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Between Two Spaces: Enslavement and Labor in the Early Modern Ottoman Navy

1 Introduction

Ottoman maritime labor, or more specifically the rowing force, consisted of paid rowers, war captives, convicts, and other categories of laborers, whose numbers and percentage differed from galley to galley. Irrespective of their voluntary or enforced recruitment and their legal distinctions, many aspects of their living conditions were almost identical. They were all engaged in what was probably the hardest and most dangerous work in the Ottoman navy. When we compare various forms of asymmetrical dependencies and other forms of unfree labor in the Ottoman realm, galley slavery and unfree maritime labor share a number of distinctive characteristics: galley slaves (*forṣa*)[1] were "state slaves" (*mīrī esīr* or *gebrān-i mīrī*) rather than domestic slaves in elite households; rowers were anonymous parts of a work force, in contrast to *kul*s, or sultan's servitors, who might attain prestigious positions in the military or administrative strata. Furthermore, unfree maritime labor was probably the only exclusively male area (apart from the Janissary corps, a kind of military bondage) in which asymmetrical dependencies prevailed. This phenomenon was not specifically Ottoman, as it was a common practice among Mediterranean powers, used in the Republic of Venice (a longtime naval rival of the Ottoman Empire), the Spanish Empire, the Kingdom of France, and the Papal States. A strong reciprocity can be observed in all naval practices, from warfare to the treatment of war captives. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, three constellations of developments caused an extreme surge in the demand for oarsmen and their coerced deployment: the Mediterranean became a battle ground; the use of oar-propelled warships became prominent (first, in galleys);[2] and technology changed with the shift from one rower per oar to many rowers on a single oar.[3]

1 The term *forsa* also appears as *forṣa* or *forṣā* in Ottoman Turkish narrative sources. In the following, I have used the transliteration system of the *Islam Ansiklopedisi* for Ottoman Turkish; for the Arabic names of Hijra months, I adhere to the *IJMES* transliteration system. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. I am indebted to Ehud R. Toledano for his invaluable comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

2 The main types of large rowing warships included galleys (*ḳadırga*): bastarda (*baştarda*): and maona (*mavuna*). Smaller galliot (*ḳalyata*): frigate (*fırḳata*): and sailing ships were only employed for support services, such as the transport of naval artillery. From the second half of the seventeenth century, sailing ships such as galleons (*ḳalyon*) and barques (*barça*) gradually replaced oar-propelled ships.

3 On effectiveness of galleys and speed under oars, see John Francis Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974): 57–84.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111296913-006

In this chapter, I focus on galley slavery from the viewpoint of unfree labor, using a micro-spatial approach to gain a global perspective and to correspond with other studies in this volume. I examine how the Ottoman state mobilized its resources to meet the high demand for manning ships during times of war. In the first two sections, I introduce two key terms that constitute this article's theoretical basis and define the semantics of unfree labor. In sections three to seven, I explore the stages of recruitment and organization and so reveal similarities in the practices of other Mediterranean powers.

2 Theoretical Remarks

Unfree labor can be understood as part of the multilayered system of Ottoman enslavement.[4] Although their approach relates to the situation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Marcel van der Linden's and Magaly Rodríguez García's work is also useful for analyzing this phenomenon in the early modern eastern Mediterranean. They identify a crucial issue in the study of labor: while a significant amount of research has already been done on two kinds of labor, namely, the most "free" (wage labor) and the most "unfree" (chattel slavery) labor, these two forms constitute only the extreme poles of a wide range of varieties. Much less attention has been paid to these other types of unpaid labor.[5] From this vantage point, the system of Ottoman enslavement and unfree labor can only be understood by paying attention to varieties of asymmetrical dependencies between these two most extreme binaries. For example, "wage labor" did not necessarily mean "free labor," although, originally, free labor was defined as non-slave labor.[6] The terms enslavement and unfree labor are not synonymous; in contrast to

4 For a recent discussion of enslavement, slavery, and slaves in the Ottoman context, see Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen, "Slavery is Not Slavery: On Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire – Introduction," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 11–17; Michael Zeuske provides a broader context and comprehensive discussion in his textbook on the history of slavery: see Michael Zeuske, *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei: Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019): 191.

5 Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, "Introduction," in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Rodríguez García (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 1–2. For further discussions, see also Carolyn Brown and Marcel van der Linden, "Shifting Boundaries between Free and Unfree Labor: Introduction," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 78 (2010): 4–11. In historical terms, free labor was defined as non-slave labor; however, some critics claim that non-slave labor does not necessarily mean that this kind of labor is automatically free labor because non-slave laborers are still influenced by legal and economic restrictions in many countries. Stanley L. Engerman, "Introduction," in *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labor*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 2.

6 Engerman, "Introduction": 2.

unfree labor, enslavement not only relates to labor, but also includes other issues, such as the extent to which the slave depended on his or her enslaver legally and socially. Hence, a slave's work could be much more independent than that of a forced laborer. Yet, despite these differences, both forced laborers and slaves resisted their dependency in similar ways.[7]

We have to keep in mind that the social or cultural setting in the Mediterranean and Ottoman world generated different forms of unfree labor that cannot be explained by a single term. This makes it difficult to develop a distinct definition for an analytical framework suitable for premodern realities and practices in the Mediterranean. The approach of grading enslavement on a continuum, as suggested by Ehud R. Toledano,[8] does constitute a useful analytical framework. In a similar way, Jan Lucassen's categorization of three kinds of productive unfree labor and enslavement in prior to the twentieth century corresponds to the characteristics of unfree labor in the Ottoman Empire.[9] (1) To a limited extent, unfree labor was used in the domestic, agricultural, and trade and crafts sectors. (2) On a larger scale, unfree labor was used in mines and on plantations, and (3) in service of the state, for example in the army or the navy. For the Ottoman case, I combine the second and third categories, since mines were entirely owned by the state. In addition to these categories, the Ottoman imperial palace was the largest household and slave-owning institution. There are only a few studies that address slave and unfree labor in Ottoman society in general,[10] and we still lack a full picture of its use in the Ottoman fleet and naval bases.[11] İdris

7 Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto, "Einführung," in *Sklaverei und Zwangsarbeit zwischen Akzeptanz und Widerstand*, ed. Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2011): ix.

8 Ehud R. Toledano, "The Concept of Slavery in Ottoman and Other Muslim Societies: Dichotomy or Continuum?" in *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa: A Comparative Study*, ed. Miura Toru and John Edward Philips (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000): 159–76.

9 Jan Lucassen, "Free and Unfree Labour Before the Twentieth Century: A Brief Overview," in *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues*, ed. Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden (Bern: Lang, 1997): 47–48.

10 For the premodern period, see Halil İnalcık, "Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire," in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History*, ed. Halil İnalcık (London: Variorum, 1985): 25–52; Konstantinos Moustakas, "Slave Labour in the Early Ottoman Rural Economy: Regional Variations in the Balkans during the 15th Century," in *Frontiers of the Ottoman Imagination: Studies in Honour of Rhoads Murphey*, ed. Marios Hadjianastasis (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 29–43. On labor recruitment mechanisms and maritime labor, see Suraiya Faroqhi, "Labor Recruitment and Control in the Ottoman Empire (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500–1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: State University New York Press, 1994): 13–57. For the late Ottoman period, among his many publications, see M. Erdem Kabadayı, "Unfreie Arbeit in den staatlichen Fabriken im Istanbul des 19. Jh," in *Unfreie Arbeit. Ökonomische und kulturgeschichtliche Perspektiven*, ed. M. Erdem Kabadayı and Tobias Reichardt (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 2007). See further Donald Quataert, "Labor History and the Ottoman Empire, c. 1700–1922," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (2001): 93–109.

11 Among the extant literature on the French navy and labor organization in the early modern period, Paul W. Bamford's study is of particular interest, since he provides a much material on the

Bostan's monograph is the sole comprehensive study on the general administration and organization of labor during the seventeenth century.[12]

The second theoretical basis of my study is the "micro-spatial approach," which places the analysis in a global perspective.[13] For this, I draw on the approach of Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen, who argue that a micro-spatial approach emphasizes the importance of spatial aspects in writing history and the means by which time and space create spatiality; in addition, it enables us to challenge the binary division between the "local" and "global."[14] The micro-spatial approach is based on the idea of a simultaneity of various spaces that are also entangled with each other. De Vito and Gerritsen argue that this method goes beyond local boundaries and relates various contexts by examining the movements and dissemination of people, objects, and beliefs. Thus, this micro-historical approach may enable us to avoid restricting our focus to certain geographical spaces and help us develop independent local units. A micro-spatial history requires the coordination of research efforts across regional, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.[15]

The third theoretical aspect is military labor. This issue is still controversial for military and labor historians: while the former do not consider labor in a military context, the latter do not consider the military as a labor force and their activities are not thought of as "work." There is only one edited volume which is comparative and covers both research areas: *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour 1500–2000*. I confine myself to quote Marcel van der Linden's definition of work as it relates to military labor:

> Work is the purposeful production of useful objects or services. Thus, work is a purposive activity, and work creates objects or services that are useful to the people for whom the work is done. That makes participation in military activities just as much a labour process as any other, even if many civilians do not regard it as a "useful activity" and have no use for it.[16]

Drawing on these theoretical considerations, I discuss the phenomenon of unfree labor for the Ottoman navy with its main base and naval arsenal at Galata in Istanbul

problems of administering and organizing the galley fleet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Paul W. Bamford, *Fighting Ships and Prisons: The Mediterranean Galleys of France in the Age of Louis XIV* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973).

12 İdris Bostan, *Osmanlı Bahriye Teşkilâtı: XVII Yüzyılda Tersâne-i Âmire* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991).

13 For a theoretical discussion of global enslavement in various "models," see Ehud R. Toledano, "Models of Global Enslavement," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 31–51.

14 Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen's introduction, "Micro-Spatial Histories of Labour: Towards a New Global History," in *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour*, ed. Christian De Vito and Anne Gerritsen (Cham: Palgrave, 2018): 4.

15 De Vito and Gerritsen, "Micro-Spatial Histories": 9–15.

16 Marcel van der Linden, "Preface," in *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour 1500–2000*, ed. Jan Erich Zürcher (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013): 9–10.

in order to understand how a closer look at this specific micro-space may give us a global perspective in relation to the other case studies on enslavement in this volume.

3 Ottoman Semantics of Unfree Labor

The spectrum of administrative terms concerning slaves and unfree labor destined to become oarsmen is relatively clear and provides insight into different forms of organization. The key term generally used in official documents and registers is *mīrī esīrler* or *gebrān-ı mīrī and üserā*, meaning "war captives/state slaves." Thus, both terms refer to the legal status of captive persons. In documents and chronicles, we also find the more specific term *forṣa* (pl. *forṣalar*), meaning "galley slaves" or "war captives who were put to oars." *Mīrī kürekçi* (state rower) is used as a general term for all oarsmen in state galleys. For both *kürek maḥkūmu* and *kürek mücrīmi* (convicted to oars), a specific punishment is indicated, and in some cases the more specific term *küreğe maḥkūm ḥarāmī* (a bandit sentenced to oars) is employed. So, a rower was a *kürekçi*, a *forṣa*, a *mīrī esīr*, or a *mīrī forṣa*. The *mühimme* registers do not particularly emphasize slave status, but in the Kadi registers for Galata for 1615–20 they are referred to as "non-Muslim unfree galley slaves" (*memlūk forṣa keferesi*) or "unfree galley slaves" (*forṣa memlūkü*).[17] Their geographic origins are indicated in some cases, as in the *mühimme* for 966–68/1558–60, who are referred to as being "convicted to oars from Galipoli" (*Gelibolılı kürek maḥkūmu*) or "convicted to oars from Skopje" (Üsküblü *kürek maḥkūmu*).[18] However, ethnic markers, such as *Russiyye* (Ukrainian) or *Nemçe* (Austrian), are absent. Labor is defined in phrases such as "putting to the oars" (*küreğe ḳoymaḳ/ḳoşmaḳ*), "being put to the oars" (*küreğe verilmek/ḳoşılmak*),[19] and "sending to row" (*kürek çekmek üzere vaż' oluna*).[20] Being conscripted in lieu of fulfilling tax obligation is indicated in most cases as "collecting oarsmen" (*kürekçi iḫrācı*),[21] and slave labor is apparent in the phrase "to man the ships with state slaves" (*mīrī esīr ile gemi donatmak*).[22] Certainly, the *mühimme* registers distinguish between three main categories of oarsmen: state slaves, convicts,

17 *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Galata Mahkemesi 46 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1024–1029/M. 1615–1620)* ed. Coşkun Yılmaz. (Istanbul: İSAM, 2012) [hereafter *Galata Mahkemesi* 46]: 52a–1.

18 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 630.

19 For example, *Mühimme Defteri* 7: 85, 417, 2324; *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 209.

20 This and similar phrases can be seen in the hundreds of entries of the Convict Registers of the Naval Arsenal. For example, *Bāb-ı Defteri, Baş Muhasebe Kalemi, Tersane Zindanları* [hereafter D. BŞM. TRZ], Defter no. 15749: 1–7. I am indebted to Joshua M. White, who has kindly provided me with three registers from the early eighteenth century.

21 For the years 951–952/1544–45, see *Mühimme Defteri E-12321*: 58, 436, 538. For the year 973/1565–66, see *Mühimme Defteri* 5: 328, 1903. For the years 975–976/1567–69, *Mühimme Defteri* 7: 795, 2608, and for 978–979/1570–72, see *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 24, 995.

22 *Mühimme Defteri* 7: 636.

and those who were conscripted in lieu of tax obligations.[23] From the eighteenth century onwards, however, the term *kürek* designates not just the service on the oars in a narrow sense, but also hard labor or imprisonment with hard labor in service of the navy, as will be discussed further below.

4 The Organization of Recruitment

Maritime labor was vital to the maintenance of a functioning navy, and therefore to the Ottoman state's sovereignty on land and sea. Moreover, the navy was operated by the state via its central administration: this gave it an advantage over many other European navies, which were at that time often run by private companies.[24] Thus, the Ottoman system of centrally organizing the recruitment of labor proved to be more efficient than that of its adversaries. As the activities of the Ottoman navy varied significantly by season, crew members, including oarsmen, were particularly in demand before upcoming campaigns. The *Tersāne-i ʿĀmire* (Imperial Naval Arsenal) only maintained a limited number of permanent laborers, although they expanded their manpower in times of intense naval activity.[25] Located on the Golden Horn, the Imperial Naval Arsenal was the main naval base and shipyard: it had a hospital, a prison (called *bagno* in Italian and *bagne* in French), and other facilities. The Ottomans had other shipyards along the Black Sea, the Aegean, and the Mediterranean coast. However, the Imperial Naval Arsenal (the micro-space on which my study is focused) was the center of the empire's naval operations, where the state organized labor for the navy. In terms of its indispensable function and size, the *Tersāne-i ʿĀmire* in Istanbul was comparable to the *Arsenale di Venezia* of the Republic of Venice or *L'Arsenal des galères* in Marseille and Toulon.[26]

If we take a quick look at the three most common types of rowing ships and the size of their crews in the seventeenth century, we can imagine, roughly, how a rowing warship was manned. A galley consisted of 300 men (of whom 196 were rowers), a *maona* had 600 men (of whom 364 were rowers), and the *bastarda* type of rowing vessel had 800 men. A fleet with 40 galleys and 6 *maona* would employ

23 Here, I refer to the practice of collective tax obligations, not to individual debts. For more detail, see chapter 4.1.

24 For the Ottoman navy and its history, see Daniel Panzac, *La marine ottomane: De l'apogée à la chute de l'Empire (1572–1923)* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009).

25 Faroqhi, "Labor Recruitment and Control": 26.

26 The term "arsenal" derives from the Arabic *dār al-ṣināʿa* (house of manufacturing). While it was commonly used in the Mediterranean area, the Turkish *tersāne* (or the older variation *tersāḫāne*) was derived from the designation of this institution in the Genoese dialect. See Henry and Renée Kahane and Andreas Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant: Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin* (Urbana: University of Illionois Press, 1958): 428–30.

16,400 men, 10,500 rowers and 5,300 armed men:[27] so, the rowers made up the majority in each ship. During the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Ottoman fleet consisted of 220 rowing ships, while the Holy League had 206 galleys.[28] The Ottoman shipyards employed many workers in diverse fields: my focus here is exclusively on rowing manpower aboard ships. With regard to the numbers of galley slaves, according to İdris Bostan, the number of "state slaves" who worked as galley slaves was at its lowest (3%) in 1604, and highest (27%) in 1661–62, relative to the total number of rowers.[29] By contrast, Salvatore Bono mentions that a particularly large number of Muslim galley slaves worked on the galleys of the knights of the Tuscan Order of St Stephen in 1617; more than 60% (1,165 out of 1,888) of their oarsmen were Muslim prisoners of war, the highest percentage of Muslim slaves in any European fleet.[30]

Tab. 1: State-Organized Forms of Labor Recruitment.

Officials Involved	Form of Recruitment	Sanctions
Captains	General equipment and manning of vessels	Demotion, order to oars
Crimean khans	Slaving raids, tribute	Imperial disfavor
Provincial governors	Obligation to provide vessels and oarsmen to the navy	Demotion, dismissal from office
Kadis and/or their deputies	Local registration, conscription, and dispatch; mostly fulfilling tax obligations	Dismissal from office, exile

Before discussing the various mechanisms of recruitment, it is worthwhile to examine the role of the officials in charge of recruiting the labor force (Tab. 1). Several entries in *mühimme*s suggest that this was a delicate task for officials, especially those like kadis or local governors, who were less senior than the admiral. For instance, the kadi of Sozopol (Süzebolı)[31] was obliged to provide five galleys to the fleet, but failed to meet his duty. Because of this failure, he received a new order threatening punishment

27 These numbers are given by Kātib Çelebi in his prominent *Tuhfet el-kibār fī asfār el-biḥār* (*The Gift to Dignitaries Concerning Naval Warfare*): however, they vary slightly according to different sources. See Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr fî Esfâri'l-Bihâr*, ed. İdris Bostan (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2018): 82.

28 Helmut Pemsel, *Seeherrschaft: Eine maritime Weltgeschichte von den Anfängen bis 1850*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1995): 151–52.

29 Bostan, *Bahriye Teşkilatı*: 210, 200.

30 Bono, *Piraten und Korsaren*: 149.

31 A coastal town on the Black Sea, today in Bulgaria.

if the aforesaid galleys were not immediately delivered to Istanbul. The same order was sent to the kadis of Samsun,[32] Varna,[33] Sivas,[34] and Amasra,[35] who must have also failed to meet the navy's demands.[36] The standard formulation in orders to the kadis to dispatch rowers from local communities – a method that I discuss below – was as follows: "You must urgently dispatch the rowers which [you] were ordered to supply from your district of authority, [as they are] required by my imperial fleet and you must deliver them to the specified destinations before Nowruz."[37] The repeated dispatch of this order shows that kadis could not always comply with this obviously difficult task. The tone of the repeated imperial orders to the kadis concerned reveals the increasing level of pressure and threat of sanctions:

> [As soon as this order arrives], do not procrastinate or delay for a moment or an hour but immediately dispatch the number of rowers that were ordered from the individual sub-districts and deliver [them] to the locations specified for each of you, whether to *maḥrūse-i İstanbul* [the well-protected Istanbul] or to Rhodes. You must flawlessly deliver [them] to the locations that were specified in my previous order. No excuses will be accepted under any circumstances if you do not meet the deadline or the specified numbers, [do not give] explanations like 'they must have run away on the way.' Be assured that you will not only be removed from office, but [you will also be] punished. Therefore, hasten your efforts and do not delay a minute in [fulfilling this order] diligently.[38]

Obviously, under contemporary circumstances of mobility the transport of recruits from the town of conscription to the indicated shipyards caused much trouble to the kadis in charge. Despite being closely guarded during journey, many recruits found the opportunity to run away, as many register entries indicate. Otherwise, all other proceedings seem to have been implemented according to the orders. Only one document mentions some criminals in the vicinity of Silivri, the European coastal neighborhood of Istanbul, who presented themselves as officials in charge of recruitment and retained locals to summon "men needed for the oars" (*küreğe adem lāzımdur*). Since the community also provided the wages of the recruits, these criminals took the money and slipped away.[39]

32 A coastal town on the Black Sea, today in Turkey.
33 A port city on the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria.
34 A central Anatolian city.
35 A port city on the Black Sea in Turkey.
36 *Tanrıvermiş, „72 Numaralı Mühimme"*: 322; also 185 on the dismissal of the governor of Rhodes.
37 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 42. For the Ottomans, Nowruz (*nevrūz*; new year) started on March 21.
38 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 42. Also see 769.
39 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 479.

4.1 Free Recruitment of Oarsmen

4.1.1 Tax Obligations of the Service Units (*Ocaklık*)

The *ocaklık* system was the most comprehensive mechanism for mobilizing resources in various areas across the Ottoman realm. Local communities, i.e., the administrative subdivisions of provinces, districts (*sancaḳ*), sub-districts (*ḳażā*), and villages, could be exempted from their tax obligations by providing certain types of service in certain areas.[40] As for maritime labor, a register of rowers recruited in Galipoli shows that in order to satisfy manpower needed by the naval base, this kind of recruitment system was already being applied in 1475 (this was the earliest documented case of recruitment in lieu of tax obligations). An imperial decree determined the administrative units obliged to supply certain numbers of rowers in exchange for relieving them of the taxes on Muslim subjects (*avārız*) or non-Muslim subjects (*cizye*).[41] These rowers were paid with money collected from a fixed number of households obliged to provide the salaries of rowers.[42] According to a register of rowers (*kürekçi defteri*) from 891/1486, 14,542 rowers were recruited from three provinces of the empire (Anatolia, Rumelia, and Rūm). It is not clear what proportion were Muslims as opposed to non-Muslims.[43] The main responsibility lay with the kadis and their deputies (*na'ib*), who were commissioned to recruit men in local communities. Such a community was then registered as a surety, essentially guaranteeing that the recruits would not escape on the way to Istanbul; if they did, the community would have to put forward the rowers' salary a second time. Sometimes, individual rowers had individual sureties. It was common for new recruits to escape with many months' advance salaries. Arriving at the arsenal in monitored transport, a check was undertaken. In the event of a discrepancy in the documentation, the kadi responsible and his deputy were called to account for it: recruits might be fugitives, ill, or disabled; in place of one registered name, another individual might have shown up.

This labor recruitment category is designated in the sources by the term "collecting rowers" (*kürekçi iḫrācı*) or "delivering rowers" (*kürekçi irsāli*), and frequently appears in the *mühimme* registers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[44] Over the course of time, the *avārız* rowers constituted the majority of galley crews. However,

40 On the system of *ocaklık* ("service villages"): see Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 118–21.

41 İdris Bostan, "Osmanlı Donanmasında Kürekçi Temini ve 958 (1551) Tarihli 59–76: Kürekçi Defterleri," in *Beylikten Imparatorluğa Osmanlı Denizciliği*, ed. İdris Bostan (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008): 60–61. Note that an *avārız* household is unusual in that it can consist of many households. See Ömer Lütfi Balkan, "Avarız," *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (1989): 15–16.

42 Bostan, "Kürekçi Temini": 6.

43 Bostan, "Kürekçi Temini": 61–62.

44 For example, the register for 973/1565–66 contains similar entries. See *Mühimme Defteri* 5.

this practice was not applied on a systematic basis across the empire, which is why a lack of oarsmen seems to have been a recurring problem over the centuries. Rowing in lieu of tax can only conditionally be considered "free recruitment," since it was coerced. Even if we consider this form of recruitment a sort of obligation of the empire's protected subjects, there is evidence that the boundaries between this form of free labor and forced labor were porous. It was quite possible that many forms of unfree labor eventually led to other forms of dependency. For example, a certain Aḥmed was recruited from the village of Burgazlı in the district of Bafra[45] and was sent to prison for several crimes he committed locally. He managed to escape in 1571 and enlisted as a rower. During the transfer, however, he not only disobeyed instructions, but also incited his fellow recruits and attacked the kadi of Bafra with a knife. Ahmed again escaped, but was caught and dispatched to the arsenal. An order dated Dhū al-Qaʿda 15, 978/April 10, 1571, and addressed to the grand admiral sentenced him to oars for perpetuity: "According to my order, you should record the mentioned [Ahmed] in the register of convicts and employ him by putting him to the oars for life."[46]

4.1.2 Volunteers

Voluntarily enlisted oarsmen (*ḫod-girifte*) with paid salaries were a permanent feature in the Ottoman fleet and supplemented the recruits conscripted in lieu of taxes. An order (20 Dhū al-Ḥijja 978/May 15, 1571) to the kadi of Iznikmid commands that the kadi register and dispatch "those able young men who would be interested in being rowers with wages" (*yarar yiğitlerden akçe ile kürekçi olmağa safālu olanları*) from his administrative unit to Istanbul. The intendant of Galata (*Ġalaṭa emīni*) sent fifty thousand *akçe*[47] for this.[48] According to an order from the same year to the kadi of Sinob, a port city on the Black Sea coast, salaried volunteers were to be recruited if the rowers from communities and convicts did not suffice. Since the Black Sea squadron needed to urgently join the imperial fleet that was already at sea, craftsmen and rowing positions had to be filled. If the number of rowers was insufficient, convicts were to be deployed; if there was still a lack of rowers, the kadi was to recruit volunteers among the population (*reʿayādan*) for 800 *akçe*.[49] In another case, the kadi was ordered to send volunteers and convicts:

45 A town on the Black Sea in Turkey.

46 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 614: *Mezbūrı emrüm üzre mücrimler defterine ḳaydetdirüb ebedi küreğe ḳoyıb istiḥdām ėtdüresiñ*.

47 The standard coin of the Ottoman monetary economy. On its history, see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

48 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 473.

49 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 318.

> [. . .] if there are men available who voluntarily serve at the oars (*küreğe gitmegi iḫtiyār ėder ʿādem*) for 900–1000 *akçe* according to the existing custom and law, you should register them and dispatch them to my *südde-i saʿādet* ['threshold of felicity,' Istanbul] so that they can be paid and employed on the vessels. Further, if there are prisoners whose offenses are evident, you should dispatch them, too.[50]

This category should be treated with caution, since some of them caused considerable security problems. In a petition from the kadi of Gallipoli sent to Istanbul on Jumādā al-Ūlā 17, 967/February 14, 1560, the author complains that bandits from the mountainous region of Kazdağı (*Kazdağınuñ harāmī levendleri*)[51] – in the Aegean region – had mingled with conscripted rowers marching from Anatolia to Rumelia (apparently for the squadron on the Danube), set up ambushes on the roads, and posed a danger to public security. Responding to the petition, an order was issued for the officials in charge to only allow the men listed in the register to march with them, in order to prevent these groups of bandits (*levend tā'ifesi*) from hiding among them by pretending to be rowers.[52] As for the treatment of volunteers on the galleys, they were certainly shackled during the battles, like their unfree colleagues. However, they did not have to be guarded permanently and could be used as soldiers for operations on land.[53]

4.2 Forced Recruitment

The seasonal demand for rowers for the growing fleet, which mostly consisted of rowing vessels, could not be satisfied by paid volunteers and recruits in lieu of taxes. This scarcity of rowers prompted the development of alternative strategies for the recruitment of oarsmen. This kind of recruitment included taking captives from naval battles and from privateering, hiring, purchasing, raiding, taking tribute from Crimean khans, impressment, and convicts.

4.2.1 War Captives

Prisoners of war, as defined by contemporary legal standards of international law, were the most common source of forced labor. The high demand for rowers required

50 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 479.

51 A century later, the Kazdağı region became a source for military recruitment. See Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 62.

52 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 783.

53 Thomas Freller, "Reinhold Lubenau und das Osmanische Reich in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 74, no. 1–2 (2015): 138.

the use of war captives, although they were subject to peace and exchange agreements. Numerous sea and land battles resulted in the captivity of thousands of combatants and non-combatants. There were, however, legal norms regarding enslavement; namely, only those individuals fighting on the enemy side in a war could be enslaved. It was a violation of Ottoman law to enslave – by taking captives or hostages – anyone from countries with which the Ottoman Empire was not currently in a declared war. Non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire, i.e., its own subjects, were also protected from being enslaved. In addition, for all prisoners of war a ransoming mechanism was legally and practically in place.[54] The Ottomans had regulated the labor performed by war captives (at land and at sea) as early as the fourteenth century by establishing a system of specific taxation called *pencik resmi*. According to this regulation, one-fifth of war captives were allotted for state services, such as *mīrī esir*, *gebrān-ı mīrī*, or *üserā*, and the rest were shared among the officers and soldiers, according to their rank, as spoils of war. In return, those who received war captives were compelled to pay taxes for each one. Since the values of slaves and war captives were fixed according to their gender, age, and physical features, it was easy to calculate what a new enslaver had to pay to the state for his new slaves.[55] An order from Sultan Bayezid II dated 1511, the *pençik* register of the Cyprus campaign 1570–71, and other documents show an elaborate categorization of human spoils that included newborns and toddlers up to three years old (*shīrḫor*), children between three and eight years old (*beççe*), boys between eight and twelve years old (*ġulāmçe*), boys at the age of puberty (*ġulām*), young men at the age of puberty (*sakallı*, or bearded), and elders (*pīr*). Female captives were categorized as little girls (*duḫterek*), girls (*duḫter*), young women (*cāriye* or *māriye*), women with children (*ümm-ü veled*), elderly women (*ʿacūze*), and women of a very advanced age (*fertūte*).[56] Each category was taxed differently, and *pencik* taxation was an effective source of income for the state treasury. For example, the 15,854 war captives from the Cyprus campaign yielded the state 1,786,678 *aḳçe*.[57]

It should be emphasized that not all war captives automatically became state slaves: the process of recording war captives in the *pencik* registers determined which captives became state slaves to be dispatched to the Naval Arsenal for hard labor, which officials who served in battle would receive captives and how many, and how much *pencik* tax these recipients had to pay to the state. State slaves were

54 For regulations for war captives, see Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996): 29–30.

55 Cemal Çetin, *Sultanın Esirleri: İstanbul'da Bir Esir Kampı (1715)* (Konya: Palet, 2015): 68–69; Will Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners of War: The Ottoman Empire, Russia, and the International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 34.

56 Abdülkadir Özcan, "Pencik," *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 34 (2007): 227; Zübeyde Güneş-Yağcı "Kıbrıs'ın Fethi ve Ele Geçirilen Esirler," in *Tarihte Kıbrıs (İlkçağlardan 1960'a Kadar)*: ed. Osman Köse, vol. 1 (Bursa: Akdeniz Karpaz Üniversitesi, 2017): 315; Çetin, *Sultanın Esirleri*: 70–71.

57 Güneş-Yağcı, "Kıbrıs'ın Fethi": 309.

immediately sent to the prison of the Naval Arsenal (*Tersāne zindānı*), where they were held together with convicts sentenced to *kürek*. It is difficult to know the exact number of state slaves in this prison, as their numbers varied according to the periods and records.[58] For example, some documents of the Arsenal prison on the distribution of bread to the *üserā-yı mīrī* (without further indication of whether they were convicts or war captives) provide information on the number of inmates detained there on the respective day.[59]

4.2.2 Privateering and Piracy

During the seventeenth century, when Mediterranean powers were losing their absolute control over the sea, privateering and piracy plagued trade there, afflicting both maritime shipping and coastal towns. In both privateering and piracy, perpetrators aimed to profit from human trafficking by capturing all kind of ships, either by taking ransom money from those they abducted or just by selling them, in particular those who were able to row.[60] There was a clear distinction between pirates and privateers. The former acted illegally: they decided for themselves which ships to capture, what booty to take, and how to use it. The latter, who performed the same acts, were commissioned by states. Furthermore, privateers were prohibited from attacking the vessels or territories of states that had official agreements (*ʿahdnāme*) with the sovereign they served.[61]

For privateering, the Ottoman authority usually commissioned North African Muslim privateers/corsairs from the "Barbary states" of Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli, which had been tributary provinces of the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century and continued the practice of privateering into the nineteenth century. Among

58 Zübeyde Güneş-Yağcı and Esra Nalbant, "İstanbul Tersane Zindanı," in *Osmanlı Istanbulu IV, Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. Feridun M. Emecen, Ali Akyıldız and Emrah Safa Gürkan (Istanbul: Istanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, 2016): 95.

59 For example, a document notes the number of 376 inmates on Ramaḍān 13, 1154/November 22, 1741; 364 on November 23, and 389 on November 24. D. BŞM. TRZ, 5-239, no. 3–5.

60 On the topic, see Salvatore Bono, *Piraten und Korsaren im Mittelmeer: Seekrieg, Handel und Sklaverei vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, trans. Achim Wurm (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2009); Molly Green, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Joshua M. White, *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017). The abduction of coastal inhabitants by Ottoman privateers was the background for Cervantes' *Novela Ejemplar* in the short story "The Generous Lover." Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Exemplary Novels of Cervantes*, trans. Walter K. Kelly (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2015).

61 On the *ʿahdnāme*s issued by the Ottoman state to the European powers, see Maria Pia Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border 15th–18th Centuries*, trans. Mariateresa Sala (Venice: Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2017): especially 30–32.

the most famous corsairs of the sixteenth century were the brothers Hayreddin Barbarossa (also called Ḫiżr Reis) and Oruç Reis (also called Barbarossa; he was a galley slave of the Knights Hospitaller on Rhodes for three years). They were later appointed grand admirals of the Ottoman navy and turned the Mediterranean into an "Ottoman lake," especially through the victory over an allied Catholic fleet in the Battle of Preveza. Although in the sixteenth century the corsairs were (to a certain extent) acting as agents of the state, in the seventeenth century their wanton actions became a serious problem not only for their military and political adversaries, but also for maritime trade and the inhabitants of coastal villages in general.[62] During the previous century, the prominent polyhistorian Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī (d. 1600) complained about these privateers, explaining how they made their careers first by plundering with small boats, then obtaining small frigates, and finally building galleys:

> They tie up the non-Muslim [tax-paying] sailors, subjects of the Ottoman state and put them to working the oars. At first, they think they have but acquired galley slaves, then as they attack whatever vessels transporting day laborers that strike their fancy, they set off on the pursuit of wealth.[63]

4.2.3 Raiding and Tribute: The Case of Crimea

As tribute, Circassian dignitaries were expected to provide slaves captured during raids on the Crimean khans, who in turn dispatched them (along with their own captives) to Istanbul.[64] There are no extant figures on the percentage of these captives among the unfree laborers in the arsenal, but their number must have been considerable in view of the great demand for laborers in the shipyard. In one instance, the Ottoman historian Muṣṭafā Naīʿmā (d. 1716) mentions in his chronicle that 100,000 slaves were brought to Istanbul from Circassia after a single raid in 1621. Stephan Gerlach (d. 1612), an envoy of the Holy Roman Empire in Constantinople from 1573 to 1578, wrote a travel account in which he describes Poles that were sold like sheep: "The Poles and Russians imprisoned by the Tatars are being sold today, and have been sold for many days, by bulk. The majority are peasants,

62 Greene, *Catholic Pirates*: 13.

63 [Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī], *The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Mustafa Āli's Mevaʿiduʿn-nefāʿis fī ḳavāʿidiʾl-mecālis: Tables of Delicacies Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings*, trans. Douglas S. Brookes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003): 34.

64 For slave supply to the Crimean rulers, see Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska, "The Role of Circassian Slaves in the Foreign and Domestic Policy of the Crimean Khanate in the Early Modern Period," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 355–369; for enslavement in the Crimea, see, Zübeyde Güneş-Yağcı, "Kırım Tereke Defterleri Üzerine Bazı Mülahazalar," *Cihannüma* 6 (2020): 17–45; Fırat Yaşa, "Kırım Hanlığı'nda Köleliğin Sosyal ve Mali Boyutları," *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 13 (2014): 657–69.

children, women, many boys and maidens, virgins, hardly any elderly people, but many rustic people."[65]

4.2.4 Hiring

When the Ottomans had difficulties finding enough men for the navy, the Imperial Arsenal hired slaves from wealthy households and slave traders. This must have been a lucrative business for the heads of wealthy households.[66] Some inventory registers at the Istanbul court confirm that certain households (most likely those of the highest-ranking vezirs) had at their disposal a large number of enslaved persons who could have been hired out to the Naval Arsenal at any time. Court decision no. 139 concerns the *forṣa*s in the estate (*tereke*) inherited by the son of the late Memi Pasha b. Abdullah (on whose exact rank we lack information). The physical features (*eşḳāli*), individual skills (*evṣāf*), and names of non-Muslim galley slaves (*memlūk forṣa keferesi*) were listed in the inventory register (*muḥallefāt*) of the aforesaid pasha:

> forty-three galley slaves of Ukrainian origin (*Rūsiyyetü'l-asl forṣa memlūkü*), twenty galley slaves of Moldavian origin (*Boğdaniyyü l-aṣl forṣa memlūkü*), sixteen galley slaves of Hungarian origin (*Macariyyü l-aṣl forṣa memlūkü*), ten galley slaves of Frankish origin (*Efrenciyyü l-aṣl forṣa memlūkü*), two galley slaves of Austrian origin (*Nemçeviyyü l-aṣl forṣa*), each [valued] at seven thousand aspers (*akçe*), and one galley slave of Croatian origin [valued] at five thousand three hundred sixteen aspers, in total ninety-two slaves.[67]

Aside from the terminology used here (*forṣa*), this passage indicates that these slaves were employed as rowers. The issue of feeding these 92 slaves must have been one reason their owners considered it lucrative to hire them out to the Naval Arsenal, even though 92 men may appear to be insignificant in view of the thousands of slaves employed by a governor general.[68] Emrah Safa Gürkan mentions the example of Uluç

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65 Stephan Gerlach, *Tage-Buch, der von zween glorwürdigsten Römischen Käysern, Maximiliano und Rudolpho beyderseits den Andern dieses Nahmens, höchstseeligster Gedächtnüß, an die Ottomannische Pforte zu Constantinopel abgefertigten, und durch den wohlgebohrnen Herrn Hn. David Ungnad . . . mit würcklicher Erhalt – und Verlängerung deß Friedens, zwischen dem Ottomanischen und Römischen Käyserthum . . . glücklichst-vollbrachter Gesandtschafft: Auß denen Gerlachischen . . . nachgelassenen Schrifften, herfür gegeben durch seinen Enckel S. Gerlachium* (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Savid Zunners, 1674): 492.

66 For the practice of hiring men from slave traders, see İnalcık "Servile Labor": 25–52.

67 *Galata Mahkemesi* 46: 52a–1. Memi Pasha's inheritance mentions 164 galley slaves: "aforementioned 164 *forṣa* with a value of 1,148.000 *akçe.* Additionally 53a: "90 *forṣa* in the Imperial Fleet in Mediterranean" with a value of 500,000 *akçe*.

68 For example, Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had 1,000 slaves in his household. See Mustafa Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014): 186. In any case, we must assume that the employment of such a large number of slaves was most likely very rare, and only occurred in Istanbul and in some of the largest provinces.

(later called "Kılıç") ʿĀli Pasha (d. 1587),[69] the former governor general of Algeria, who, with 3,000 slaves in his household, moved to Istanbul in order to take the office of grand admiral. Gürkan points out the difficulties he faced in feeding this number of slaves. Even though he employed six hundred of them (surely the ones with technical expertise) in the Naval Arsenal for 10 *akçe* per day, he still had to feed the rest of these "three thousand mouths" from his own pocket. When this financial burden became too heavy, he eventually provoked the Ottomans to undertake a naval war against their Catholic adversaries. According to Gürkan, Uluç ʿĀli conquered Tunis in 1569 without any official order or authorization: his actual motive was to fill his coffers and feed his slaves.[70] Gerlach refers to "7,000 to 8,000" captives that Uluç ʿĀli had taken at sea, in addition to "thousands" of slaves he already owned in Algiers.[71] Nonetheless, Uluç ʿĀli was first of all a loyal subject of the sultan and by his actions eventually promoted Ottoman interests.

4.2.5 Purchase

The process of acquiring oarsmen by purchasing slaves was by far the most established method; however, there is no systematic study of this topic, and therefore our knowledge is very limited. Certainly, a number of slave markets across the Ottoman domain provided slaves who were purchased for the Imperial Naval Arsenal.[72] Sales in the slave markets provided a large number of men. The sixteenth-century observer Johann Wild (d. after 1619), who was enslaved in Hungary and sold to Istanbul, and who can be regarded as a reliable author, describes a common scene at the market when he narrates his own sale under the caption "How the captive Hans Wild and other boys were brought to the market and sold there" in chapter 37 of his captivity narrative:

> On the fourth day, two of the servants of the chief of the palace gatekeepers brought us to the marketplace where valuable fabrics and other goods are displayed for sale. There, we were handed over to a man who was referred to as a broker by the Turks. The broker took us by the hand, showed us around, and invited bids on us. The other Turks bid on us and after three hours the business finally came to an end. In their tradition, it is customary for an article of commerce to be offered to the last man. The one who gives the most wins the bid [as in an auction]. That is the case for everything that is displayed for sale: captives, horses, goods, and such like. Before the man who wanted to buy me counted the money, he had a look at my hands, arms, and teeth, at my body and my head in order to see that I had no physical deficiencies. They do this with

69 He was an Italian renegade who had been captured by North African corsairs and had served as a galley slave before starting his own naval career. For his biography, see İdris Bostan, "Kılıç Ali Paşa," *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 25 (2002): 411–12.

70 Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Batı Akdeniz'de Osmanlı Korsanlığı ve Gaza Meselesi," *Kebikeç* 33 (2012): 190–91.

71 Gerlach, *Tage-Buch*: 494.

72 For an example on 100 slaves who were urgently bought to the ships in 1690, see Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners of War*: 43.

> everyone, men and women, so that they are not cheated. If they are pleased with the person, they count the money, pay, and take their purchase with them. This is how I was sold for the fifth time in one and a half years, this time for 60 ducats.[73]

Some entries in the *mühimme* registers show that rowers were to be purchased in case of emergencies: the officials in charge of the transport of the conscripted rowers were ordered to replace runaways in this way, in order not to lose time.[74] Given that the slave market in Istanbul was the largest and provided the most slaves for purchase, it is clear that the officials of the Naval Arsenal made use of this market.[75] The slave markets were of interest to other Mediterranean navies as well: in order to meet the need for oarsmen, captains and fleet admirals anchored their ships in ports along the way and went to the slave markets to find new laborers. For instance, slave markets with seemingly endless supplies of laborers could be found in Leghorn, Messina, Malta, and Crete.[76]

4.2.6 Deployment of Soldiers as Oarsmen

In the event that a squadron still could not fulfill its need for rowers, soldiers originally commanded to man a fortress could be dispatched to the navy for service on the galleys. An order (dated Jumādā al-Ūlā 12, 967/February 9, 1560) requested that the district governors (sing. *sancaḳ beyi*) of Aydın and Ṣaruḫān (today Manisa) dispatch a sufficient number of fortress soldiers (*hisār erleri*) to Mehmed Bey, who needed rowers. The order, however, indicated that it should be implemented in such a way that the fortresses would not be deprived of all their personnel.[77]

4.2.7 Impressment

Impressment was officially deemed illegal, but was frequently employed, as is well-known particularly with respect to the British Royal Navy in the eighteenth century[78]

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73 [Johann Wild], *Johann Wild: Reysbeschreibung eines Gefangenen Christen Anno 1604*, ed. Georg A. Narciß (Stuttgart: Steingrüben Verlag, 1964): 89–90. For his biography, see Viktor Hantzsch. "Wild, Johannes," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd120141620.html [accessed 06.03.2023].

74 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 168.

75 For the slave market in Istanbul, see Zübeyde Güneş-Yağcı, "Slave Traders (Esirciler) in the Ottoman Istanbul," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 331–34.

76 Bono, *Piraten und Korsaren*: 150–51.

77 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 761.

78 J. Ross Dancy highlights the fact that skilled and experienced seamen in particular were pressed. See J. Ross Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015): 152–54.

and earlier.[79] The same holds true for officials in charge of the Ottoman Imperial Arsenal. With the scant research we have on the Ottoman navy, we know little about this recruitment method. It seems that it was mostly vagabonds from outside Istanbul who were forced into the navy.[80] Daniel Panzac argues that *ḫod-girifte* volunteers were victims, just the Ottoman equivalent of contemporary English press gangs.[81] However, this issue requires further research, since the term was officially used in many state orders concerning the recruitment of oarsmen.

A further aspect of labor organization that still needs to be explored is the question of how the recruited laborers were transported. Transportation to the destination where the labor was needed was a vital aspect of the organization of labor. We know little about rowers and slaves in general. For example, in the seventeenth century, we know that state slaves captured as prisoners of war from Central Europe were transported by carriages to Ottoman domains.[82] According to some *mühimme* entries, specific "slave ships" (*esīr gemileri*) were used for transport.[83] In an order (Rajab 8, 967/April 4, 1560) in the *Mühimme 3*, Hasan Pasha, governor general of Algiers, requested the dispatch of ships in order to transport captives/slaves (*esīrler*) to Istanbul. A reply stated that a captain named Ḥācı Maḳṣūd would arrive to transport those slaves: Hasan Pasha was ordered to register the number of slaves and to send the sealed register as well.

4.2.8 Convicts

From the mid-sixteenth century well into the eighteenth century, criminals were condemned by the Ottoman courts to service at the Naval Arsenal.[84] Due to the ongoing lack of rowers in galleys, the *kürek* (a sentence of rowing, or hard labor in general) as penal servitude became a state resource, or recruitment mechanism, firstly to provide

79 Edward Barlow, who sailed the seas for almost half a century (from 1659 to 1703): reports these practices in his journal for the Royal Navy. See Marcus Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates, and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014): especially 39.

80 Gül Şen, "Galley Slaves and Agency: The Driving Force of the Ottoman Fleet," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 146–147; Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, "Medical Treatment in the Ottoman Navy in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 4 (2000): 555.

81 Panzac, *La marine ottoman*: 73.

82 Güneş-Yağcı, "Kıbrıs'ın Fethi": 308 n. 31.

83 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 924.

84 İdris Bostan, "Osmanlı Donanmasında Kürekçi Temin": 60; Mehmet İpşirli, "XVI. Asrın İkinci Yarısında Kürek Cezası İle İlgili Hükümler," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1982): 206–7. The study of Fariba Zarinebaf provides a unique glimpse into eighteenth-century Ottoman practices in the case of Istanbul. See Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul: 1700–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

the urgently needed manpower for rowing, and from the eighteenth century onwards, when the galleys were put out of service, for hard labor in the navy and the arsenal. The recruitment of laborers by sentencing was not only an Ottoman solution, as it was practiced by other sea powers in a large-scale fashion. The Spanish courts sent convicts (*presidarios*) to the galleys in the same period,[85] while the French navy relied on convicts kept in the *bagne*s (prisons) of Toulon, Brest, Rochefort, and Lorient. Among those convicts sentenced to oars were small-time criminals, but also Protestant Huguenots condemned as followers of the so-called "Reformed religion."[86] Of the thousands of convicts in the French galleys, only the memoirs of Jean Marteilhe remain.[87]

In the Ottoman context, aside from felons such as murderers, it seems that all kinds of misdemeanors could lead to this specific punishment. For instance, an order (dated 29 Muḥarram 967/October 31, 1559) obliged the kadi of Maġnisa (today Manisa) to send a certain Meḥmed to Istanbul in order to sentence him to the oars (*küreğe ḳoşmak içün bu canibe gönderesün*). Meḥmed had built a henhouse on the wall shared with the mosque and incorporated the historical cemetery into his garden by surrounding it with a wall. He then assaulted his neighbor Ḥācı Aḥmed, who had attempted to reprimand him, and even injured the bailiff sent to summon him to court.[88] Hosting certain kinds of entertainment without the consent of the authorities could lead to perpetrators being sentenced to oars. An entry dated Shawwāl 20, 970/June 12, 1563, reports the following case: a certain Ferḥād from the village of Aydın complained about Oruç b. Ḥüseyn (from the same village), who lit Ferḥād's stable on fire and seduced Ferḥād's female slave. Oruç denied the accusations, whereupon the villagers were questioned. They stated that Ferḥād was a troublemaker without a proper occupation, so he was sentenced to oars and sent to the island of Lesbos (Midillü).[89] The registers show that the need for oarsmen and the deployment of convicts sharply increased after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, because of the huge loss of oarsmen killed or liberated by the enemy.

For the early eighteenth century, Fariba Zarinebaf states that penal servitude in the galleys was applied as a punishment for all kinds of crimes: this clearly indicates that there was an increasing need for rowers and a rising crime rate. Various

85 Ruth Pike, "Penal Servitude in the Spanish Empire: Presidio Labor in the Eighteenth Century," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (1978): 21–30.

86 André Zysberg, "Galley Rowers in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *Deviants and the Abandoned in French Society: Selections from the Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol. 4, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978): 83–110.

87 Jean Marteilhe, *Mémoires d'un protestant condamné aux Galères de France pour cause de Religion: écrits par lui-même: ouvrage dans lequel, outre le récit des souffrances de l'auteur depuis 1700 jusqu'en 1713, on trouvera diverses particularités curieuses, relatives à l'histoire de ce temps-là*. I have used the German translation of this fascinating first-person narrative: Jean Marteilhe, *Galeerensträfling unter dem Sonnenkönig: Memoiren*, trans. Hermann Adelberg (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989).

88 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 472.

89 For this entry, see İpşirli, "Kürek Cezası": 222.

punishments, such as fines and flogging, were replaced by forced labor in the galleys.[90] Although penal servitude was limited to a certain period of time, in a remarkable number of cases criminals were sentenced to the oars/hard labor for life, as expressed in phrases such as "in order to row for one's lifetime" (*müʿebbed kürek çekmek üzere*). A register entitled "The Convict Register of the Imperial Naval Arsenal" (*defter-i mücrimān-ı der-zindān-ı an tersāne-i āmire*) and dated Ramaḍān 1, 1116/December 28, 1704, lists a number of entries concerning those who had committed crimes of banditry or rebellion. In accordance with the generally tough approach taken by the Ottoman state against bandits and rebels as disturbers of the public peace, these convicts were excluded from any possible amnesty. An entry dated 5 Muḥarram 1115/May 21, 1703, states that a bandit sentenced to "perpetual rowing" should not be freed even if the sultan was to pardon him (*fermān daḫī ṣadr olsa ıtlaḳ olınmaya*).[91] This life sentence was applied not only in relation to servitude on war ships, but also for service on special ships that transported stone, as the entry dated Rabīʿ al-Awwāl 7, 1115/July 21, 1703, shows.[92]

5 Seasonal Indentured Labor

Apart from active service at sea, rowers were also employed in two other locations: in the arsenal and outside the arsenal area. In prison, they lived together with the newly arrived war prisoners and convicts sentenced to the oars. During his visit to the arsenal prison, Gerlach describes the interior of the walls where prisoners produced sails and other equipment for galleys.[93] Outside the prison, they were put to hard labor, i.e., to repair ships or to public works, mostly construction jobs throughout the city;

90 Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul*: 165. Zarinebaf's findings have recently been confirmed by Bornstein-Makovetsky's study on Jewish convicts in the Imperial Naval Arsenal. See Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Sentencing Jews to work on Ottoman Naval Ships and in Forced Labor at the Imperial Arsenal from the Early 16th Century to 1839," in *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica* 19,No 1 (2020): 421–42.

91 D. BŞM. TRZ, 15749: 2.

92 D. BŞM. TRZ, 15749: 2. The sentence "to the oars" (*kürek cezası*) continued to exist in penal law until the days of the national assembly in Ankara, though it was only symbolic. In a decree issued by the Ankara government, an offender sentenced to the oars (*küreğe mahkum*) for seven and a half years for bodily injury and homicide in 1912 was pardoned. Jumādā al-Ākhira 2, 1339/February 11, 1921. See *Ceride-i Resmiye* [Official gazette] no. 5 dated Jumādā al-Ākhira 27, 1339/March 8, 1921, 4. During the Tanzimat reforms, the penal law of 1274/1858 "Men'i irtikāb Kanunnamesi" designated "kürek" as hard labor for crime of theft (according to art. 19 and 21). Ahmet Akgündüz, "1274/1858 Tarihli Ceza Kanunnamesinin Hukuki Kaynakları, Tatbik Şekli ve Men-i İrtikâb Kanunnamesi," in *Belleten* 199 (1987): 153–93. Convicts sentenced to *kürek* would have their feet put in chains during work. Pakalın, *Tarih Deyimleri*: 342.

93 Gerlach, *Tagebuch*: 493.

sometimes, they were employed in the sultan's palaces.[94] The most well-known construction project on which the slaves of the navy worked was the Süleymaniye mosque and soup kitchen in Istanbul. Based on the construction registers, Ömer Lütfi Barkan has determined that slave labor amounted to only five percent of the total labor of the whole construction project.[95]

Although the identity of these slaves is not clear and we do not know what kind of organization the galley slaves worked in, those who were listed in the registers in a different way, and those who were considered the *gebrān* (slave) of the ship captains (e.g., "wage of the workers: slaves of the mentioned captain of the ships," *ücret-i ırgadān ʿan gebrān-ı sefīnehā-i rüesāy-ı mezkūrın*) were galley slaves. Another indicator that the *gebrān* workers were *forsa* (galley slaves) can be found in the registration of guards with the title *vādīyān* (prison guards) on some days. We cannot be certain that these guards were always with the slave laborers on the construction project; however, it is clear that guards were sometimes present.[96] These slave workers were also paid, like the free, mostly Christian workers, between three to six *akçe* per day.[97] The seventeenth-century world traveler Evliyā Çelebi (d. 1682) also describes, albeit in an exaggerated style, the *forsa*s who worked on the construction of the Süleymaniye mosque: "For three full years, 3,000 shackled *forsa*s dug up the soil deep in the earth and Taurus, carrier of the globe, listened to the pickaxes of the diggers deep in the earth."[98] Slaves not only worked on construction sites in Istanbul, but also in other locations. At the new fortress in Candia, where construction started in April 1650, beside the soldiers and janissaries, 150 captives also worked in the lime kilns.[99]

94 However, according to Hakan Erdem, the number of state slaves working in the palace was restricted so that only six captives could be employed in the Old Palace and twelve in the New Palace at the same time. See Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*: 30.

95 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti İnşaatı*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1972): 93; on renting out the slaves by the arsenal's administrators, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Slavery in the Ottoman World: A Literature Survey* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2017): 29–31.

96 Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami*: 133.

97 Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami*: 137. The daily wage of an unskilled construction worker in Istanbul in the sixteenth century was between five and six *akçe*. See Pamuk, *Monetary History*: 67.

98 Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Dankoff, Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003): 149: "Üç sene kâmil üç bin pây-beste forsa pâyzen temelin ka'r-ı zemîne endirüp kûhkenlerin darb-ı tîşeleri sadâsın ka'r-ı zemînde hamele-i dünyâ olan sevr istimâ' ederdi."

99 Elias Kolovos, "A Town for the Besiegers: Social Life and Marriage in Ottoman Candia outside Candia (1650–1669)," in *The Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman Rule: Crete 1645–1840*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2009): 105.

6 Maintaining the Labor Force

In terms of maintaining the labor force, we consider the living conditions aboard galleys, including the provision of food, clothing, medical treatment, and the rest. The supply of food and clothing is best documented. The main provision, rusks (*beksimat*/*beksimet*), is the subject of many state orders addressing the officials in charge; its production and transport are frequently reported in the *mühimme* registers since this was a state duty.[100] Other supplies are indicated with the phrase "provisions" (*zāhire*) that may include grains for cooking, such as lentils, rice, and wheat, as well as olive oil and vinegar.[101] Furthermore, the quantity of provision for the daily needs of each crew member and oarsman were regulated. According to Kātib Çelebi, each sailor and rower received one-half *okka* of rusk per day, as ordained by the state.[102] Synchronic rowing involved great physical effort and was very exhausting; therefore, it is questionable whether and to what extent the daily provision sufficed.[103] We do know that they were allowed to cook any provisions they bought.[104]

We know even less about the medical care of galley oarsmen (aboard or in the arsenal prison). Miri Shefer-Mossensohn gives the example of a certain Hasan, who was appointed as surgeon to the arsenal prison in spring 1694. Shefer-Mossensohn points out that the Imperial Arsenal offered medical treatment to captives and criminals in the prison, who had to be healthy to be employed as oarsmen in the upcoming naval season.[105] It was not possible to include a medical practitioner aboard the galleys, largely because of the extremely limited space and overcrowding. We first see a physician aboard a *patrona* galleon (a large sailing ship) in 1693 and 1695, as part of a crew of 550 men and employed with a daily wage of 40 *akçe*.[106]

An official order[107] from the sixteenth century demonstrates that thirteen sick convict rowers were handed over to Dārende Yorgi, the custodian[108] of Izmir, for treatment and recovery. However, they escaped from their confinement. Thereafter,

100 For example, see *Mühimme Defteri* 6: 68 on the need for state rowers (*miri kürekci*) on galleys for the defense of Rhodes; *Mühimme Defteri* 82: 214.

101 *Mühimme Defteri* 12: 23; 777; Cezar, *Levendler*: 126–27.

102 Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*. On rusk and its production, see Bostan, *Tersâne-i Âmire*: 244–50.

103 On food and clothing, see Bono, *Piraten und Korsaren im Mittelmeer*: 157–158; on food in the corsair galleys, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, *Sultanın Korsanları: Osmanlı Akdenizi'nde Gazâ, Yağma ve Esaret, 1500–1700* (Istanbul: Kronik, 2018): 219–27.

104 Bostan, *Tersâne-i Âmire*, 250, referring to Wratislaw.

105 Shefer-Mossensohn, "Medical Treatment": 552–54.

106 See the table on crews in Bostan, *Tersâne-i Âmire*: 184–186 (table xliv).

107 *Mühimme Defteri* 3: 113.

108 The "custodian of non-Muslim subjects" (*kefere kethüdāsı*) had the same responsibilities as the "city custodian" (*şehir kethüdāsı*). Both worked in city centers where the number of tax-paying subjects was probably increasing: the custodians acted as mediators between the state and the locals. See Şenol Çelik, "Şehir Kethüdâsı," *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 38 (2010): 451–53.

an order was addressed to all Anatolian kadis to find the fugitives and deliver them to the governor of Rhodes so they could be returned to service on the galleys. The issue of rest is the least known aspect of being a galley rower. The image of continually rowing to the point of death is the creation of the popular imagination of galley slavery, not only in fiction, but also in first-person narratives of former galley slaves in Europe.[109] In Agatha Christie's famous crime novel *4:50 from Paddington*, a protagonist comments about his housekeeper: "We've worked her like a galley slave."[110] In movies such as *Ben Hur* and *The Sea Hawk*, Hollywood popularized the image of the oarsman as a miserable wretch toiling below deck while loaded down with heavy chains, an image that has persisted in satirical depictions and cartoons (Fig. 1). In reality, galleys put to sea only for a short period (in spring and summer, when weather permitted); once aboard, slaves were made to row only when necessary, in combat or during still periods. Wenceslaw Wratislaw, a former capitve, remembers that even during a journey, he and his comrades "rested one, two, three, or more days by the

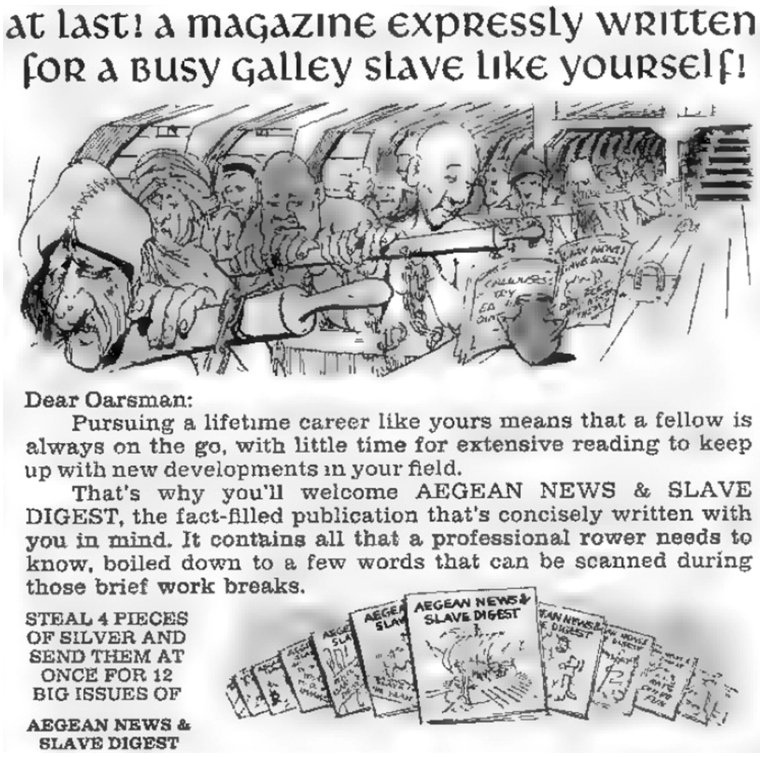

Fig. 1: "If Junkmail had Always Existed," *MAD Magazine* 232, July 1982.

109 Şen, "Galley Slaves": 131, 138.

110 Agatha Christie, *4:50 from Paddington* (Glasgow: Omnia Books, 2002): 226.

shore [. . .]"[111] Thus, being a galley slave did not mean that one was mercilessly worked to death; cases are recorded showing that oarsmen reached old age (see also the section on manumission).

Regarding food, drink, and medical treatment, the treatment of slaves might more appropriately be compared to the living conditions of the poor of Istanbul. Was the situation on the galleys indeed worse than that of day laborers or carriers? We know that those in early modern European cities suffered from poor hygiene and malnutrition, such that living conditions on galleys may not have seemed particularly unhealthy. Moreover, studies indicate that the food supply in the navy was not necessarily worse than that in the city. Ruth Pike's study on penal servitude in early modern Spain points out that prisoners from the royal jails sometimes submitted petitions to be transferred to galleys, where they expected better conditions.[112]

7 Keeping Manpower at Work

With regard to the question of how unfree laborers were kept working, the first assumption might be physical force. However, physical compulsion alone could not ensure that laborers continued working. Incentives, allowances, and wages may have played a role in motivating coerced laborers to work, whereas disciplinary measures were the strategy most frequently applied to keep men at work in the galleys.

7.1 Incentives and Wages

Laborers' incentives can be related to further reasons, such as pride, local loyalty, recognition, and community service, to use Marcel van der Linden's labels.[113] Unfortunately, it is difficult to detect these kinds of incentives in our sources, although conscripted oarsmen must have worked for some of these reasons, given the tax obligations of their communities. In the Ottoman Malta Register, several entries record the actions of individuals rewarded for good service or acts of bravery during the Malta campaign: "Halil, son of Ömer, who was an oarsman from the sub-district (*ḳażā*) of Koçhisar, rendered outstanding services by holing the wall of

111 Wenceslas Wratislaw, *Adventures of Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw of Mitrowitz*, trans. Albert Henry Wratislaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 140.

112 Pike, "Penal Servitute": 21–40.

113 Marcel van der Linden, "Dissecting Coerced Labor," in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 308 Figure 13.2.

the Santarma fortress during the siege."[114] The entry for Thursday, Dhū al-Qaʿda 22, 972/June 21, 1565, states that Halil, the son of Ömer, an oarsman from the sub-district of Koçhisar,[115] "had rendered outstanding services" by breaking a hole into the wall of the Santarma fortress during the siege. Because of this service, it was decreed that Halil should receive a military fief[116] of 3,000 *akçe*. However, the oarsman Halil obviously did not receive his award, and according to the entry for Dhū al-Qaʿda 25, 972/June 24, 1565, he complained to the authorities. He told them that a certain Şahrah (whose position we do not know), who owned a fief in the district of Menteşe,[117] had drowned at sea. Therefore, Halil requested that he be awarded Şahrah's fief. The entry states that his request was accepted.[118] Since these few individuals were specifically identified as "oarsman," and not only as "soldiers" as in the case of other awardees, we can assume that they were employed for combat during the siege.

Slaves who were purchased were paid like voluntary rowers, or sometimes even more.[119] As noted in some of the entries above, this wage was likely to have been between 800 and 1,000 *akçe* during the sixteenth century. According to the finance registers (*muḥāsebe defterleri*) of the Imperial Arsenal from 1602 to 1698, the payment of voluntary rowers varied between 1,700 and 6,000 *aḳçe*. The *forsa*s, however, were paid one-half *aḳçe* per day in 1603–4 and two *aḳçe* per day in 1621–22.[120] Their status as slaves (i.e., because they were *forsa*s) did not prevent them from receiving a small financial payment. Therefore, payment in cash cannot be a criterion by which to differentiate between free and unfree labor.

7.2 Coercion, Discipline, and Surveillance

The issue of coercion, which may be the best known aspect of unfree labor, is described vividly in a number of personal narratives. Coercion was applied, in particular, during critical moments when it was necessary to row the galley during a battle or combat encounter. Wratislaw describes the following situation:

114 Arnold Cassola, *The 1565 Ottoman Malta Campaign Register* (Malta: Bank of Valletta/Publishers Enterprises Group, 1998): 23 (page number of the register): also see the appendix entitled "Turkish Troops Who Distinguished Themselves for Good Service or Acts of Bravery During the Malta Campaign": 368.

115 Today Şereflikoçhisar, a district of Ankara province.

116 The military fief called a *timar* was the smallest unit of the land tenure and tax revenue system.

117 As Aegean district of Muğla province.

118 "Halil, an oarsman, rendered outstanding services in the conquest of the Santarma fortress." Cassola, *Malta Campaign Register*: 33 (this is the page number of the register). In the appendix, he is erroneously listed as a second oarsman (with the same name): although in fact it is only another appearance of the same person in the register, see 368.

119 Bostan, *Tersâne-i Âmire*: 212–13.

120 Bostan, *Tersâne-i Âmire*: 210 n. 202.

> We were conducted on board the galley, or large war-boat, under the care of a vigilant guard, and Achmet, the reis, or captain, who commanded on board the vessel, a Christian born in Italy, but who had now become a Turk, immediately received us and ordered us all to be chained to oars. The vessel was tolerably large, and in it five prisoners sat on a bench, pulling together at a single oar. It is incredible how great the misery of rowing in the galleys is; no work in the world can be harder: for they chain each prisoner by one foot under his seat, leaving him so far free to move that he can get on the bench and pull the oar. When they are rowing, it is impossible, on account of the great heat, to pull otherwise than naked, without any upper clothing, and with nothing on the whole body but a pair of linen trousers.[121]

Coercion was exerted by various forms of discipline and constraint, such as whipping and fettering. The treatment and discipline of oarsmen differed according to their legal status, whether they were convicts, slaves, or freemen. To comprehend the whole picture, we must consider coercion and physical violence in their contemporary context, at a time when the idea of human rights did not yet exist. How was violence defined in the premodern period? Was flogging on the galleys regarded as a particularly brutal and shocking form of violence? Physical coercion was generally applied as a control and disciplinary measure and was widespread in early modern social life.[122] The galley was a space in which extremely asymmetrical relationships were affirmed by strict discipline; severe corporal punishment was used to maintain the social hierarchy. A contemporaneous description of the mechanisms of unfree labor and social discipline can be found in the diary of Johann Siegmund Wurffbain (d. 1661), who served in the Dutch Moluccas in the seventeenth century and frequently noted the harsh punishments meted out to slaves, soldiers, local subalterns, and deviant individuals.[123] A typical depiction follows:

> On March 24, another wrongdoer was punished. A slave who had stolen nutmegs from a tree was whipped and branded. Likewise, a boatman who had stolen rice from a ship and exchanged it for coconut wine, as well as the slave with whom he had exchanged the goods, was whipped around the neck with two canes filled with rice and coconut wine.[124]

In terms of discipline, Jean Marteilhe's depiction makes clear the necessity of discipline, especially at moments when rowing was critical. The situation was likely similar in other galleys:

> As soon as he [the warden] is given the order to row by the captain, he gives a certain signal on a silver whistle hanging around his neck. The two sub-wardens repeat the signal on their whistles, whereupon the oarsmen, with their oars ready, start to row simultaneously all at once and so precisely that all the 50 oars drop on the water and plunge into the water in a single blow, as if there was only a single oar. They continue in this way without needing another order until, after another

121 Wratislaw, *Adventures*: 138.

122 A notion popularized by Michel Foucault in his study *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977).

123 Johann Sigmund Wurffbain, *Reise Nach den Molukken und Vorder-Indien 1632–1646* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Joh. Th. de Bry, 1931): 139, 143, 152.

124 Wurffbain, *Reise*: 150: "mit 2. Rohren voll Reiß und Cocus-Wein, umb den Halß gegeisselt."

> whistle gives the signal, they stop rowing. Very much depends on them rowing simultaneously in this way; for when one or another of the oars loses the rhythm and comes up or drops down too early or too late, the oarsmen sitting in front of this very oar bump their head on the oar when they sit down, and likewise, the oarsmen who missed the beat, bump their heads on the oar right behind them. And there is more [danger] than just bumping one's head. The warden strikes them as well, so it is in their own interest to pay particular attention to speed and rhythm. A saying that applies very clearly to someone who is doing hard and exhausting work: 'I am working like a galley slave.' For it is indeed the hardest job that you can imagine.[125]

7.3 Preventing Escape

Several measures were undertaken in order to keep unfree labor on board galleys and in the arsenal prison during the winter season. Surveillance, carried out by supervisors (*vardiyān*), was used rigorously in these spaces. Surveillance was also applied during recruitment, as we know from entries in *mühimme* registers. Most entries include orders to prevent rowers conscripted from villages from running away. Aboard the galleys, despite strict surveillance, escapes were still frequent. A certain Dimitri Mestene, who was a galley slave (*mīrī forsa kürekçilerden Dimitri Mestene nām efrenciyyü l-aṣl esīr*) in the squadron of ʿAlī Bey, the governor of Rhodes, managed to escape and arrived in the district of Teke (modern-day Antalya). A police chief (*subāşı*) recognized the fugitive and surrendered him to the governor of Tripoli, Murād Bey. On 28 Rabīʿ al-Awwāl 972/November 3, 1564, the latter was ordered to dispatch him to Istanbul and ensure that the aforementioned oarsman did not escape on the way there.[126]

8 Organizing Turnover

The *mukātaba/mükātebe* was essentially an agreement applying to the legal limits of enslavement, which was a basis for the organization of unfree labor. Such a contract stipulated that a slave was allowed to pay for his own release after a fixed period of time and/or the fulfillment of terms set in the contract.[127] However, manumission was much more difficult to obtain for slave rowers in the navy than for other enslaved individuals or groups. One reason may have been that rowers were hard to obtain

125 Marteilhe, *Galeerensträfling*: 276–77.

126 *Mühimme Defteri* 6: 168.

127 For the different forms of manumission at the Ottoman courts, see Joshua M. White, "Slavery, Manumission, and Freedom Suits in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," in *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 283–318; in the nineteenth century, the government itself paid the manumission fee required by the contract (for example, in the case of the Circassian refugees): see Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression: 1840–1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016): 162–64.

and therefore indispensable; healthy and strong men seem to have had only a small chance of redeeming themselves or acquiring *mukātaba* contracts. Nicole Priesching writes about the situation for the galley slaves of the Papal States and notes that many of them hoped that one day they would be able to pay for their release. One of the several obstacles they faced was the necessity to obtain a medical report confirming that they were unfit to work on the galley.[128]

According to the documents I have been able to identify, manumission "due to advanced age" was the only reason galley slaves were set free. As Nur Sobers-Khan states, we know that the slaves who engaged in *mukātaba* contracts did not have to work as oarsmen. Almost certainly, slaves who had to work as oarsmen were not listed among those employed in *mukātaba* contracts in the court registers of Galata because they did not receive payment for their work and also did not hold out the prospect of a guaranteed manumission.[129] Documents show that slaves employed in a *mukātaba* contract worked as skilled laborers or seamen at the arsenal or that their work was at least partially related to the seafaring sector.[130] I have found entries in the Galata court register no. 15 (a different one from that analyzed by Sobers-Khan) stating that oarsmen were also manumitted. Obviously, they could obtain such a document only due to advanced age:

> The slave called Yuvan Elyo had rowed in the galleys of Rhodes [i.e., in the fleet of the Ottoman governor of Rhodes] for thirty years (*otuz yıl mikdārı Rodos kadırgalarında kürek çeküb*) and served the state faithfully. Now, as he is a frail old man, he was appointed overseer for the state slaves according to the ancient custom. Because of his loyal and righteous service, [he] should be freed after serving for three years beginning in 1 Jumādā al-Ākhira 994/May 20, 1586, and his manumission contract [should be] handed to him.[131]

A manumission was only possible after one served in another function, such as an overseer. In humanitarian terms, however, it seems rather cruel to set a frail old man free and leave him to his fate. The case above is confirmed by a number of entries stating that slaves of the arsenal were employed in surveillance functions as well. In a similar case, a certain Anton v. Bonato, who had served 30 years in the Imperial Arsenal and had become old, was manumitted. The record does not clarify whether this man had ever served as an oarsman.[132] Francesco Gaspari, another state slave in the

128 Nicole Priesching, *Von Menschenfängern und Menschenfischern: Sklaverei und Loskauf im Kirchenstaat des 16.–18. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012): 208.

129 Nur Sobers-Khan, *Slaves Without Shackles: Forced Labour and Manumission in the Galata Court Registers, 1560–1572* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014): 162.

130 Sobers-Khan, *Slaves without Shackles*: 164.

131 Coşkun Yılmaz, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Galata Mahkemesi 15 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1024–1029/M. 1615–1620)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2012) [hereafter Galata Mahkemesi 15]: 91b–1.

132 *Galata Mahkemesi* 15: 90b–3: "otuz yıl miḳdārı mīrī içün ḫidmet ėtmeğle pīr olmağın."

arsenal, was set free after fulfilling his three-year service.[133] We may consider all other reasons by which oarsmen exited from slavery, but not mechanisms, since these possibilities were based on the existing social order rather than on the employer's decision. These possibilities included conversion, escape, or being ransomed or exchanged.[134] Note that none of these possibilities necessarily led to freedom: rather, they led to a new relationship of asymmetrical dependency.

9 Conclusions

My goal has been to study the phenomenon of unfree labor as it pertains to the Ottoman navy in the early modern period and its place in global history from a micro-spatial approach. I chose Galata as the ideal location, because the Ottoman navy and the Imperial Arsenal, with their shipyards and social facilities, were based there. In the Mediterranean basin, war captivity, enslavement, and unfree labor were common in all the navies of the Mediterranean powers; they all shared the same characteristics. This amounts to a rule of reciprocity: all of these powers responded to the exigencies of naval warfare in the same way. The dramatic increase in the need for rowers at the beginning of the sixteenth century led to an increase in the forcible recruitment of men. Despite their various reasons for working in the navy, the organization and form of labor were similar, particularly in terms of the working conditions of convicts, war captives, and other recruited oarsmen. The distinctive characteristic of unfree labor lies in the fact that for all these groups, the state acted as their common employer. While their legal status differed significantly, the rowers shared the same living conditions.

Dependency and unfree labor were global during the early modern period, afflicting many groups. But from a global perspective, and in view of the fact that life on the galleys entailed existential emergency situations, such as naval combat and storms at sea, the situation of rowers was in some regards the most extreme form of dependency. Looking at Galata in the wider Mediterranean context, both as a space and as a micro hub from a micro-spatial perspective, its connectivity provides many opportunities to take a global history perspective. It was not an isolated or unique place. Even if we focus exclusively on unfree labor, human labor, or recruitment mechanisms, we encounter a number of geographical connections. Among those involved, we must include the entire Mediterranean world (war captives or other recruited manpower were supplied by the Italian states (particularly Venice, Spain, Malta, and France), central and

133 *Galata Mahkemesi* 15: 88b–3: "Mīrī esīrlerden [. . .] efrenciyyü l-aṣl Françesḳo Gaspari Takarfer." On the term *efrencī/ifrinci*, see Sobers-Khan, *Slaves without Shackles*: 84–85. On the employment of slaves as overseers, see further *Galata Mahkemesi* 15: 90b–5.

134 Şen, "Galley Slaves and Agency": 151–58.

eastern Europe (Hungary, Germany), the northern neighbors of the Ottoman state (Russia, Ukraine, the Caucasus), and distant regions of the Ottoman domains (tax recruits from the Balkan provinces). There was significant mobility between inhabitants of these larger geographical areas as well as among local spaces: the arsenal, its prison, the galleys, and the city, where some were employed in the off season.

Amidst these geographical connections and mobility, individuals, as slaves and members of the human workforce, were entangled in various webs of dependency. War captives became slaves, slaves hired by private owners became seasonal laborers, and convicts served as penal serfs in the state's navy. Moreover, officials from the grand admiral to the guards were involved in the management of maritime labor. In the system of large-scale recruitment and forced labor in the Ottoman navy, the state was the main protagonist. In this respect, unfree labor in the early modern period can be considered similar to prisoners of war and forced labor in the twentieth century, such as the gulag of Stalin's Soviet Union and prison camps in Germany during the Nazi regime. All share distinctive characteristics: the state was the main actor that engaged in large-scale recruitment and there was mass mobility, deployment to different spaces, and a war context (i.e., the necessities resulting from warfare). They were not self-sustaining systems; the workforce required continual external replacements.

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