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Negotiating Early Modern Transottoman Slaving Zones: An Arab in Moscow

1 Introduction

The journey of an Arab man from Jerusalem to Moscow in the seventeenth century to raise cash for ransoming his family may well be considered global in a range of senses: it connected two scarcely linked, distant, and growing Eurasian empires, of which one was a great power and the other was on the brink of such status. It referred to other journeys connecting these empires, along with the experiences gained while traveling through these loosely related Transottoman spaces, including possibly Anatolia, the Mediterranean[1] and the Black Sea, certainly the Caucasus area, the River Volga, the adjacent steppe, and inner Muscovy. It was conditional on a broad array of external factors influencing its tenets, outline, and results. As recent studies on global migration remind us, such journeys in premodern conditions were seldom undertaken on the individual judgement of one person but involved decision processes encompassing numerous related people.[2] Often, but not necessarily in the given case, such interlocutors acted as professionals or were sent by the master of the persons they claimed to ransom.[3]

The multiple considerations involved in such a journey call for adequate frameworks of interpretation that are historically informed or, preferably, saturated, and which may spur the meaningful linking of these factors. Questions raised comprise why anyone would expect to gain an advantage in ransoming from undertaking an arduous and costly journey across at least 4,000 kilometers to a distant, northerly kingdom that could hardly be described as remarkably wealthy. They also require relevant approaches to questions of faith, conversion, and political economy, since such factors were involved in the actions leading up to the decision to embark on this journey and in the decisions of the Moscow chancelleries. How were these places linked

1 Assuming he received the recommendation of the patriarch of Constantinople in the city.

2 Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds. *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience (16th–21st Centuries)*, vol. 3 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014).

3 Géza Dávid and Pál. Fodor, eds. *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders: Early Fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

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by networks of religion, trade, and politics to produce the outcome of an Arab collecting alms in Moscow, and in what ways and to what extent did they limit his endeavors? Why would the Moscow administration even consider helping an Arab in any way, since as a Greek Orthodox he may or may not have been considered a coreligionist? Approaches giving due consideration to mutual influences of faith, politics, and economy in histories of slaving that decenter from or "provincialize" Europe are few and far between.[4] A recent attempt to formulate such a framework relies particularly on data gained in the medieval Mediterranean and Europe.

2 Slaving and No-Slaving Zones

The theory of slaving zones and no-slaving zones was put forth by Jeffrey Fynn-Paul in 2009. Although it was launched among scholars of slavery, it was from the start concerned with wider questions of empire building and global history.[5] There has been some revision since, but it was welcomed and in its basic assumptions maintained by a growing number of international scholars mainly studying the Greater Mediterranean – including Genoa and the Black Sea, as well as Roma slaves in Romania, medieval Europe, and the colonial world.[6] Despite some generalizing forays, the concept has not yet elicited much work among students of the inner Eurasian and eastern European regions.[7] As a core statement, slaving zones have occurred everywhere in time and space, while at other times the same area or group might be addressed as no-slaving zone. As against essentializing concepts, this highlights the fluid character of enslavement. The theory's main characteristics were originally listed as six columns on which to base conceptual considerations. Subsequently, these were adjusted to some degree in conference proceedings published in 2018. The earlier formulation may be summarized as follows: political organization protects people from enslavement, while political disorganization can have the opposite effect. Secondly, many societies had geographical areas which were "slaving zones," i.e., places from which slaves could be captured or purchased. Thirdly, many societies created "no-slaving zones" that were (theoretically) off limits to

4 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5 Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era," *Past & Present* 205 (2009): 3–40.

6 Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery," in *Slaving Zones: Cultural Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions in the Evolution of Global Slavery*, ed. Jeffrey Fynn-Paul and Damian Alan Pargas (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 336–59.

7 Juliane Schiel, "Sklaven," in *Migrationen im Mittelalter: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014): 251–65; Fynn-Paul and Pargas, *Slaving Zones*: 2. For medieval Rus prior to 1100, see: Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery": 5, 17, 21, 23.

slaving. Fourthly, non-monotheistic societies had more permeable "no-slaving zones," while monotheistic societies tended to create more absolute bans on the enslavement of co-religionists. Thus, religious boundaries also acted to create slaving zone boundaries. Moreover, slaving zones can represent fractures within a given society. For example, some "classes" of people, such as criminals, the poor, or people of a certain race, creed, or ethnicity, might be legitimate slave targets, while others were off limits. The sixth column states that identity and ideology play key roles in determining the actual boundaries of slaving zones, often just as much or more than political and economic organizations.[8]

One of Fynn-Paul's most original points is that the slaving zones of politically organized states might be more thoroughly exploited than those of politically disorganized states. This is due to the potential to be a "long-term" slaving zone and the increased economic sophistication that might come with political organization, increasing effective demand for slaves taken from the affected slaving zone. For the latter, he nods to Africa and Russia, though largely in the medieval period, as prime examples.[9] Such a theorizing statement allows us to evaluate the historical record more rigorously. The terms thus applied are analytical and less essentializing than the usual ethnic and religious markers of raiders and raided, in which inheres the potential to stigmatize the late born. In an evaluation performed in 2018, identity markers that might render a person eligible for slavery are extended to the point at which the interaction of economic and political interests is openly discussed. "Caribs" are to some degree those whom the Spanish crown designated enslaveable for a certain period and in an area deemed less economically important, after fees were paid by traders and raiders. There were manifold intervening markers of identity between the era of religion and that of race: markers as diverse as citizenship, religion, ethnicity, race, tribal identity, political allegiance, and geographical elements have all been used at various times and places around the globe in order to delineate enslaveable populations. These characteristics are no longer seen as different types of slaveries, but as a continuum of various interlacing forms.

Another clarification of earlier points illustrated by many contributions to this conference is that various power regimes and ideological systems can compete over a given region at a given time, which can cause confusion or competition among slaving zones.[10] This is especially pertinent to the Transottoman region, which contained core areas that developed no-slaving zones, such as the Ottoman or Persian empires, but also contained numerous shatter areas in which the impact of differing empires made

8 Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery": 3–4; Stephan Conermann, Review of *Slaving Zones: Cultural Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions in the Evolution of Global Slavery*, ed. Jeff Fynn-Paul and Damian Alan Pargas, *sehepunkte* 19, no. 1 (2019).

9 Fynn-Paul and Pargas, *Slaving Zones*: 3.

10 Fynn-Paul and Pargas, *Slaving Zones*: 7.

itself felt and mutually competing slaving zones influenced each other.[11] In connected terms, Stanley Engerman and David Eltis in their pathbreaking overview of social dependence have pointed out that eligibility for enslavement is a major neglected issue.[12]

3 The Ottoman Empire and Muscovy – Transottoman Interactions and the History of Slaving

Muscovy and great swathes of eastern Europe entered the Ottoman slaving zone in the fifteenth century as a result of several longstanding trends with varying effects and consequences. The two empires at the western end of the Silk Road, the Ottoman and the Muscovite empires, and their interrelations were to considerable degrees shaped by and for trade and slaving. They were increasingly distinguished by geographically separate trade routes from Europe to Asia. The older, southernly arms of the Silk Road trade terminated in the Ottoman Mediterranean ports. A new, Siberian arm of the Silk Road network opened in the seventeenth century, running from China and India through Nerchinsk, Irkutsk, Tara, and Tobolsk to Moscow: this was recently studied in detail by Erika Monahan.[13] Increased security and communications in these new Siberian outposts swayed well-connected Bukharan transcontinental merchants to move to Tobolsk. They sought to evade the growing internal troubles in Central Asia as a consequence of the long-term dissolution of the Mongol Empire. Meanwhile, Armenian and Indian traders set up in Astrakhan.[14] Growing transcontinental trade was the mid-term outcome of sixteenth-century conquests along and beyond the Volga: the capital of the Volga Tatars, Kazan (1552), Astrakhan near the estuary, and Sibir. Attempts to expand into the Baltic during the Livonian War (1558–83) at first hampered trade but led to opening the Arctic route, collaborating with the Dutch and English via newly-founded Arkhangelsk.[15] However, the main trade artery from northern Europe to the Ottomans led through Poland, a frequent and long-term ally of the former and competitor of

11 Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

12 David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor in Time and Space," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 3, *AD 1420–AD 1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 15–21.

13 Erika Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

14 G.L. Penrose, "Inner Asian Influences on the Earliest Russo-Chinese Trade and Diplomatic Contacts," *Russian History/Histoire russe* 19 (1992): 388–92.

15 Nancy Shields Kollmann, *The Russian Empire 1450–1801* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Muscovy.[16] It is symptomatic that "Khadzhi Ivan" changed between the Ottoman and Muscovite transportation networks at Astrakhan, the intersection of the hajj route from Central Asia to Mecca along the northern Caucasus and Muscovite-Persian waterways.[17]

After the Muscovite conquests, the Ottomans attempted to cut a channel through the isthmus between the Don and Volga. They failed in 1569, since their Crimean Tatar guides led the campaign astray – they had other designs than letting their ostensible suzerain bypass the Caucasus, appear by waterborne transport in force in the northern domains of its adversary, Safavid Iran, and cut out nomadic Tatar intermediaries and Muscovy from the eastern trade.[18] It was not until doom loomed large over Istanbul's long-time ally Poland-Lithuania, threatening the balance of power in western Eurasia, that the Ottomans attacked beyond the Black Sea steppe.[19] The Muscovite-Ottoman war of the 1670s brought a new, uneasy balance that emptied right-bank Ukraine, but allowed Muscovy to people its newly-won steppe possessions beyond the river.[20]

North-south Muscovite-Ottoman trade was alive but limited. The two empires remained separated by the Pontic Steppe and were competitors for the predominantly east-west transcontinental trade on parallel routes. Income flows had changed from the state of affairs when the Mongol Empire had united the Silk Road routes.[21] Transhumant nomads, especially on the Pontic Steppe, were from the sixteenth century onwards often compelled by their meager revenue as herders and increasingly river-based transport to seek additional sources of income, which they found in raiding and highway robbery – the middle and lower Volga were still known for this phenomenon in the later 1500s.[22]

Demand for labor was high in the economically thriving Ottoman Empire and raiding access for nomads to human resources was easy, fast, and ugly. Almost annual slave raids across the steppe, often several per year of various sizes, yielded large

16 Albrecht Fuess, "Handel und Waren," in *Transottomanica: osteuropäisch-osmanisch-persische Mobilitätsdynamiken*, ed. Stephan Conermann, Albrecht Fuess and Stefan Rohdewald (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2019): 105–34.

17 See below.

18 Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500–1700*, *Warfare and History* (London: Routledge, 2007); Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia*; Kollmann, *The Russian Empire 1450–1801*.

19 Eurasia in this sense denotes the area north of major mountain ranges and west of the Carpathian arc: John LeDonne, "Poltava and the Geopolitics of Western Eurasia," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 31, no. 1–4 (2009–2010): 177–191; Donald Ostrowski, "The End of Muscovy. The Case for ca. 1800," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 2 (2010): 426–38.

20 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*.

21 On the cities and trade networks of the Golden Horde, see Mark Kramarovsky, "The City and Urban Life in the Golden Horde," in *The History of the Tatars since Ancient Times*, vol. 3, *The Ulus of Jochi (Golden Horde)*, ed. M. Usmanov and R. Khakimov (Kazan: Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2017): 593–615; and Christoph Witzenrath, Review of *Srednevekovye goroda nižnego Povolž'ja i severnogo Kavkaza*, by Aleksandr Vladimirovič Pačkalov, *sehepunkte* 19, no. 9 (2019).

22 Kollmann, *The Russian Empire 1450–1801*.

numbers of slaves:[23] eastern Europe from the Caucasus to Poland was second in numbers only to sub-Saharan Africa as a source of slaves. Between the 1470s and 1700, documented port taxes indicate 2–3 million captives sold through northern Black Sea harbors, not counting those killed during hurried marches through the steppe as their captors tried to escape relief forces.[24] Connectivity was central to this nomadic extra income: Muscovite and Ruthenian slaves can be found in numbers in places as far removed as Aleppo, Istanbul, and Bursa, as well as in Central Asia. For most, this was a one-way trip. They did not necessarily remain unwillingly in their new places of residence due to the Ottoman Empire's attraction or the mere power of the holding areas to retain them, although this has proven hard to document in individual cases.[25] Slaves were usually manumitted after a certain number of years, from seven to twelve, and continued to live in the vicinity of their former owner as clients;[26] however, not all benefitted from this custom and some were sold on before manumission. Some slaves reached the heights of the Ottoman hierarchy, epitomized by Hurrem (1500/1506–1558), a slave girl from Ruthenia whom foreigners called Roxelana. She

23 Charles L. Wilkins, "A Demographic Profile of Slaves in Early Ottoman Aleppo," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 221–46.

24 Estimates based on various sources confirm the larger picture: Halil İnalcık, ed., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 32–37; Alan W. Fisher, "Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 6, no. 4 (1972): 579; A.A. Novosel'skij, *Bor'ba moskovskogo gosudarstva s tatarami v pervoj polovine XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stva Akademii nauk SSSR, 1948): 436; G.A. Sanin, *Otnosheniia Rossii i Ukrainy s Krymskim Khanstvom v seredine XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987): 243; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Slave Hunting and Slave Redemption as a Business Enterprise: The Northern Black Sea Region in the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," *Oriente Moderno* 25, no. 1 (2006): 151; Mikhail Kizilov, "Slave Trade in the Early Modern Crimea from the Perspective of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11, no. 1–2 (2007): 6–7.

25 Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent. Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Ehud R. Toledano, "Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 3, *AD 1420–AD 1804*, ed. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 25–46; Brian L. Davies, "The Prisoner's Tale: Russian Captivity Narratives and Changing Muscovite Perceptions of the Ottoman-Tatar Dar-Al-Islam," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 279–94; Aleksandr Lavrov, "Captivity, Slavery and Gender: Muscovite Female Captives in the Crimean Khanate and in the Ottoman Empire," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 309–19; Aleksandr Lavrov, "Rapatriement, genre et mobilité sociale. La liste des captifs rapatriés de Crimée par Timofej Hotunskij (1649)," *Cahiers du monde russe* 57, no. 2–3 (2016): 667–85.

26 Ehud R. Toledano, "An Empire of Many Households: The Case of Ottoman Enslavement," in *Slaves and Households in the Near East: Papers from the Oriental Institute Seminar held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 5–6 March 2010*, ed. Laura Culbertson (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011): 85–97.

was the first after generations of slave spouses to lawfully marry the sultan. Suleyman the Magnificent, or the Lawgiver in the Ottoman phrasing, broke with tradition, writing love poems in her name. When she became regent to her son after a biting round of Ottoman succession struggles, she had already increased the harem's influence in politics and culture.[27] However, others returned after months, years, or decades – ransomed, fled, or manumitted. Many enjoyed less good fortune and found themselves on galleys as rowers.[28] From Ottoman silver mines no slave returned, according to the records. Nevertheless, far from all miners were slaves and such a fate was not uncommon, let alone in Christian empires.[29] Some were manumitted after a period of years according to contract or paid their own ransom from what they had earned as trade agents of their masters. Others were ransomed by Muscovite envoys, merchants, foreign ambassadors, or intermediary steppe groups, such as Cossacks, through their contacts with Tatars. Some Cossacks on the steppe frontier intermarried with Tatars or mountaineers; others and some Muscovite Tatars returned from slavery to become interpreters for the Muscovite foreign ("ambassador") chancellery.[30] Resulting networks were instrumental in arranging the exchange of captives for ransom, including even boyars.

The peculiar connectivity between the Muscovite and Ottoman empires has been duly noted in the literature. Nancy Kollmann writes about trade and its corollary in the politics of expansion and assembling empire. Land and people are seen in global context, especially the genetic link to the Mongol Empire that the Muscovites and Ottomans shared, but which developed in divergent ways. The main approach to ideology fairly emphasizes broadcasting legitimacy, nevertheless it begs the question from what legitimacy was derived except the dynastic link that broke down at the end of the sixteenth century.[31]

In the traditional story of Muscovy's rise as first described by V.O. Kliuchevskyi, there were four factors contributing to its waxing: Mongol patronage, securing the see of the Orthodox metropolitanate by the 1320s, the dynasty's de facto primogeniture in the face of partible inheritance practiced by its rivals, and, finally, its

27 Leslie Peirce, *Empress of the East: How a European Slave Girl Became Queen of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

28 Gül Şen, "Between Two Spaces: Enslavement and Labor in the Early Modern Ottoman Navy," in this volume.

29 Christoph Witzenrath, "Introduction. Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia. An Overview of the Russian and Ottoman Empires and Central Asia," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 1–77.

30 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Brian J. Boeck, "Identity as Commodity. Tournaments of Value in the Tatar Ransom Business," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 35, n. 3–4 (2008): 259–266; see now: Christoph Witzenrath, *The Russian Empire, Slaving and Liberation, 1480–1725: Trans-Cultural Worldviews in Eurasia*, (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022): 186–9.

31 On ideology and slavery during Godunov's regency and reign, see Witzenrath (2022).

advantageous position.[32] These factors were important, except for Moscow's placement, which was hardly better than that of its rival Tver.[33] They may be considered the political organization at the heart of an incipient no-slaving zone. Since Lawrence Langer's investigation, it has become harder to overlook, first, the role of internal slaving in the medieval Rus principalities and, second, the setting up of an initial no-slaving zone – although he does not use the label – by Moscow in its as yet limited territories, especially during the period of internal wars in the Golden Horde in the 1360s–70s.[34] Thus, it might be argued that a no-slaving zone and the concomitant detrimental effects on its neighbors might be addressed as the fifth – or fourth – factor of Moscow's rise.

Which traits of the Muscovite Empire align with its creation by devising a no-slaving zone? An early period in the development of the no-slaving zone was the late fourteenth century, when the Mongol Empire disintegrated in fits and increasingly spawned slave raiders feeding human chattel to the burgeoning Muslim economies in the Greater Mediterranean. Initially, this no-slaving zone did not even extend to all Russian Orthodox, which meant that less organized territorial entities, such as the "trampled-over" district of Riazan on the southeastern approaches to the steppe or Kyiv, succumbed to the market forces exerted by regional no-slaving zones. We may surmise that there were several phases in setting up a counter no-slaving zone, as the initial internal Tatar war of the 1360s and 70s gave way to a new phase of consolidation in the early fifteenth century, until the Golden Horde split up in so many smaller hordes and khanates in the middle of the century. Meanwhile, the Ottomans established a new center of power and a new and growing anti-slaving zone in the region. Beyond the often-mentioned effect of close Muscovite-Tatar cooperation in taxing during these phases until the mid-fifteenth century, the Muscovite counter no-slaving zone was likely to indirectly strengthen budding Muscovy vis-à-vis its Orthodox competitors in northeastern Rus. Note that paying taxes to the Tatars was initially not part of establishing an anti-slaving zone, since there were town rebellions over tax rate increases and related debt slavery in the 1260s.[35] Later, Moscow's grand princes received the help of Tatar troops and the rebellious spirit subsided. The initial record of this phase is decidedly mixed, not least due to the unreliability and frequent silence of the sources. Moreover, no-slaving as a protective strategy of dominance was directed more against fellow east Slavic entities and rulers that engaged in enslaving their neighbors.

32 Kollmann, *The Russian Empire 1450–1801*: 44–53.

33 Mikhail Krom, Review of *The Russian Empire 1450–1801*, by Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Ab Imperio* 4 (2017): 295–302.

34 Lawrence N. Langer, "Slavery in the Appanage Era: Rus' and the Mongols," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 145–70.

35 Langer, "Slavery in the Appanage Era."

In a third phase, Muscovy faced a much-enlarged threat as the political fragmentation of its steppe neighbors and erstwhile suzerains progressed – in part and rather typically becoming slaving zones themselves as political organization fragmented and Tatars sold Tatars – and Ottoman and Safavid power, market capitalization, and demand for human resources in the Muslim no-slaving zones was at its height.[36] Muscovy reformulated border policies, pouring in considerable resources that helped to change local and regional population dynamics.[37] However, it also faced a different kind of highly sophisticated no-slaving zone in the Union of Poland-Lithuania, among the wealthiest states in Europe, which combined high rates of enfranchisement with adequate military organization. In the long run, however, the out-migration and rebellion of less privileged Ruthenians (Ukrainians in today's parlance), who were also less secure from Tatar slave raids, helped Moscow to reverse the regional power balance.[38]

In sum, despite minor existing mutual trade links in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy found themselves at opposing ends of repercussions from evolving routes across Eurasia. New trade links from the Baltic and Arctic Ocean down the Volga to Persia and India and across Siberia to Mongolia and China cut down the caravan trade along established, southerly Silk Roads that reached the Ottomans. Adding to these effects, political troubles in Central Asia both hindered the Ottoman-liaised caravan trade and increased migration pressures in the western steppes. Nomads found new sources of income conducting slave raids. They catered to the Ottoman demand for labor and additions to provincial and capital households of dependents, scarcely curbed by mutual respect and common interests.[39] Moreover, the Crimean khans used these raids to curb budding powers on the steppe rim. Likewise, they occasionally checked the Ottomans by withholding support or providing misleading information. They aimed to prevent any of these powers from growing to such proportions that they might upset the European – and Transottoman – balance of power; the

36 Witzenrath, "Introduction. Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia"; William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (London: Hurst and Company, 2006).

37 Kollmann, *The Russian Empire 1450–1801*.

38 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500–1700*: 84.

39 Zübeyde Güneş-Yağcı, "The Slave Trade in the Crimea in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Black Sea Past, Present and Future*, ed. Gülden Erkut and Stephen Mitchell (London: British Institute at Ankara, 2007): 73–80. Hannah Barker, "Egyptian and Italian Merchants in the Black Sea Slave Trade, 1260–1500" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014); Fisher, "Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade"; Kołodziejczyk, "Slave Hunting and Slave Redemption"; Danuta Qurini-Popławska, "The Venetian Involvement in the Black Sea Slave Trade (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)," in *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000–1500 CE)*, vol. 5, *Mediterranean Nexus 1100–1700*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and Christoph Cluse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017): 255–98; Wilkins, "A Demographic Profile of Slaves in Early Ottoman Aleppo."

security of the khan's income and grazing grounds depended on these arrangements.[40] The Muscovite response to these challenges and opportunities was many-tiered. Firstly, they stepped up military construction from the 1570s and the 1630s. Fortresses and connecting fieldworks were built to shut down invasion roads across hundreds, later thousands, of kilometers through the steppes.[41] They became building blocks of Muscovite influence in Eurasia. Moreover, Muscovy used its self-image as New Israel to enhance its symbolical capital, trying to induce a sense of security and compete for influence among the multicultural populations of the steppes and their vicinity.[42]

Less of an economic phenomenon, ransom was symbolically linked to this image and enhanced imperial links by inducing internal and external travel and patronage.[43] The degree to which this soft power worked was not limited to Muscovite populations, but Orthodox clerics ensured that it extended deep into the Ottoman Empire, beyond Moscow's actual influence in terms of hard power and political aims.[44]

4 Khadzhi Ivan

"*Khadzhi* Ivan" appeared in the Chancellery of Foreign Affairs in November 1686. In his petition, he mentions the outstanding reputation of the tsar and the redemption effort:

> I your servant (*rabotnik*) [. . .] who does not own anything to feed himself [. . .] have heard about your great well-known mercifulness towards all Orthodox Christians arriving from neighboring states to your state, [. . .] I came today in a pitiful state to Moscow to collect alms.[45]

40 Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Das Krimkhanat als Gleichgewichtsfaktor in Osteuropa (17.–18. Jahrhundert)," in *The Crimean Khanate between East and West (15th–18th Century)*, ed. Denise Klein (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012): 47–59.

41 Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552–1671* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*.

42 On the broad use of New Israel imagery, see Joel Raba, "Moscow – the Third Rome or the New Jerusalem," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 50 (1995): 297–308; Daniel B. Rowland, "Moscow – the Third Rome or the New Israel?" *Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (1996): 591–614. On the imagery's links with preventing slave raids and liberation of slaves, see Christoph Witzenrath, "The Conquest of Kazan' as Place of Remembering the Liberation of Slaves in Sixteenth – and Seventeenth-Century Muscovy," in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 295–308.

43 Christoph Witzenrath, "Rachat ('rédemption'), fortification et diplomatie dans la steppe – la place de l'Empire de Moscou dans la traite des esclaves en Eurasie," in *Les esclavages en Méditerranée: Espaces et dynamiques économiques*, ed. Fabienne P. Guillén (Madrid: Casa de Velaàzquez, 2012): 181–94.

44 Christoph Witzenrath, "Agency in Muscovite Archives: Trans-Ottoman Slaves Negotiating the Moscow Administration," in *New Perspectives on Slavery: The Ottoman Empire*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2020). On Greek Orthodox clerics appearing in Moscow in the seventeenth century, see Ekkehard Kraft, *Moskaus griechisches Jahrhundert: Russisch-griechische Beziehungen und metabyzantinischer Einfluss 1619–1694* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995).

45 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 1.

This amounts to what today would be called the extension of soft power, although in an area well beyond Moscow's possible aspirations in that period. Those were the years when the regent Sofia and her favorite V.V. Golicyn twice attacked the Crimean Khanate with large armies without even passing the isthmus of Perekop.[46] Secretary Emelian Ukraintsev interrogated Ivan Mikhailov, the "*khadzhi*" who is presented as a "Greek Orthodox Arab from Jerusalem." However, chancellery staff were not certain how to address him: later that year, when he returned, they lapsed to calling him a "Greek."[47] Mikhailov set out to explain how he had entered his pitiful state, starting with a long chain of events: "A non-resident Greek manumitted a female Russian slave in Jerusalem, who thereafter married a Jerusalem Greek. Upon the husband's death, he left two children and his wife decided to convert [to Islam]."[48]

Her owner might have entertained religious motives for this decision. Where the owner originated or where he moved to are both unknown, so it is possible in the vast Ottoman Empire that he left her close to Rus – it is never entirely clear who is meant by "Russian," but usually it is Ruthenian, from today's Ukraine. There are no indications about her decision to marry or whether it was at her own free will or a deal among business partners involving the former owner. Her husband was well established in the local Greek Orthodox community and had their children educated by a fellow believer, Georgii, who happened to be *Khadzhi* Ivan's brother. When the husband died, his wife was either scared or sufficiently acquainted with her new environment to seek conversion to Islam.[49]

It was usually female slaves living in concubinage rearing male heirs for their masters who converted. As converts, they rose to the status of *ümm-ü veled,* a freed mother of an heir and a wife with full rights.[50] However, in this case her original master had manumitted her and she had married a Greek, which meant the usual rights of a widow after he died. In some regard, this status was disadvantageous, and it seems here that this might have been the reason for her conversion. As a Greek Orthodox widow, it was the family of the father who got custody of the child. Therefore, conversion was attractive, as the widow gained custody of her children under Muslim law.[51]

46 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*.

47 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, l. 4.

48 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 2.

49 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 3.

50 R. Brunschvig, "Abd," in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1960): 31.

51 Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kisve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670–1730*, vol. 30 (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 90–91; Ronald C. Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records – The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18, no. 1 (1975): 74. I am grateful to Veruschka Wagner for this information. Exchange across the boundaries of research fields was facilitated by the interdisciplinary environment within the Bonn Center of Dependency and Slavery Studies and the Priority Program Transottomanica. See also Elyse Semerdjian, "Armenian Women, Legal Bargaining, and Gendered Politics of Conversion in Seventeenth – and Eighteenth-Century Aleppo," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 2–30.

It is hard to say what motivations were behind this decision, since important pieces of the mosaic are missing and cannot be retrieved from Muscovite or, most likely, Jerusalem archives. There is no indication of the age of the children, so, beyond a mother's right to custody, their best interests are hard to establish. Georgii's reaction to the order of the pasha, however, indicates possible previous disagreement about the children's education or whereabouts. It cannot be excluded, for this reason among others, that the former Ruthenian slave sought conversion for reasons beyond child custody.

In any case, she chose the Ottoman way of life. Or, perhaps, leaving Jerusalem seemed too unsafe and expensive, as another Muscovite woman manumitted in Istanbul paid the full ransom of a fellow male captive to ensure his protection, demanding payment of the debt as soon as they arrived in Moscow.[52] Although women were usually underrepresented among ransomed and returning slaves, as Aleksandr Lavrov has shown, sometimes Tatars provided an escort to Muscovite emissaries, lowering the risk of the journey through the steppe. In such an entourage, there might be hundreds of women deciding to return to Muscovy.[53] While the mother's choice of conversion might indicate a preference for Islam or at least child custody, it was additionally framed by the hardships and costs of return. Since she could not take her children with her, an outcome reconfirmed by subsequent events, her decision seems informed by a multitude of determining factors.

In any case, this decision entailed much disorder and hardship. The Greek teacher was ordered by the pasha to deliver the children to the authorities. Instead, "for reasons of faith" he sent them to a monastery in Nazareth, where they were ordained. Apparently, this act was not questioned as such as the children in the monastery are not mentioned further, though we cannot be sure – they have no role in the subsequent narrative. Ottoman authorities apparently did not interfere with religious institutions. Therefore, it seems that the mother's attempt to regain custody failed. The decision to send the children to the monastery was a different issue altogether. The teacher Georgii avoided punishment for contempt of Muslim laws only by paying a heavy fine of 500 leeuwendaalder (*levki*); payments "went to the pasha and the local Turkish elite (*nachalnye liudi*)."[54]

Ivan Mikhailov stood in for his brother, but could pay up only 300 *levki*.[55] For the rest he went in debt; soon, as he could not muster the sum, his relatives were made

52 Lavrov, "Captivity, Slavery and Gender."

53 Lavrov, "Captivity, Slavery and Gender"; Lavrov, "Rapatriement, genre et mobilité sociale."

54 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 4.

55 The *leeuwendaalder* or lion dollar replaced coins bearing the symbols of the Spanish Empire during the Dutch Rebellion and produced specifically to facilitate export trade. It was authorized to contain 427.16 grains of 0.750 fine silver. As it was lighter than the large denomination coins then in circulation, it was more advantageous for a Dutch merchant to pay a foreign debt in *leeuwendaalders* than in more costly *rijksdaalders*. Thus, the *leeuwendaalder* became the coin of choice for foreign trade. The coin was popular in the Middle East. https://coins.nd.edu/ColCoin/ColCoinIntros/Lion-Dollar.intro.html [accessed 19.12.2019].

debt slaves. He sought redemption money for his wife, brother, sister-in-law, and their two children. Thus, he travelled via Persia and Astrakhan to Moscow to "petition the great Lord."[56] The patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople and the metropolitan of Astrakhan provided recommendations backing his story.[57] Initially, the chancellery under E. Ukraintsev reacted obligingly. *Khadzhi* Ivan was issued 50 rubles from the great cashier.[58] The whole affair unfurled again when he came back to ask to be accepted in the service of the tsar in early October 1687. In his petition, he explained that he had sent all the money collected in alms for ransom to Jerusalem with the abbot of the Sinai monastery. He lived as a beggar in poor accommodation, buying only a kaftan against the cold for himself. Finally, he received the message that his wife had died in captivity. Nothing was left since his house had been lost "due to the Turks." Consequently, he applied for eternal service to the tsar.[59]

At this point, the chancellery required all intelligence available on the man. For the first time, the recommendations of the patriarchs were translated. They read rather generically: "He is a good Christian who fell victim to a Muslim attack [. . .] therefore he turns to all Orthodox Christians for alms, to enable him to ransom his relatives from Muslim hands."[60] The governor of Astrakhan had permitted him to leave for Moscow on August 7, 1686. In Astrakhan, he had collected alms, explaining under interrogation that he had received five rubles, which he needed to pay for travel to Moscow, as well as one and half rubles the local chancellery gave for travel expenses. On arrival in Moscow, he petitioned: "I do not dare to ask for alms in Moscow without the lord's decree."[61] He received the 50 rubles and a begging license to collect further funds for his relatives. In January 1687, *Khadzhi* Ivanov received the begging license. He received

> for ransom and for travel and for daily allowance 50 rubles. With the begging license he collected 29 rubles. The Great Princess [i.e. regent] Sofia Alekseevna consecrated 15 gold *chervonnye* [18 rubles]. Altogether he received 47 rubles. Furthermore, he may collect with this begging license another 26 rubles during the noted period.[62]

In Ukraintsev's draft report, we also learn what Ivan Mikhailov might have benefited from precedent if he was admitted into the tsar's service: "In 1623/1624 the Greek Mikhailo Dmitriev emigrated from Tsargrad [Istanbul], where he had been a handler of gyrfalcons. He received 13 rubles and 40 marten pelts, plus good taffeta and good cloth."[63] Another émigré was a Greek Muslim who received the same items: "In 1672/

56 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 4.
57 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, ll. 5–7.
58 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3248, l. 8.
59 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, l. 1.
60 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, l. 3.
61 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, l. 4.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.

1673 the Muslim Greek Magmet left to serve the Lord [i.e., the tsar]."[64] The final resolution in Mikhailov's case was delivered from the highest command post on 21 October 1687. Vasilii V. Golitsyn, the "close boyar" and the favorite of the regent Sofia, and his brother decided to decline this wish. "*Khadzhi* Ivanov" was to be given two rubles "salary" for unknown reasons and he was to be expelled from Moscow.[65]

Ivan Mikhailov's sojourn to Moscow falls squarely in the period of preparations for the first Crimean campaign headed by Golitsyn in 1687. It is possible that Golitsyn sought to avoid further complications with the Ottomans. This seems to fit the general outline of his policies as he aimed to fulfil his obligations towards Western allies with as little damage to relations with the Ottomans as possible.[66]

Moreover, Mikhailov's loyalty was doubtful: he could demonstrate no preceding services, nor was it certain that he would serve loyally beyond the moment when he might regain his family (there was no corroboration of the claim that his wife had died in captivity). In other cases, the documentation of claims and services helped applicants to attain rather exalted positions.[67] To boot, Ivan Mikhailov had nothing to show that served the interests of the tsar. At this point, suspicion might have grown due to the coincidence with the campaign, since Ivan Mikhailov had changed his mind rather sharply.

Given such complexities, the convert mother might be congratulated for her decision to remain in Ottoman Jerusalem. It would have been presumptuous for her, in the middle of Ottoman and Muscovite campaigns in the steppe and the unfurling Holy Alliance, to attempt to reach Poland or Muscovy if she had wanted to. The market pull of the Ottoman no-slaving zone had brought her in, probably by means of a slave raid and trade from Crimea or other ports along the northern shore of the Black Sea. After manumission, she tried to overcome subsequent dependency in marriage and as a widow by conversion to another internal zone of graded dependency.[68] This may or may not have failed and resulted in separation from her children. It also brought debt slavery to her opponents, who tried to benefit from the Muscovite counter-slaving zone, as it may be called for not actually exerting market forces, but rather achieving more symbolical and integrating effects, although with a similar set of religious rules.

64 Further examples: RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, ll. 5–7.

65 RGADA, f. 159, no. 3470, l. 8.

66 Lindsay Hughes, "Sophia, Regent of Russia," *History Today* 32, no. 7 (1982): 202–3, 215; Kołodziejczyk, "Das Krimkhanat als Gleichgewichtsfaktor": 53; M. Müller, "Krim-Feldzüge," in *Lexikon der Geschichte Rußlands: Von den Anfängen bis zur Oktober-Revolution*, ed. Hans-Joachim Torke (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1985): 216.

67 Cf. the Transottoman career of the translator and former slave Petr Andreianovich Tatarinov, who served the *baştercümân*, or great dragoman in Western parlance. The dragoman's tasks included diplomacy and politics. After his return, he served as translator in the Muscovite Ambassador Chancellery: *Slavery, Liberation and Loyalty at the Steppe Rim: Tsar, People and Imperial Competition in Eurasia (1552–1725)*, typescript (exp. 2020).

68 Eltis and Engerman. "Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor."

The overlap of various slaving zones, especially in the dangerous Ukrainian or Black Sea steppes, meant that Ivan Mikhailov had to keep to a narrow line of trade and travel corridors across trans-imperial spaces. In Moscow, he received but a quarter of the sum needed, though it might have helped that the fate of his family was interlaced with that of the children of a slave from Rus. The reality of the Muscovite counter-slaving zone was always at odds with its soft power and influence. His effort to beg for alms to ransom his family faltered when he learned about the death of his wife. His final attempt to enter the service of the tsar succumbed to a turn in Moscow's foreign policy, which made his Transottoman ransom effort appear suspicious.

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