-- archival sources are not very explicit, and we cannot even be sure that those slaves that Ottoman officials recorded as 'Arab' were the only Black people present in the empire. There may have been others about whom we know nothing. For quite possibly, when the scribes did not use the ethnicity of a given slave to identify him or her, they may not have bothered to record whether the person at issue was Black or not.[3] Moreover, while Turkish citizens of our own time, whose ancestors had arrived in the 1800s or early 1900s, may be conscious of their African backgrounds, the descendants of the men and women sold to Anatolia in the sixteenth or seventeenth century usually will not know anything about their African connections. After all, for many generations, the descendants of slaves and former slaves have intermarried with the previously resident population.

Differently from the Greeks, Southern Slavs, Ukrainians, and Hungarians, who beginning with the fourteenth century, became slaves after capture by Ottoman soldiers or seamen, Black people were not a likely war booty, at least not before the conquest of the province of Habeş/Abyssinia by Özdemiroğlu Hasan Pasha in 1561-7. Before this date, at the most, a few Africans in the service of Mamluk lords may have reached the Ottoman lands as war booty, after Sultan Selîm I (r. 1512-20) had conquered Egypt in 1517. Thus, inhabitants of the Ottoman central provinces must have purchased their Black slaves from professional slave traders, who probably charged higher prices than soldiers would have done, as the latter often wanted to turn their human booty into cash as soon as possible. Given this situation, we may think that Black slaves were rare luxuries unknown outside of major commercial and politico-administrative venues.

However, enough references survive to show that this was not the case at all, even though we have to combine anecdotal evidence from a variety of Ottoman sources: African slaves were more widespread in sixteenth-century Anatolia than previously believed. Admittedly, in the

3 On the methodological problems see Yannis Spyropoulus, "*Bey*s, Sheikhs, *kolbaşı*s and *godiya*s: Some Notes on the Leading Figures of the Ottoman-African Diaspora," *Turcica* 48 (2017), pp. 187-218.

southern parts of the peninsula, 'Arab' might upon occasion, be a personal name, and there was a tribal community going by the name of *Araplar*.[4] However, such instances were rare; and when the term occurred, it usually referred to African ethnicity. Most of the relevant texts were on record in the qadi registers of Anatolian towns; typically settlements located close to the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts. In the 1500s, customary rules governing the compilation of these registers differed quite strongly from one district to the next, and Black slaves and ex-slaves appeared in a variety of contexts.

It would have been desirable to proceed in an orderly sequence from one aspect of the lives of Black slaves to another, beginning, for instance, with the capture and transportation of African men and women and continuing with their sale in the slave markets. After completing that first stage of the discussion, it would have been logical to focus on the conditions under which African slaves labored once they had arrived in Ottoman Anatolia. At an even later stage of his/her investigations, the historian would have wanted to discuss the arrangements for future liberation and, finally, the actual manumission of African slaves, either during the lifetimes or after the deaths of their owners. However, the information available for the cities and towns of Bursa, Üsküdar, and Lârende/Karaman as well as the region of Aydın, put differently the places where African people have entered the official records of the sixteenth century, is too idiosyncratic for such a proceeding to be possible. Therefore, we discuss the evidence town by town, and in the concluding sections lay out the provisional results of our analysis.

Bursa

By the late 1400s and early 1500s, Black slaves or freedmen were appearing in the registers of the Bursa qadis, usually because their owners sold or else manumitted them.[5] Black slaves were a small minority, as most of the people entering the registers had been war captives from southeastern

4 For example, Alaattin Aköz, "XVI. Yüzyıla ait bir Nikâh Defteri ve Bazı Değerlendirmeler," *İstem* 2/3 (2004), pp. 91-118, at pp. 31, 39, 101, and 186.

5 Halil Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the Social and Economic Life of Bursa in the late 15th and early 16th Centuries," *Turcica* 17 (1985), pp. 43-112, reprinted in idem, *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1999), p. 135.

Europe, or else the victims of raids in borderlands, dangerous even in times of peace. However, given the role of Bursa as a commercial center, where trade goods, including humans from different parts of the earth, came together, Black slaves did occasionally appear in the records. Admittedly, in some instances, the scribes may have confused people from South India with Africans, as slaves that were clearly from South Asia appear in the Bursa records as well. Sometimes, the scribes probably did not know the difference, merely noting that the slave or ex-slave had very dark skin.

As we cannot compile any statistics, not even approximate ones, we glean whatever information we can from anecdotal evidence. In November 1559, a police officer (*subaşı*), who probably served in Bursa although alternatively, his seat could have been in one of the nearby villages, demanded the preparation of an official record concerning the declaration of a Black slave named Ca'fer, who lived in the village of Umurbey. Probably, this man, who had received a promise of freedom (*mükâtebe*), was more zealous in protecting his master's house than an 'ordinary' slave might have been, and we see him acting as the caretaker and representative of the absent owner.[6] Through local gossip, Ca'fer had advance knowledge of the plans of two dubious individuals, who had been scheming to enter his master's house at night.[7] As Ca'fer knew the names of these people, they either lived in the neighborhood or else had a well-earned reputation for theft and robbery. When discovered by the slave caretaker, the intruders ran off, but Ca'fer followed and grabbed one of them, whom he hit over the head. The victim first fainted, but then came to and managed to get home, where he lay in his bed for about a week and then died.

There were some ambiguities in this story, because in a note later deleted from the official protocol but readable even today, Ca'fer had --in advance-- expressed his intention to kill. Presumably, someone familiar with court protocol had advised him that there might be trouble if his declaration included homicidal intentions, for, in that case, he probably had exceeded his rights as the defender of his master's property. After all, Ca'fer

6 On contracts of this kind (*mükâtebe*) see Sahillioğlu, "Slaves," pp. 115-20.

7 T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Bursa Şer'iyye Sicilleri, A 78, fol. 43. My heartfelt thanks to Fırat Yaşa, who helped me to gain access to this text, and to Zeynep Dörtok Abacı, who read some of the more difficult words.

had killed the intruder, not in the house, but after the miscreant had already run away. By contrast, if premeditation was absent, the judge might regard his action as the equivalent of 'justifiable homicide.'

Üsküdar

Colorful records concerning Black slaves living in the sixteenth century come from Üsküdar, a coastal town close to Istanbul, soon to become an integral part of the Ottoman capital. While small and semi-rural, Üsküdar was a place that many transients passed through on their way into and out of Istanbul; and in a short period during the mid-1500s, officials serving the qadi of Üsküdar produced 118 documents concerning slaves, both male and female.[8] In 65 cases, the scribes mentioned ethnicity. In 14 instances, the persons at issue, usually re-captured fugitives, were 'Arab' and sometimes 'Habeşi Arab.' While these figures have no statistical value, they do indicate a significant presence of Black slaves and indirectly, the activities of slave traders, who had sold these men in northwestern Anatolia. As no ethnic Arabs in the present-day sense of the term could legally suffer enslavement, as they were Muslims of long standing, we can take this term as referring to Black people exclusively, whom Istanbul inhabitants called 'Arab' even in the early twentieth century.[9]

Despite the rarity of African slaves, it is unrealistic to assume that the escaped Black men tracked down in Üsküdar all belonged to members of the Ottoman elite, because some of the owners reclaiming their human property were inhabitants of Anatolian villages without any titles to indicate elite connections. Other owners, by contrast, may well have been members of the Ottoman central administration, for these personages might hold sizeable farms in different parts of Thrace, with a few slaves

8 Yvonne Seng, "The Üsküdar Estates (*tereke*) as Records of Everyday Life in an Ottoman Town, 1521-1524," (doctoral dissertation), The University of Chicago, 1991; Ekrem Tak, "1513-1520 Tarihli Üsküdar Kadı Siciline göre Kaçkın Köleler," *12-14 Mart 2004 II. Üsküdar Sempozyumu: Bildiriler*, 2 vols. (İstanbul: Üsküdar Belediyesi, 2005), I, pp. 19-28; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Mostly Fugitives: Slaves and their Trials and Tribulations in Sixteenth-century Üsküdar," in Suraiya Faroqhi, *Travel and Artisans in the Ottoman Empire: Employment and Mobility in the early Modern Era* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 129-42; eadem, "Captured in Üsküdar, during the 1550s: Fugitive Slaves and their Clothing," unpublished manuscript awaiting publication.

9 As for Christian Arabs, they had been the subjects of Muslim rulers for centuries, and thus were not legitimate booty for Muslim slave-hunters either.

employed as year-round laborers.[10] Fugitives may have crossed the Bosporus in the hope of making new lives for themselves in Anatolian villages. However, such plans were quite unrealistic, given the existence of officials whose very job it was to track down escaped slaves.

Aydın

Presumably, sizeable landholdings held by members of the Ottoman elite existed in the area of Izmir and Aydın as well, for we possess evidence of a significant number of Africans working the land during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. For a document preserved in the Registers of Important Affairs (*Mühimme Defterleri*) refers to Black slaves and freedmen that organized a festivity whose details remain unknown, but which may have resembled the 'feast of the calf' that people of African descent celebrated in Izmir in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[11]

Whatever the nature of these celebrations, the organizers required money. In fact, our evidence of this rural festival and the appreciable presence of Africans, at a time when the meteoric rise of Izmir to commercial prominence was still in the distant future, comes from a complaint of local landholders. Ten years after the death of Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520-1566), in 1576, these holders of local power claimed that the Africans used threats when demanding contributions to the festival fund, and in addition, they supposedly menaced slaves unwilling to participate. Perhaps some of these laborers worked the lands of major pious foundations of the Izmir-Urla district, which may have held farms worked by slaves, an arrangement known from the Istanbul region.[12] At the same time, we may hypothesize that certain Africans worked the cotton fields that had been typical of the region ever since the middle ages; but secure information is lacking.

10 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Edirne Askeri Kassam'ına ait Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)," *Belgeler* III/5-6 (1966), pp. 1-479 at pp. 85, 94-97.

11 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Black Slaves and Freedmen Celebrating (Aydın, 1576)," *Turcica* 21-23 (1991), pp. 205-15.

12 The edition of Ömer Bıyık, *Defter-i Evkâf-i Vâlide Sultan der Mağnisa: Ayşe Hafsa Vâlide Sultan Vakfı ve XVI. Yüzyılda Urla* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014) refers to *çiftlik*s belonging to the pious foundation instituted by Hafsa Sultan, the mother of Sultan Süleyman. Many former slaves lived in Urla and the surrounding villages; but as the index of this publication does not include individuals and their ethnicities, it is hard to tell whether there were any Black people among the freedmen.

Black People in Lârende/Karaman

More surprisingly, we find a significant number of Black slaves in the sharia court records of the small land-locked town of Lârende/Karaman in southern Anatolia. The register at issue is a collection of disparate small fascicules, dating to the earlier years of Süleyman the Magnificent and likely joined into a single volume at a later stage. Barring errors in counting, the volume, which has resulted from this re-binding and which covers the period from 1532 to 1535, contains references to 31 slaves.[13] Thirteen of these people were Blacks, while in the case of the others, the text either specified a European (often of Ukrainian or Russian) background or else gave no information on ethnicity. Thus, there may have been a few Black people present in the record, who remain impossible to retrieve.

To outsiders, the town of Lârende/Karaman was noteworthy for two major pious foundations. One of them was a complex comprising a mosque and other charities, founded by the Karaman prince İbrâhîm Bey II (d. 1464) and the other a madrasa-cum-mausoleum established by Melek Hatun, a daughter of the Ottoman Sultan Murâd I Hüdavendigâr (r. 1362-89, married to a prince of the Karaman dynasty.[14] Elsewhere, the same princess appeared as 'Nefîse.' Likely, in the time that is of interest here, namely the reigns of Sultan Süleyman and his immediate successors, Lârende/Karaman had lost most of the importance that it had possessed when still part of the Karaman principality and in the first years after the Ottoman conquest; for most pious foundations of any significance dated back to the Karamanid period.

In 1474, Mehmed the Conqueror had sent his son Prince Cem (1459-95) to govern the province of Karaman, recently conquered after the death of İbrâhîm Bey. With the advice of his entourage, the teenage Cem Sultan managed to frustrate any attempts of the defeated dynasty to return to power. At that time, the prince and his household seem to have established connections to the town of Lârende/Karaman, for a local pious foundation

13 *Kanuni Devrine Ait 939-941 / 1532-1535 Tarihli Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili / Özet, Dizin, Tıpkıbasım*, ed. Alaattin Aköz (Konya: Tablet Basım Yayın, 2006).

14 *Fatih Devrinde Karaman Eyaleti Vakıfları Fihristi*, ed. Feridun Nafız Uzluk (Ankara: Vakıf Umum Müdürlüğü Neşriyatı, 1958), p. 7 records the madrasa and mausoleum of this woman, whom the register merely calls 'the lady' (*hatun*).

financed the reading of sections from the Qur'an for the benefit of Cem Sultan's soul. Admittedly, most of the revenue sources assigned to the foundation were no longer productive by 1530; and as the latter were mostly located in and around the covered market (*bedesten*), the 'business center' of the town was probably not in very good shape. In addition, Lârende/Karaman contained a small pious foundation in memory of a woman named Hüsnişâh Hatun, described as the 'mother of the prince' (*şehzâde*); while it is probable that the şehzâ*de* at issue was Cem, we cannot be entirely sure.[15] If so, this brief record gives us the name of Cem Sultan's mother.

Thus, by 1530, Lârende/Karaman was only a minor provincial town. According to the abridged (*icmâl*) register dated to 1530 but probably summarizing data collected during the earliest years of Kânûnî Süleyman's reign, the town contained 462 households and 570 taxable males.[16] If we estimate that a household consisted of five people and add on about one hundred bachelors, the population should have been between 2400 and 2500 people. While urbanization in the early sixteenth century was limited throughout Anatolia, compared to Konya or Kayseri, which had been centers of pre-Ottoman rulers as well, Lârende-Karaman cut a very modest figure.

Protected by a fortress manned by 37 soldiers under the responsibility of a commander (*dizdâr*) and his second in command (*kethüd*â) the town had a market for horses, cattle, and salt. As noted, the covered market must have been at least partly in ruins, since the registrars did not even bother to list the institutions that, apart from Cem Sultan's somnolent foundation, derived revenue from this source. We only know that the building contained some chests, where presumably merchants and artisans deposited their money for safekeeping. The town's primary resource was an ample

15 Mahmut Şakiroğlu, "Cem Sultan," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (*DİA*) 7 (1993), pp. 283-84. Şakiroğlu does not name Cem Sultan's mother.

16 *387 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Karaman ve Rūm Defteri (937-1530)*, part I *Konya, Bey-şehri, Ak-şehir, Larende, Ak-saray, Niğde, Kayseriyye ve İç-il Livaları <Dizin ve Tıpkıbasım>*, ed. İsmet Binark et alii (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996), pp. 106-22.
İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı had published the same text in 1967: *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Karaman Tarihi, Ermenek ve Mut Abideleri* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967), pp. 103-10. In the same volume, on pp. 461-82, Konyalı had introduced the original foundation document (*vakfiyye*) of Melek/Nefise Hatun.

supply of water, as apparent from the many mills that permitted the operation of quite a few local charities. Given the availability of water, the major urban manufacture was a dye-house, on record as producing 20,000 akçe in revenue for the governor of the sub-province (*sancakbey*). Local artisans specialized in the production of cotton cloth (*kirpas*), an activity that attracted traders to this outlying region, but differently from Bursa practice, weavers apparently did not employ slaves.

For the most part, the slaves at issue seem to have worked in villages and one instance, at least, in an encampment of nomads or semi-nomads. As many inhabitants of the town made a living from gardens, fields and vineyards, most slaves were agricultural laborers, as we learn from the records documenting the recapture of escapees. For similar to the practice in Üsküdar, when an escaped slave fell into the hands of the authorities, it was customary to hold him for several days, known as the *müddet-i ʿörfiyye*. During this period, the owner, normally identified by his place of residence and notified by intermediaries, could come to the qadi's court to retrieve his property. The slave owner then paid a fee for the retrieval (*müjde*), feeding (*nafaka*), and registering (*defter*) of the slave. As in Üsküdar, the person responsible for guarding the retrieved slaves and collecting the appropriate dues from the owners had farmed his office; put differently this man had invested money in his appointment and expected to make a profit from the recovered slaves.

In some cases, the scribes of the qadi's court elicited the owner's names from witnesses before these property owners actually arrived. Thus, we learn that apart from the villages of the Lârende/Karaman district, the Black slaves on record had worked in places quite distant from the town. One African had labored in the mountainous district of Mud (today: Mut), and others had come all the way from Konya and Tarsus.[17] We do not know why these persons had chosen to travel long distances to Lârende/Karaman, presumably on foot. Perhaps they hoped for charity in one of the pious foundations of the town. Furthermore, it is somewhat enigmatic how witnesses from remote villages, who as noted testified to the identity of the often absent slave owners, had found their way

17 *Lârende (Karaman)* Şerʿiye *Sicili*, pp. 5-9.

into the local court. Perhaps at least some of these men worked as 'investigators' for the tax farmer of the *müjde* dues and received some remuneration from the fees that the owners paid when retrieving their slaves, but this is merely an unproven assumption.

It is extremely rare to find documents recording the slave's (presumed) reasons for flight. Even so, an unnamed African, who had first worked in the village of Karkın and after sale to Hacı Yaylaoğlu Hüseyin, had been moved to the town of Tarsus, told the court of Lârende/Karaman that he had fled because his new owner beat him.[18] At the same time, we frequently encounter local people denouncing an unknown man that they had met on the road or in the woods as a fugitive slave, perhaps hoping for a reward from the owner. We do not know whether these types of denunciation were so 'normal' that nobody thought about the possible moral implications; after all, a slave that ran away from his master committed a crime. Even so, we may wonder whether there ever were discussions about the propriety -- or otherwise -- of denouncing another human being to the authorities and ensuring that he would return to his owner, who might well mistreat him.

Exceptionally, we encounter arrested persons who could prove their freedom, after having stayed in the lockup, probably under much discomfort, for a couple of days. We do not know whether any of these wrongfully imprisoned Black people ever took their captors to court. However, in one case involving the sale of a free person who was not Black, the man responsible for the fraudulent sale did end up in prison. On the other hand, as imprisonment was a measure to ensure that the accused remained at the disposal of the court, rather than a punishment, we may wonder what --if anything-- happened to the fraudster in the long run.[19] If not resident in Lârende/Karaman, where their neighbors could vouch for them, Black people only could have convinced the court of their free status if they possessed a manumission document. By contrast, people born as Ottoman subjects, if challenged by the men hunting for fugitive slaves should have had less trouble in finding witnesses who could testify to their free status. Being born to free parents outside the Ottoman borders, in Africa in this case, unfortunately would not have been of much help, even if the slave had

18 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili*, p. 28.
19 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili*, p. 234.

witnesses to that effect. For the Ottoman courts would have considered enslavement outside the empire's borders, in the realms governed by 'infidel' rulers, as perfectly legitimate. As for the subjects of Muslim African kings, who could have claimed that their enslavement was illegal according to religious law, the sources hitherto located are completely silent. Presumably, when in flight, Black people were more at risk than other strangers would have been, for they would have immediately stood out among the locals. As we do not find any 'clusters' of Black slaves documented in the local qadi's records, the slaves laboring near Lârende/Karaman probably were unable to found communities, of the type existing in late sixteenth-century Aydın.

As noted in the case of Ca'fer, the caretaker of his owner's house in Umurbey/Bursa, the presence of Black slaves sometimes emerges from court cases in which they play a pivotal role. In other instances, by contrast, their presence may be marginal. Thus, when a man from Lârende/Karaman claimed that he had found five of his stolen pigeons in possession of a certain Hamza b. Hayreddîn, the latter countered that he had purchased the birds from 'the Arab of Çavdar Ahmed,' a claim confirmed by witnesses.[20] Likely, the Black slave of Çavdar Ahmed had acquired the pigeons from an unidentified source, if indeed the complainant had correctly identified the birds and had not tried to claim Hamza's pigeons fraudulently. It was incidental to the case that Çavdar Ahmed's slave was Black, but for our present purposes, all references to black slaves are very valuable.

Another case in which the existence of African slaves enters the records 'by chance' involves a case of killing and the subsequent payment of blood money (*diyet*). Before April 1534, a certain Mûsâ Bey had mortally wounded a man named Mahmud b. Ahmed, whose heirs took the culprit to the court of Lârende/Karaman. Perhaps because their evidence did not satisfy the exacting standards set by the sharia, the relatives of the dead man obtained a settlement out of court. Even so, the claimants must have been in a strong position, for the settlement required the killer to pay 15,000 *akçe* to the estate of the victim, a large sum of money for a rural environment in which money was scarce.[21] The two sides agreed on a list of goods belonging to Mûsâ Bey and one of his brothers, which the two men would

20 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili,* p. 229.
21 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili,* p. 240-41.

have to sell in order to meet the obligations of the killer towards the family of his victim. Prudently, the killer himself had not shown up at all but left his brothers to speak for him. The agreement contained a clause that if the property of Mûsâ Bey and his brother proved insufficient, Mustafâ Bey, another sibling of Mûsâ and the killer, would have to divest himself of some of his properties to make up the total.

The lengthy enumeration of Mustafâ Bey's possessions began with two Black slaves (*kara köle*), followed by one white slave (*ak kul*) and four pairs of oxen, ten head of black cattle (*kara sığır*), 150 sheep, (one?) camel and some real estate. As at that time, the title *bey* still denoted persons of status, the three brothers must have belonged to the local elite, engaged in field agriculture as well as in herding, and who employed both Black and white slaves. Unfortunately, we do not know how many slaves in total worked on their holdings.

Other ex-slaves entered the record because on manumission, they needed to pay the taxes demanded from peasant householders. These payments varied according to the size of the holding, and as recently liberated slaves were typically smallholders, they often paid the *resm-i bennâk* that was lower than the dues, which the sultan's servitors demanded from full and half-sized farmsteads.[22] In one case, we encounter a slave whose owner promised to manumit him after an additional ninety days of service; the soon-to-be-liberated slave already held two *dönüm* sowed with wheat and one *dönüm* where a harvest of barley was ripening.[23] This short document is one of the few sources recording how owners living in villages might facilitate the integration of their liberated slaves into the local community. The text does not indicate the ethnicity of the slave; however, at least in this particular respect, there probably was no difference between Black and non-Black freedmen.

Records of female slaves being extremely rare, we cannot say whether the general rule that freedwomen paid the bride-tax (*resm-i 'arûs*), applied to Black as well as to white females. However, the probability is high: For whatever their ethnicity may have been, these women presumably

22 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili,* p. 221.
23 *Lârende (Karaman) Şer'iye Sicili,* p. 54.

needed husbands in order to survive, and the *tim*âr-holders, who usually had the right to collect the bride-tax, must have been on the lookout for recently manumitted women. The records covering Black slaves do not contain any references to women. In contrast, we do find some females among the slaves either described as European or about whose backgrounds the texts do not give any information. As the number of cases is small, we cannot be sure that there were no females of African descent among the slaves in Lârende/Karaman; but as noted, they must have been quite rare.

Usually, Ottoman records concerning African slaves do not tell us where these men had originated; the designation Habeşî, rather vague but common in Üsküdar does not occur in the registers of Lârende/Karaman.[24] In one case, however, we learn of a manumission involving a man named Saʿidi ʿAbdullâh, who had likely come from Upper Egypt. In Bursa, during the late 1400s and early 1500s, this term, which refers to Upper Egypt, occasionally occurred among the slaves mentioned in the qadi registers, while it was apparently unique in Lârende/Karaman.[25] Sahillioğlu has rightly pointed out that Egyptians, being Muslims by birth (or else Christians subject to a Muslim sultan), should not have suffered enslavement. Unfortunately, we are no closer to an explanation of this dilemma than Sahillioğlu was, now over thirty years ago.

Another singular record from the Lârende/Karaman register concerns the marriage of a Black slave. Unfortunately, the laconic expressions typical of Ottoman qadi registers do not allow us to determine why either the owner of the slave or else the groom had decided to put this particular marriage on record.[26] Perhaps the reason was the order of Sultan Süleyman, supported by his chief *müftü* Ebüsuûd Efendi (1490-1574), that marriages would need approval by the local qadi; in Karaman during the 1530s the local judges took this command quite seriously, although application often seems to have lapsed in later years.[27]

24 Spyropoulus, "*Bey*s, Sheikhs, *kolbaşı*s and *godiya*s."
25 Sahillioğlu, "Slaves," p. 135; *Lârende (Karaman) Şerʿiye Sicili,* p. 133.
26 *Lârende (Karaman) Şerʿiye Sicili,* p. 173.
27 Aköz, "XVI. Yüzyıla ait bir Nikâh Defteri."

Black Slaves, Perhaps Exchanged for Timber

These findings invite hypotheses concerning the trade that brought Black people, mostly males, to remote sites in rural Anatolia. A possible explanation is the timber trade, as Egypt had no trees useful for building ships and dwellings, and Anatolia had supplied Cairo already in Mamluk times. During the middle ages, the Syrian provinces and the southern coast of Asia Minor were major sources for pinewood, supplemented by timber from the western Mediterranean that Venetians and Genoese carried to Egypt for sale. Gallnuts from Balat and Antalya, used in the manufacture of dyes and ink, found buyers in Cairo as well. In addition, many artisans worked with imported wood, for instance, carving the famous screens known as *mashrabiya.* Given the closeness of southern Anatolia to Egypt, much of this critical raw material must have come to Cairo from the coastlands to the north of the Mediterranean. In 1510, when southern Anatolia had been in Ottoman hands for some forty years, Sultan Bâyezîd II (r. 1481-1512) sent arms and Anatolian timber to Egypt in pursuance of a temporary alliance with the Mamluks. Quite possibly, the Mamluk dignitary sent by his monarch to pick up the Ottoman sultan's aid engaged in some slave trading as an additional source of income.

Certainly, Ottoman-Mamluk relations soured after a short time and the conquest of the Mamluk sultanate was to follow but a few years later, in 1516-17.[28] However, after the Ottoman conquest, the demand for Anatolian timber in Egypt must have increased even more, when the use of wood in construction became more fashionable among the Cairo elite. As a study of the monumental dwellings of the Egyptian capital has shown, wealthy people of the Ottoman era favored wooden ceilings and/or paneling, likely in imitation of Ottoman customs.[29] In the estates of eighteenth-century Egyptian decedents of moderate wealth, wooden items were among the most valuable goods, as pottery or textiles were far cheaper to produce.[30]

28 Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)* (Wiesbaden/Germany: Franz Steiner, 1965), pp. 330-31 and 467.

29 Bernard Maury, André Raymond, Jacques Revault, Mona Zakaria, *Palais et maisons du Caire,* II, Époque ottomane XVI*e - XVIII*e *siècles* (Cairo and Paris: IFAO and CNRS, 1979).

30 Alan Mikhail, "Anatolian Timber and Egyptian Grain: Things that Made the Ottoman Empire," in *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories 1500-1900*, ed. Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 274-93.

Supplying Ottoman dockyards in Suez was an even more urgent concern. For in the sixteenth century, countering the Portuguese threat against the Holy Cities of the Hijaz required a substantial investment in ocean-going ships.[31] Ottoman ambitions for expansion in the Indian Ocean increased official demand even further, particularly since, in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, parasites were more likely to attack the hulls of ships than was true of the Mediterranean environment; the ships thus became unsafe after only a few years of use. In addition, feeding the permanent inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, as well as the numerous pilgrims, required ships to carry grain from Egypt to the Hijaz, a constant worry of the Ottoman authorities, to say nothing of the pilgrim traffic between Egypt and Mecca. For these enterprises, timber was indispensable; and it must have primarily come from the Anatolian coastlands.

Partly, the exportation of Black slaves may have paid for these deliveries. While we know very little about the transit routes by which Black slaves reached the eastern Mediterranean during the sixteenth century, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records indicate the Hijaz and Egypt as the venues where slaves would have changed hands; and probably the situation was no different in the 1500s. Likely, the active slave market in Cairo, on record in Mamluk sources, continued to operate. Unfortunately, this hypothesis is difficult to prove. After all, as Sahillioğlu has noted, many slaves, Africans and others, changed hands several times before reaching their final destinations because merchants whose leading trade was in other wares, sold and bought slaves whenever they had an opportunity to do so.[32] In most cases, we thus have no evidence about the routes that African slaves followed before reaching the principality of Karaman, and later on the Ottoman province of the same name. This intriguing problem needs further study.

31 Gian Carlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Mikhail, "Anatolian Timber and Egyptian Grain" discusses this matter for the eighteenth century. Compare the chapter by Andrew Peacock in the present volume.

32 Sahillioğlu, "Slaves," p. 136.

In Conclusion

To date, we have very little evidence of Black slaves laboring in Anatolian towns further inland, for example, in Ankara or Konya – admittedly, in Konya during the 1660s, a few such people do appear in the records. However, the vast majority of the slaves working in Central Anatolia came from the Ottoman borderlands in southeastern Europe, in addition to the men and women captured by Tatar warbands and sold in Black Sea ports. Until future finds in the archives show our hypothesis to be mistaken, we may assume that Black slaves arrived in the Anatolian coastlands by ship, with Egypt a likely transit place. In the case of eunuchs destined for the sultans' palace and a few elite harems, a passage through Egypt must have been the rule, as there were not many places with inhabitants 'specializing in the manufacture' of eunuchs, and certain Coptic villages on the southern fringes of Egypt engaged in this kind of mistreatment.[33] However, the available documents do not indicate that there was any demand for African eunuchs in Anatolia.

As the documents located at present do not lend themselves even to 'guesstimates,' we cannot say whether Lârende/Karaman had a higher concentration of Black slaves than the regions of Üsküdar or Aydın. Even so, given the smallness of the town's population and its very limited role in interregional trade, it is noteworthy that we find a significant number of Black slaves laboring in the region. As the area was mountainous, there were probably few medium- or large-sized farms *(çiftliks)* of the kind known in the Istanbul or Izmir areas, where the owners sometimes kept a few slaves for year-round work. However, given the limits of our knowledge, caution is of the essence, for as we have seen, a few wealthy families employing numbers of slaves existed even in this outlying area. Thus, the Africans working in the Lârende/Karaman region may have come to southern Anatolia because traders used them as payment for the timber or cotton cloth that they purchased in the town's markets. We can only hope that in the future, documents will turn up that allow us to verify – or falsify -- this hypothesis.

33 Otto Meinardus, "The Upper Egyptian Practice of the Making of Eunuchs in the XVIII. and XIX. Century [sic]," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 94/1 (1969), pp. 47-58.

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