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The Daily Life of Slaves and the Global Reach of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969-1250 CE

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Abstract

“The Daily Life of Slavery and the Global Reach of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969-1250 CE”

By Craig Perry

This dissertation examines the geography of the slave trade, the role of slavery in the household, and the lives of domestic slave women in the Egyptian Jewish community under the rule of the Fatimid caliphate and Ayyubid sultanate. I juxtapose Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic documentary records from the Cairo Genizah with medieval chronicles, travelogues, and responsa to illustrate developments at both the macro- and micro-levels: the evolving geography of the slave trade to Egypt, the politics of slavery within the household, and the lives and choices of individual slave women.

At the geo-political level, mining bills of sale and merchant letters allows for a composite portrait of the local Egyptian slave population's origins. My analysis of these sources demonstrates that over the course of the twelfth century, Egyptians turned increasingly southward toward sub-Saharan Africa and eastward toward the Indian Ocean for slave imports.

The micro-study of slaves' lives provides a window into the everyday life, gendered social world, and legal systems of the Egyptian Jewish community. Domestic slaves were intimately embedded in household life, where free women used them to protect their social status and extend their own practical kin networks. The presence of slave women could also imperil the status of free women when husbands took slaves as concubines, a practice that was illegal in the Egyptian Jewish community and took place outside the regulatory ambit of

communal authorities. I analyze legal codes and responsa alongside documentary records to explain how Jewish legal authorities' inability to regulate slave concubinage effectively led to unintended consequences: men who took concubines did so in ways that caused greater disruption of the household, concubinage put the security of free women and children at greater risk, and concubines themselves were more vulnerable since they lacked clear legal standing.

Finally, I piece together fragmentary evidence in order to chart the life course of female domestic slaves and to narrate their lived social experience from birth and childhood through maturity. I also use Genizah records to illustrate how ongoing clientage relationships between manumitted slaves and their former owners served to reverse the deracination and natal alienation of slavery and aided slaves in their integration into Jewish society.

Investigating domestic slaves as a group enables me to overcome the limitations of medieval documentary sources, in which slaves are often mentioned only obliquely. By focusing on instances in which slaves made consequential decisions, I illustrate how historians can apprehend the personhood of marginal subjects from the distant past.

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(and sometimes to will me) through the difficult periods with a steady hand, a sense of humor, and expert advice for roasting the perfect chicken.

Roxani Margariti taught me to read Judaeo-Arabic and sat with me in her office as I first read the original text of a Genizah bill of sale for a slave. She continues to show me how I can be more precise and thorough in my research and writing. Roxani's thoughtfulness, enthusiasm, and compassion have been a constant source of support. *κουράγιο!*

In 2009, after my first day in David Eltis's course on coerced labor in the Atlantic World, I knew I wanted to write a dissertation about slavery. David taught me to analyze slavery and the lives of slaves with empathy, nuance, and precision. I thank him for the confidence he has placed in me and for his example as a scholar and colleague.

There is only one Devin Stewart and he taught me to read classical Arabic literary sources. Devin spent countless hours with me during the semester, and even on summer afternoons, as I practiced the skills necessary to analyze the Arabic sources I discuss in this dissertation. As a colleague this year at the Fox Center, Devin has helped us all laugh at ourselves, while still producing a stream of outstanding scholarship.

Thank you, Eve Krakowski and Oded Zinger, for your careful reading of my first drafts and for your comments and encouragement. Your feedback has saved me from errors—small and great. You both first brought several sources cited in my dissertation to my attention. I have learned tremendously from your dissertations, and my own work is stronger because of your insights.

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To my children Lilah and Asher, you are almost always a delight. Your presence has been an escape from the pressures and stresses of the PhD. Thank you for always, constantly, asking me when I was going to finish my “project” so that we could play. To my lady-friend,

Elana Perry, thank you for never giving up on me and for supporting our family over the last six years. Your poise, strength, and support during the final push to finish the dissertation has been amazing. Truly, I would not have finished without you. We have made a joyful and fulfilling life together over the past eight years. For all this you have my love and gratitude.

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Citations, transcriptions, translations, and dates

I cite Genizah documents by their shelf-mark along with published editions and translations. The bibliography lists all cited manuscripts first according to the city and institution where they are currently located. Abbreviations and alternate (or outdated) shelf-marks are also noted.

Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic names and phrases are transcribed according to the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, though I use *-ah* (*-at* in construct state) throughout. Transcription of Hebrew and Aramaic follows the guidelines of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, with the following exceptions: װ as *ʷ*, ם as *ʃ*, and ף as *q*.

Square brackets [] indicate a lacuna or uncertain reading in a manuscript. Parentheses () indicate my editorial editions added to the translation for greater clarity. Ellipses ... indicate my omission of words and phrases in translations from manuscripts and published sources. Arabic and Hebrew personal names are transcribed as they appear in the Genizah manuscripts, except that I use “b.” interchangeably for *ben* and *ibn* (“son of”). Common place-names and terms are rendered in their anglicized forms except for their first mention, when full diacritics are provided.

Dates are frequently missing from Genizah documents. When they are included, they are most often written according to the Seleucid calendar. I provide the Julian equivalent for these dates. I have preserved specific dates, when provided by sources, according to the Islamic calendar and provided the Julian equivalent.

The abbreviations used include:

BT– Babylonian Talmud

EI 2–Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

EJIW–Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

MT– Mishneh Torah

Introduction

I. An Abandoned Concubine

A mid-twelfth century court deposition preserved in the Cairo Genizah, or worn manuscript store-room, of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fuṣṭāṭ (Old Cairo) records a disturbing set of accusations made by a slave-agent (*ghulām*), Ṣāfi, against the Jewish merchant Abū Saʿīd Ibn Jamāhir and his mistreatment of his slave woman.¹ A group of Jewish merchants in the city testified to the details of the incident, which took place in the Red Sea port of ʿAydhāb. The merchants report that Ibn Jamāhir beseeched the governor to summon the slave Ṣāfi and punish him for his slander. When Ṣāfi appeared before the governor, he testified against Ibn Jamāhir: “You had a slave woman, made her pregnant, and when she bore you a boy, you abandoned her together with [her] bo[y] in Berbera (on the Horn of Africa).”²

Ibn Jamāhir vigorously protested the allegations and summoned several of his Muslim associates to testify against Ṣāfi’s accusation. At the persistent behest of Ibn Jamāhir, the governor ordered Ṣāfi to be flogged as punishment for his words. Ṣāfi continued to protest, saying: “I am the slave-agent of the head of the academy (*ha-rayyis ra’s ha-metiv[t]ah*).” In other words, Ṣāfi was indignant that he, as the slave of an elite communal leader, should be

¹ T-S 12.582. See S. D. Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls in the Cairo Genizah Records,” *Arabica* 9 (1962): 5; *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), I: 133, 432; *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 335–338. For more on Ibn Jamāhir, see S. D. Goitein and Modechai A. Friedman, *Maḍmūn Nagid of Yemen and the India Trade*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2010), 470–472. The Arabic term *ghulām* is often used in documents from the Cairo Genizah in reference to male slaves who served as factotums (multi-purpose agents) for owners who were long-distance merchants. Slave concubinage was outlawed in the Egyptian Jewish community, though it was legal in Islamic law. See chapter three below.

² A city on the coast of the Horn of Africa.

punished in this way.³ Some Jewish merchants in the community tried and failed to prevent Ṣāfi's punishment. Ṣāfi was flogged, jailed, and freed only after he paid a fine.

The Jewish merchants party to this deposition demonstrated concern for Ṣāfi and even sought to intervene on his behalf before Ibn Jamāhir intimidated them. The abandoned slave woman and child, however, appear only once in the deposition—disappearing from the historical record as quickly as they had surfaced. The deposition mentions her only to cast aspersions upon Ibn Jamāhir's character and to explain why Ṣāfi, the factotum of a Cairene Jewish elite, had been punished. The nameless slave woman and her child are easy to overlook even from the vantage point of the present. In contrast to the confrontation between Ibn Jamāhir, Ṣāfi, and the other Jewish merchants of 'Aydhāb, there is little information or fanfare that marks the slave woman's exit. Yet it is precisely her history that this dissertation seeks to narrate. Ibn Jamāhir's callous treatment of his slave in fact belies the extent to which slave women were intimately embedded in the households of Jewish elites in medieval Egypt.

II. Historical Background

Slavery was a persistent feature of societies across the Near East for centuries before the rise of Islam and remained one after its advent in the seventh century, both within Arabia itself and in the greater Near East. A rapid and vast territorial expansion within and then out

³ T-S 12.582, ll. 6-7, 9-10. In his translation, Goitein translates *wālī* to mean "chief of police." The word also means "governor," which I use here since the *wālī* exercised a wider field of authority than is connoted by chief of police alone. Ṣāfi uses the term *ha-ra'īs r'as ha-metiv[t]ah* in reference to the head of the yeshiva, or Jewish academy, in Egypt. Goitein notes that this reference is almost certainly to Abū Sa'īd Joshua b. Dosā who was mentioned as a Jewish religious authority in Egypt in a document from the years 1143–1144. A space to write the year is left blank in the document, but the date recorded is the 21st of the Hebrew month of Tevet. From this information, Goitein dates the letter to 21 Tevet 1144 (December 19). See Goitein, *Letters*, 336–337 nn. 5 and 8, where he notes the correct date. Cf. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 432 n. 10.

of Arabia marked the first centuries of the Islamic state. This expansion meant near constant warfare at the edges of the nascent Islamic empire, and this in turn produced a steady supply of prisoners-of-war.⁴

Slave traders also brought human chattel from diverse and distant locations to the urban centers of the Islamic world. Slaves from western and central Europe were funneled along with Slavic captives across the Mediterranean. To the east, peoples from the Caucasus and Central Asia were brought overland to Baghdad and later to Cairo. Abyssinian, Nubian and East African peoples also composed a significant part of the slave-supply that streamed into the Near East.⁵

In contrast to the major slave-systems in the early-modern Atlantic, that of the Islamic world was not associated primarily with large-scale agricultural production. Even though slaves in ninth-century Iraq and tenth-century Ifrīqiyah were used heavily in agricultural projects, the majority of slaves in the Islamic empire at any given time served primarily as

⁴ Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chap. 1; Khalil 'Athamina, "How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the Jawārī, or the Female Slaves," *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 28 (2007): 383–408; Laura Culbertson, ed., *Slaves and Households in the Near East* (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011).

⁵ Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh, 1st ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1937), 156–169; Jere L. Bacharach, "African Military Slaves in the Medieval Middle East: The Cases of Iraq (869–955) and Egypt (868–1171)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981): 471–95; William D. Jr. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), chap. 4; François Renault, *La traite des noirs au proche-orient médiéval VII^e-XIV^e* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1989); Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, chap. 1; Olivia Remie Constable, "Muslim Spain and Mediterranean Slavery: The Medieval Slave Trade as an Aspect of Muslim-Christian Relations," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500*, ed. Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 264–84; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960), s.v. "abd"; John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Routledge, 2007), chap. 3; Najwā Kamāl Kīrah, *al-Jawārī wal-ghilmān fī Miṣr fī al-ʿaṣrayn al-Fāṭimī wal-Ayyūbī (358-648 AH/969-1250 CE)* (*Slave Girls and Slave Soldiers in Egypt during the Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid Eras*) (Cairo: Maktabat Zaharā' al-Sharq, 2007). See also chapter one below.

domestic servants and slave soldiers.⁶ The reasons behind the demand for these two different types of slavery differ greatly.

The common use of domestic slaves reflects the relative wealth and urban character of the Islamic imperium. The families of merchants, judges, scholars and, at times, even artisans were able to purchase slaves to help with the raising of children and day-to-day household chores. Slave women were frequently used as child-bearing concubines by Muslim men. But according to Islamic law, children born to a Muslim master and a female slave were considered a free born Muslims. Mothers of such children gained the status of *umm al-walad*, literally “mother of the child.” Islamic law stipulated that an *umm al-walad* could not be sold after she bore her master’s child. Furthermore, she gained her own freedom upon the death of her master. While Islamic law held that a child born to two slave parents was also a slave, the rate of this natural increase was insufficient to ensure the replenishment of the slave population.⁷

By the time there is an abundance of documentary sources from the Cairo Genizah in the eleventh century, purchase had become the most important method of acquiring domestic slaves.⁸ Many factors within medieval Islamic empires conspired to catalyze a high-volume, geographically far-flung slave trade. While Islamic law still recognized captives as

⁶ Mohamed Talbi, “Law and Economy in Ifrīqiya (Tunisia) in the Third Islamic Century: Agriculture and the Role of Slaves in the Country’s Economy,” in *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900 : Studies in Economic and Social History*, ed. A.L. Udovitch (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1981), 209–49; Alexandre Popović, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999); *EI 2*, s.v. “zandj.”

⁷ *EI 2*, s.v. “*umm al-walad*”; Kristina Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls (Qiyān) of the ‘Abbasid Court in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *Children in Slavery Through the Ages*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, Joseph C. Miller, and Suzanne Miers (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 105–18; Jonathan E. Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law: Ibn ‘Abd Al-Ḥakam and His Major Compendium of Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), chap. 4.

⁸ On the topic of Jews and the medieval slave trade, see the extensive discussion in chapter one.

eligible for slavery provided that they were unbelievers captured in *jihād*, the rapid rate of conquest and expansion throughout North Africa and the Middle East gradually slowed after the eighth century.⁹ This meant that the numbers of slaves entering the empire as prisoners-of-war declined. Additionally, enslavement of populations within Muslim controlled territories ceased to be a reliable source for recruitment, since conversion to Islam and “the acceptance of *dhimmī* [protected] status by increasing numbers of non-Muslims” reduced the available pool of eligible slaves.¹⁰ Islamic law dictated that Muslims could not enslave Muslims or *dhimmīs* within the territory of Islam. If a slave converted to Islam after his or her enslavement, then the owner was allowed to maintain his ownership and control of the slave.¹¹ The Islamic state could and did enslave conquered Christians and Jews who did not submit to the rule of Islam, but these were presumably in the minority. Thus while Islamic law introduced reforms that limited the reach and severity of slavery within Muslim states, these reforms created a need for new slave supplies that led to the development of a large-scale slave trade.¹²

III. Scope

My focus on Egypt between the mid-tenth and mid-thirteenth centuries is explained both by the availability of relevant evidence and Cairo’s emergence in the second half of the

⁹ In this context, *jihād* refers to religiously sanctioned wars of expansion waged by the Islamic state against non-Muslims. See *EI* 2, s.v. “*djihād*” and “*Dār al-Ḥarb*.”

¹⁰ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 5–7.

¹¹ Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 127–133.

¹² Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 5–7. By some estimates, the volume of the slave trade in the Muslim world between the seventh and nineteenth centuries reached between 3.5 and 10 million people. These figures are cited, with reference to the work of Ralph Austen in Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, vol. 2nd (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24–25. The geographic regions in the orbit of the Muslim slave trade vary over time. This figure is an aggregate one for the years between 600 and 1600.

tenth century as a political and economic center in the greater Mediterranean. The Cairo Genizah was a storeroom attached to the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fustāṭ that was built to house worn or disused manuscripts that contained the name of God until the community interred the materials in a ritual manner. The bulk of the deposited material dates to the rule of the Fāṭimid caliphate (969-1171) and the Ayyūbid sultanate (1171-1250) in Egypt. In addition to literary and liturgical works, Jews deposited all manner of documents in the Genizah including marriage contracts, court records, business partnership agreements, family letters, bills of sale and so forth.¹³

¹³ For an overview of the general practice of *Genizah* among both Jews and Muslims, see Mark R. Cohen, "Genizah for Islamists, Islamic Genizah, and the 'New Cairo Genizah,'" *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 7 (2006): 129–45. For an overview of the Genizah's contents as a whole, see Stefan C. Reif, "A Centennial Assessment of Genizah Studies," in *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance*, ed. Stefan C. Reif and Shulamit Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–35; Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000). The present study focuses on the documentary Genizah, approximately 15,000 (a conservative estimate) records that have tremendous bearing on the social and economic history of the medieval Near East. On the documentary Genizah, see Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs: A Contribution to Their Political and Communal History, Based Chiefly on Genizah Material Hitherto Unpublished*, 2 vols., 1970 reprint (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1920); Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 1–74; Reif, "A Centennial Assessment," 13–28; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Medieval History and Religious Thought," in *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance*, ed. Stefan Reif and Shulamit Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 136–149; Marina Rustow, "The Genizah and Jewish Communal History," in *From a Sacred Source: Genizah Studies in Honor of Professor Stefan C. Reif*, ed. Ben Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 289–318. This dissertation also relies upon nearly a century of research that has included invaluable volumes of edited Genizah documents and analysis. This list notes only the works I have consulted during the research and writing of this dissertation: Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*; Gershon Weiss, "Legal Documents Written by the Court Clerk Halfon B. Manasse (Dated 1100-1138): A Study in the Diplomatics of the Cairo Geniza" (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1970); S. D. Goitein, *Palestinian Jewry in Early Islamic and Crusader Times: In the Light of the Geniza Documents*, ed. Joseph Hacker, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Publications, 1980); Mordechai A. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine: A Cairo Genizah Study*, 2 vols. (Tel-Aviv and New York: Tel-Aviv University and Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1980); Moshe Gil, *Palestine During the First Muslim Period (634-1099)*, 3 vols., in Hebrew (Tel-Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1983); Mordechai A. Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny in the Middle Ages: New Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1986); Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*, trans. Ethel Broido (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Elinoar Bareket, *The Jews of Egypt 1007 - 1055: Based on Documents from the "Archive" of Efrayim ben Shemariah*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1995); Moshe Gil, *In the Kingdom of Ishmael*, 4 vols., in Hebrew (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1997); Moshe Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, trans. David Strassler (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Mark R. Cohen, *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle*

While the Genizah was located in Fustat, the Jews who deposited their documents there corresponded with family and business associates across a wide swath of territory stretching from Iberia to the west coast of India. The documentary contents of the Genizah fill a gap in the historical record of the medieval eastern Mediterranean and Near East, since there are relatively few documents and even fewer continuously surviving archives from North Africa and the Levant. The everyday nature of the documentary Genizah sources is unparalleled for the light they shed on the social history of domestic slavery in the medieval Near East.¹⁴

The emergence of Cairo as a major political and economic center makes Egypt an excellent site for the study of domestic slavery. Beginning in the mid-tenth century, the center of gravity in the Islamic world began to shift from Baghdad in Iraq to the twin cities of Fustat-Cairo, which emerged as a bustling commercial entrepôt benefiting from its location at the

Ages: An Anthology of Documents from the Cairo Geniza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Miriam Frenkel, *"The Compassionate and Benevolent": The Leading Elite in the Jewish Community of Alexandria in the Middle Ages*, Hebrew (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 2006); Amir Ashur, "Engagement and Betrothal Documents from the Cairo Geniza" (Dissertation, in Hebrew, Tel Aviv University, 2006); S. D. Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); S. D. Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, *Joseph Lebdi: Prominent India Trader* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2009); S. D. Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, eds., *Abraham Ben Yijū: India Trader and Manufacturer*, in Hebrew (Yad Ben Zvi: Jerusalem, 2010); Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*; S. D. Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, *Ḥalfon and Judah Ha-Levi: The Lives of a Traveling Scholar and Poet Laureate According to Geniza Documents* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2013). For a recent history of how the Cairo Genizah came to be "discovered" by modern scholars and antiquities dealers and then removed to libraries and private collections in North America, Europe, Israel, and Russia (primarily), see Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Genizah* (New York: Schocken Books, 2010). Recent historical studies (not including articles and book chapters) based on the Genizah that inform the methods and approaches of this dissertation include Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*; Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Roxani E. Margariti, *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade: 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Jessica L. Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Eve Krakowski, "Female Adolescence in the Cairo Geniza Documents" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2012).

¹⁴ See n. 16 below for works on slavery based on Genizah documents.

confluence of trade from the Mediterranean, the Levant, sub-Saharan and east Africa, and the Indian Ocean. The Jewish community in Fustat also grew as a result of migration from Iraq and Ifrīqiyah. In the twelfth century, refugees from the persecutions of Almohad rule on the Iberian peninsula, such as Moses Maimonides, also made their way to Egypt. Cairo's emergence as a pre-eminent global political and commercial center led to increased demand for slaves for use in state armies, as factotums for merchants, and, in wealthier households, as domestic servants. Cairo's immense demand for forcibly imported slaves gives us a wealth of information on the geographic reach of the slave trade at the time.

Yet there are other reasons that the period between ca. 950 and 1250 is an appropriate frame for this dissertation. These years are book-ended by two momentous changes in the *longue durée* of slave-eligibility in the eastern Mediterranean that I will foreground in chapter one. From the ninth to eleventh centuries, Christian Europe increasingly banned the enslavement of Christians and the export of slaves from the northern Mediterranean to Muslim territories in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. These changing cultural attitudes were accompanied by the renewal of Byzantine naval power in the eastern Mediterranean, as with the empire's reconquest of Crete in the 960s. Economic growth in Europe and the increasing projection of Byzantine power into the eastern Mediterranean and its coastal regions meant that changing European attitudes concerning the enslavement of Christians were put into effective practice, limiting the slave-trade between the northeast Mediterranean and the Islamic world.

After the Mamluk sultanate supplanted the Ayyubid dynasty in 1250, the Egyptian conquest of Christian Nubia altered the regional politics of slaving once again. As a result of the Mamluk conquest and the resulting Islamicization of the region, Nubians were no longer viewed as Christian outsiders eligible for enslavement. Consequently, the Mamluk state more intensively exploited other neighboring regions such as Abyssinia in order to secure domestic slaves. The composition of the Egyptian domestic slave population in Mamluk times clearly reflects the shift away from Nubia and Christian Europe as slave-supplying regions.¹⁵ This dissertation analyzes the composition of the Egyptian slave supply in the period before 1250, after which time the make-up of the slave population changed dramatically.

IV. Historiography

There is a small but important body of scholarship on domestic slavery as it is represented in the Genizah.¹⁶ S. D. Goitein's work on slavery was part of his larger study *A Mediterranean Society*, a work that, despite its provisional nature, has long been considered the state of the art on the topic of domestic slavery in the Genizah. Mordechai Akiva

¹⁵ For example, Nubians are by far the most common group attested as slaves in Genizah documents. Sources from the Mamluk period clearly illustrate the shift away from Nubian slaves and toward Abyssinians. For example, see the slave biographies recorded in the fifteenth-century biographical dictionary of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw' al-lami' li-ahl al-qarn al-tasi'* (*The Shining Light Upon the People of the Ninth Century*), 12 vols. (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayat, 1966).

¹⁶ Studies of slavery based on Genizah documents include Simḥa Assaf, "Slaves and the Slave Trade in the Middle Ages (in Hebrew)," *Zion* 5 (1940): 271–80; Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls"; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 130–147; 431–437; Mordechai A. Friedman, "The Monogamy Clause in Jewish Marriage Contracts," *Perspectives in Jewish Learning*, Spertus College of Judaica, Chicago, 4 (1972): 20–40; Simha Assaf, "Slaves and the Jewish Trade in Slaves in the Middle Ages," in *Beoholei Ya'akov: Essays on the Cultural Life of the Jews in the Middle Ages*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Mosad haRav Kook, 1965), 223–56; Mordechai A. Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl: Two Genizah Documents," *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies* 1 (1972): 56–63; Friedman, "Monogamy Clause"; Mordechai A. Friedman, "Pre-Nuptial Agreements with Grooms of Questionable Character: A Genizah Study," *Dine Israel* VI (1975): CV–CXXII; Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, chap. 10; Miriam Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society under Islam: a gendered perspective," in *Männlich and weiblich schuf Er sie: Studien zur Genderkonstruktion und zur Ehe recht in der Mittelmeerregionen*, ed. Matthias Morgenstern, Christian Boudignon, and Christiane Tietz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011), 249–59.

Friedman has also contributed greatly to the study of female domestic slaves in his studies of Jewish marriage and family life. Goitein's and Friedman's scholarly editions of Genizah documents related to slavery have been an invaluable asset, and Friedman continues to bring new Genizah sources to light in his ongoing work in publishing and revising the *India Book*.¹⁷

My research draws heavily from the work of previous scholars, but I also seek to break new analytic ground by exploring how slavery and slaves embedded in Jewish households and a constitutive element in the politics of the household. First, I argue that the question of whether or not Jews were wholesale slave traders has received undue attention and that our preoccupation with the issue says more about modern questions than it does about medieval society. While there is no firm evidence that Jews traded in large numbers of slaves as wholesalers, they did transact in slaves frequently. I have chosen to focus instead on what we can learn about global history from these transactions and the logistics of slave acquisition evident in merchant and family letters.

Second, I propose an alternative framework for understanding the persistence and effects of illicit Jewish concubinage in Egypt. Goitein recognized that Jewish men took concubines in defiance of Egyptian Jewish law. But he argued that illicit Jewish concubinage persisted because of the influence of the Islamic cultural environment, in which concubinage was a legal and common practice. I take a different view and suggest that Jewish men took slave concubines not because Islamic influence corrupted Jewish culture, but because

¹⁷ The *India Book* refers to Goitein's study of the Genizah materials relevant to the India trade, the project on which he was working before he died in 1985. Mordechai A. Friedman is the custodian of Goitein's *India Book* archive and continues to publish these materials in both Hebrew and English. Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*; Goitein and Friedman, *Joseph Lebdi*; Goitein and Friedman, *Abraham Ben Yijū*, 2010; Goitein and Friedman, *Maḏmūn*; Goitein and Friedman, *Ḥalfon*.

concubinage was a widespread sexual practice among Jews as well; in fact, I argue, it is the efforts of Egyptian Jewish authorities to outlaw concubinage that are conspicuous. The dynamic apparent in the sources must take into account the effects of the rabbinic and communal failure to regulate concubinage successfully.

This dissertation focuses almost entirely on female domestic slavery for three main reasons. First, all forms of medieval Islamicate slavery have been overshadowed in scholarship by the study of slave soldiers. Military slavery emerged in the ninth century as a consequence of the attempt by the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258) to create a fighting force not plagued by local attachments and divided loyalties. Beginning in the reign of the Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (r. 833-842), Arab tribesmen and Khurāsānī troops (who had served as the core of the Abbasid army) were replaced by Turkish horsemen from the periphery of the empire. When the Fatimids conquered Egypt in 969, there was a long-standing precedent of using slave-soldiers in the armies of Islamic states.¹⁸ This dissertation aims to draw attention to the study of domestic slavery, a form of slavery that was widespread and even more pervasive than military slavery, but about which scholars still know precious little.¹⁹

¹⁸ For a summary of this topic, see Reuven Amitai, “The Mamlūk Institution, or One Thousand Years of Military Slavery in the Islamic World,” in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 40–78. Two works on the origins of slave-soldiers are Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). On the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, see Bacharach, “African Military Slaves”; Yaacov Lev, “Army, Regime and Society in Fatimid Egypt, 358-487/968-1094,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 337–65; Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1991). For the late medieval history of the institution, see David Ayalon, “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army—III,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 16, no. 1 (1954): 57–90; David Ayalon, *The Mamlūk Military Society* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979).

¹⁹ This is especially true for the period before 1250. Scholars of the Mamluk period paid more attention to domestic slavery. See Shaun Elizabeth Marmon, “Domestic Slavery in the Mamluk Empire: A Preliminary

Second, female slaves are found far more commonly in the Genizah than their male counterparts. The predominance of female slaves in the historical record probably reflects a historical reality in which domestic work was recognized as the domain of women—slave and free.²⁰ The other type of slave frequently found in Genizah records is the *ghulām* (*ghilmān*, pl.), the male slave-agent (factotum) of a merchant or other official. The *ghilmān*, as a group, require further investigation and I plan to take up the subject in a future study.²¹

Third, despite the relative abundance of information about domestic slave women from the Genizah, the sources are scarce in absolute terms and also fragmentary in nature, and this situation has led to a dearth of historical work on them. Historians have written a great deal more about elite female slaves who served as singing girls (*qiyān*), courtesans, and concubines.²² Chroniclers and biographers mention these female slaves in their works because they were found in the palace and among the other elite classes with whom these writers are most concerned. The body of scholarship focused on domestic slavery is growing, but this

Sketch,” in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, ed. Shaun Marmon (Princeton, NJ: M. Wiener, 1999), 1–23; Yossef Rapoport, *Marriage, Money, and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Yossef Rapoport, “Women and Gender in Mamluk Society: An Overview,” *Mamluk Studies Review*, no. 11 (2007): 1–45.

²⁰ There are mail domestic slaves mentioned in Genizah sources, where they are designated as a “*waṣīf*.” The term “*ghulām*” is also rarely used in contexts that indicate domestic work. The *ghulām* (pl. *ghilmān*) is more commonly found as the factotum for merchants or other communal officials.

²¹ While the *ghilmān* have not been studied systematically as a group, there is Genizah scholarship on the subject. See Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls”; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 130–147; Amitav Ghosh, “The Slave of MS. H.6.,” in *Subaltern Studies VII*, ed. Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 159–220; Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land* (London: Penguin Books, 1992); Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, passim, on the slave Bama and other factotums.

²² Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*; Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), also contains useful information about slavery outside the palace walls; Kirah, *Slave Girls and Slave Soldiers*, focuses mainly on elite slave women; Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls”; Fuad Matthew Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), see the bibliography for an overview of the relevant medieval Arabic sources.

dissertation marks the first systematic study of domestic household slaves based on documentary sources for the Fatimid and Ayyubid eras.²³

IV. Sources and Methods

As the above ‘Aydhāb court deposition illustrates, the study of medieval domestic slavery must contend with the fragmentary nature of the documentary sources related to slaves and the oblique manner in which slaves are recorded. On the one hand, slavery was a ubiquitous and integral feature of medieval Egyptian society. On the other hand, slaves themselves did not generally leave their own records, and medieval authors were not generally concerned with documenting the experiences of the unfree population.

If we step back from this one oblique reference, however, we find that there are hundreds of additional documents that mention domestic slavery in the Cairo Genizah. Within this sub-corpus of Genizah sources, there are close to 100 slave women whom it is possible to identify as unique individuals who served the middling and well-to-do Jewish households and Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt.²⁴ Within the Genizah sub-corpus, in a few instances we are able to identify multiple documents that pertain to the same individual slave.

²³ Brockopp notes that modern scholarship has privileged the histories of the *qiyān* and slave soldiers while little is known about “the common household slave.” *Early Mālikī Law*, 116–117. On a related note, Matthew S. Gordon observes: “Given, in all likelihood, that the great majority of slaves of early ‘Abbāsīd society lived and worked in domestic settings—urban households—then the lacuna is obvious.” See “Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor in the Third/Ninth Century ‘Abbāsīd Empire,” in *Slaves and Households in the Near East*, ed. Laura Culbertson (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011), 71–84. For the later Mamluk and Ottoman periods, there are some excellent works available that treat domestic slavery. See Marmon, “Domestic Slavery”; Madeline Zilfi, “Thoughts on Women and Slavery in the Ottoman Era and Historical Sources,” in *Beyond the Exotic: Women’s Histories in Islamic Societies*, ed. Amira el-Azhary Sonbol (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Nelly Hanna, “Sources for the Study of Slave Women and Concubines in Ottoman Egypt,” in *Beyond the Exotic: Women’s Histories in Islamic Societies*, ed. Amira el-Azhary Sonbol (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Rapoport, *Marriage, Money, and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society*; Rapoport, “Women and Gender in Mamluk Society: An Overview”; Madeline Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁴ See appendix for a list of individual slave girls and women documented in the Genizah.

More often than not, however, household slaves pass in and out of view as we see in the ‘Aydhāb deposition described above.

We must also constantly bear in mind the logic by which Genizah sources related to slavery survived for posterity. Egyptian Jews retained (and eventually deposited in the Genizah) primarily documents that had value. Thus the most common single type of preserved document related to slavery is the bill of sale. Bills of sale protected both buyer and seller by certifying that both parties had met their legal obligations and concluded the transaction according to Jewish law and custom. As chapter one and two illustrate, bills of sale contain a wealth of information that is useful for reconstructing the geography of slavery, and even the social meaning of slave owning. Yet bills of sale usually lack the kind of narrative detail that is essential for understanding the lived experience of slavery and the nature of master-slave relationships—including topics such as slave resistance and agency. That kind of information can, however, be found most frequently found in rabbinic responsa and family letters, but these document types are not as numerous in the Genizah sub-corpus as bills of sale.

The writ of manumission is another more common document type that survived in the Genizah.²⁵ Such writs had two kinds of value: for freed slaves, they provided proof of free status; they also provided proof, when courts requested it, of the identities and marriageable status of their offspring. By its nature, then, the surviving documentation shows a bias toward freed slaves, especially those who eventually entered the Jewish community as Jews. Thus the

²⁵ See the extensive discussion in chapter four.

logic of source survival and how it has shaped the documentary record must be kept in mind in a history of slavery based on the documents alone; the surviving sources favor a focus on the acquisition of slaves and on those who were manumitted. This same logic mutes other facets of slavery; the violence inherent in its origins, owners' mistreatment of slaves, and the deaths of slaves who were never manumitted and thus never occasioned the creation of a document trail.

The patterns of source survival also raise questions about how Egyptians used the Genizah between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The great majority of documents related to slavery date to between the mid-twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In fact there are no dated bills of sale until the late eleventh century, even though, in eleventh-century mercantile correspondence, business associates write to share information about individual slave purchases, or to request help in purchasing slaves. This dissertation does analyze documents from the late tenth and eleventh centuries, but these documents are uncommon relative to the records that survive from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. Chapter One explores these issues and explains what these patterns may reveal about both the history of the Genizah's use and the practice of slavery in Egypt.

While the nature of the evidence makes it difficult to study the lives of individual slaves in depth, the numerous references to slave women are conducive to collective biography (or prosopography). Prosopography is particularly useful when the sources that document a certain group are scarce or particularly fragmentary—as is the case with domestic slaves in the medieval Islamic world. Collective biography allows us to

contextualize discrete and fragmentary references to individual slaves within larger trends at the group level, and the juxtaposition of the group with the individual, in turn, makes possible a social history of medieval domestic slavery that includes the points of view and experiences of the slaves themselves.

A focus on the lives of slaves also brings other subjects to the fore. Domestic slaves were socially embedded in medieval urban households, where they served in close quarters with their owners as caretakers and personal attendants. From the historian's perspective, the lives of masters and slaves are even more intertwined. Slave owners created written records and discarded them into the Genizah. And it is largely through the written mediation of owners, communal authorities, and scribes that we can identify the person of the slave. Without that intertwinement, we would have even less information about slaves than we do. When we study family and business letters, court records, and rabbinic responsa we are also studying the household web in which slave women were enmeshed—the ways in which free men and women used slavery for their own ends but in very different ways, or in which slaves could serve as pawns in larger arguments between family members. At other times, the slave woman herself was a cause of strife between a husband and wife and other family members. In these ways, this history of domestic slavery is also a history of Egyptian Jewish household life.

At the same time, the numerous sources that record transactions in slaves—including bills of sale, merchant correspondence, and family letters—provide a more complete picture of the medieval slave trade to and within medieval Egypt than is currently available; this

aggregated data illustrates the geography and politics of the larger slave trade in the eastern Mediterranean.²⁶ For those reasons, I have chosen to extend the scope of this study beyond the local level and to investigate the geopolitics of slaving in the eastern Mediterranean. The quantitative data that documents have preserved allow us a glimpse of slave imports during a time when the patterns of enslavement in the Mediterranean were evolving; slave exports from Europe to the Islamic world shrank.²⁷ By documenting the origins of slaves and the logistics of slave transactions, I am able to place Genizah sources and medieval Jewish history in conversation with the broader scholarly literature that studies the geography of the medieval Mediterranean, African, and greater Near Eastern slave trades before 1250.²⁸

Prosopography is not the only method I use to make greater sense of the fragmentary documentary record related to slavery. Documentary Genizah sources can be read productively alongside prescriptive legal texts and narrative and literary sources. Documentary sources provide more reliable indicators of how slavery was actually practiced from day to day. Court records, letters, and legal documents also reflect the social experiences of slaves and owners more immediately. But they do not often the larger historical context in a way that legal and literary sources can.

²⁶ Collections of Arabic papyri also contain records that document the lives of female slaves. See Yūsuf Rāḡib, *Actes de vente d'esclaves et d'animaux d'Égypte médiévale* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2002). For the purposes of this dissertation, I draw on relevant papyri for comparative purposes in chapter one. A more systematic study of slavery based on Arabic papyri remains a desideratum.

²⁷ Cf. Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," *Past & Present* 177 (2002): 17–54.

²⁸ Primarily Michael Toch, "Jews and Commerce: Modern Fancies and Medieval Realities," in *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa, secc. XIII–XVIII* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2000), 43–58; Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); McCormick, "New Light"; Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), chap. 2; Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era," *Past and Present* 205 (2009): 3–40.

One of the prescriptive sources to which I frequently turn are rabbinic responsa, a common tool that Jewish legal scholars in the medieval period used to adjudicate social practice and bring it more closely into line with prescriptive law. For social historians, responsa fall into a category between documentary and literary sources: the queries frequently testify to real individual and communal concerns that illustrate social practices—in this case, relations between Jewish men and their slave women. Depending on how completely the responsum has been preserved, it can be dated to the lifetime of a specific addressee; but queries copied into larger legal compendia are generally stripped of specific identifiers and precise historical information. Proper names, for example, do not appear in responsa concerning slave matters.²⁹ Further, when scribes recopied responsa, they sometimes further generalized the specifics of the original queries in order to broaden their legal relevance, or they combined several queries into a single case. Despite these characteristics of the genre, responsa are of immense value to historians because they suggest what their authors viewed as plausible, or even actual, scenarios involving slaves and their masters.³⁰

²⁹ An exception to this rule is discussed in chapters two and four. A legal query sent to Abraham Maimonides, and answered by him, mentions specific places and individuals. T-S 8J16.4.

³⁰ On the use of rabbinic responsa for social history, see Haym Soloveitchik, *The Use of Responsa as Historical Source*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1990); Reneé Levine Melammed, “He Said, She Said: A Woman Teacher in Twelfth-Century Cairo,” *AJS Review* 22 (January 1, 1997): 19–35; Reneé Levine Melammed, “Women in Medieval Jewish Societies,” in *Women and Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 91–115; Berachyahu Lifshitz, “The Legal Status of the Responsa Literature,” in *Authority, Process and Method: Studies in Jewish Law*, ed. Hanina Ben-Menahem and Neil S. Hecht (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 59–100. Lifshitz does not address responsa from medieval Egypt in any detail, but his discussion of the authority and interrelationship of responsa and legal codes raises some useful questions.

This dissertation also mines a diverse set of literary sources concerning slavery and the slave trade in Egypt and the greater Mediterranean. Medieval authors frequently discuss slavery in the context of more general works of history and geography. In some instances, these mentions provide the most detailed, if not the only, accounts of particular aspects of the slave trade in the medieval Mediterranean, such as the diplomatic exchange of slaves as gifts.³¹ Medieval travel writing also contains descriptions of slaves and the slave trade in Egypt, the greater Mediterranean, and beyond that can be read alongside histories and geographies in order to present as comprehensive a description of the slave trade as is possible.³²

V. Towards a History of Domestic Slavery in a Medieval Islamicate Society

This dissertation contains four main chapters. Chapter One analyzes the origins of the domestic slaves documented in the Genizah and juxtaposes this data with the descriptions of the slave trade to Egypt found in medieval literary sources. My findings here have implications for the history of the larger interregional slave trade in Africa, the greater Mediterranean, and western Indian Ocean. I argue that domestic slave imports to Egypt from Africa and the Indian Ocean were the most important during the Fatimid and Ayyubid period. This finding underscores how scholarship on slavery and the slave trade in the greater Mediterranean

³¹ Arabic literary sources are primarily analyzed in chapter one. See Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti‘āz al-ḥunafā bi-akhbār al-a‘immā al-fāṭimyyīn al-khulafā* (*The Exhortation of Believers: On the History of the Fatimid Caliph-Imāms*), ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, 3 vols. (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A‘lā li-l-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1967); Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma‘rifat duwal al-mulūk* (*The Path to Knowledge about the Reigns of Kings*), 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997); Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawā‘iz wa’l-i‘tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa’l-āthār* (*The Book of Exhortations and Reflections Concerning the Remembrance of the Districts and Monuments of Egypt*), ed. Madīḥah al-Sharqāwī and Muḥammad Zaynhum, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabah Madbulī, 1998); al-Musabbihī, *al-Juz’ al-arba‘ūn min Akhbār Miṣr* (*The fortieth chapter of the History of Egypt*), ed. Ayman Fu‘ād Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1978).

³² Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary*, trans. Marcus N. Adler (London: Henry Frowde, 1907); Nāṣir b. Khusraw, *Nasir-i Khusraw’s Book of Travels = (Safarnāma)*, trans. W. M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2001).

must take into account how slave trades far removed from Byzantium and its hinterlands also shaped the demand for slaves.

Chapter Two examines how free Jewish women used domestic slavery to mark and bolster their social status. This chapter demonstrates how the labor of slaves and the roles of slaves as practical kin impacted the lives and legacies of free women.

Chapter Three illustrates how Jewish communal officials failed to regulate the use of slaves as concubines among Jewish men in Egypt during the latter twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Instead, Jewish legal authorities declared slave concubinage completely illicit for Jewish men, and the resulting social dynamic created opportunities for some, while it marginalized the rights and well-being of others. Specifically, the lack of a legal framework made men more likely to abandon their families in favor of a concubine. Abandonment could cause financial hardship for the wives and children left behind. The concubine herself was more subject to the caprice of her owner since the law did not provide her with legal rights as it did under Islamic law.

Chapter Four takes up a prosopographic approach in order to provide a collective biography of the individual female slaves documented in the Genizah. This chapter mines Genizah documents for clues that reveal how slaves experienced different phases of life including childhood, household service, and their transitions from slavery to emancipation; it also picks up slave women at the nodal points in their lives when they were most likely to leave a documentary trail, including moments of dramatic resistance. Chapter Four also illustrates how former masters could act as patrons for their freed slaves and how their

patronage served to help reverse the deracination and natal alienation that attended enslavement.

This study cuts across traditional divisions in the study of the Genizah and Jewish communal history. Specifically, I aim to demonstrate how Jewish history (and sources thought of as “Jewish”) can be used to write a broader history of Islamicate domestic slavery in Egypt and the greater Near East. While at least one recent work has questioned the assumption, common to much previous Genizah research, that the Jewish documents can be made to tell a wider Islamicate story, I have attempted to remain attentive to the differences between how domestic slavery was practiced among Muslims and Jews.³³ Yet the shared aspects of the practice, from the common slave supply to the use of slavery as a means to project social status and prestige, have convinced me that the study of these documents can also cast light on the practice of domestic slavery in the broader society. Conversely, I hope to illustrate how the history of domestic slavery in the Islamicate world can provide a critical vantage point from which to draw new insights about the social history of the Jewish communities that lived within the Islamic imperium during the Middle Ages.

This approach requires frequent movement between different scales of analysis: from the micro-historical level of the individual and the household to the macro-level of the greater Near East, Mediterranean, Africa, Europe, and Central Asia. How can the life of an individual household slave be read as a point in the history of the greater medieval world? A more comprehensive history of slavery requires us both to move between these scales and to

³³ Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman, *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

establish the relationship between them in order to grasp what slavery meant, how it operated as a system, and how it shaped the worlds of individuals at the level of daily life.

Chapter One

The Geography and Politics of the Slave Trade in Egypt and the Greater Mediterranean

I. Introduction

In an undated letter, a writer describes a local court case in the Red Sea port city of ‘Aydhāb. Two slave women appeared before the Muslim judge (*al-qāḍī*). One of them testified that they were kidnapped when they went to fetch water at a local well. The kidnappers enslaved and sold the two women; thus the document calls them *al-waṣīfah* and *al-jāriyah* - two terms used to identify slave women.¹

It is unclear whether these women appeared before the *qāḍī* voluntarily or he had summoned them. Either way, he wanted to ascertain whether they were free-born Muslims, because according to Islamic law, Muslims were ineligible for enslavement within the Islamic state and their enslavement would have been illegal.² One of the kidnapped women insisted, however, that she was “a Jew in her hometown.” To emphasize this point she added, “I have not had any dealings with Muslims.” The *qāḍī* therefore decided that a Jewish court should handle the case, since the Jewish authorities could better confirm her identity. While owning slaves who were protected minorities (*dhimmī* or *ahl al-dhimmā*) such as Jews and Christians was permissible within the Islamic state, enslaving them was illegal; a Jewish court could also

¹ CUL Or.1080 J30 (India Book VII, 24). First mentioned in Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 14. See also Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I: 136; III: 39, 435. The spelling and orthography in this document are unusual and contain mistakes, as Goitein observes in his personal notes. For example, the author writes *al-waṣīfā* repeatedly and *al-jāriyā* in line 15. Thanks to Roxani Margariti for sharing this note with me from Goitein’s materials held in the Princeton Genizah Laboratory.

² See *EI 2*, s.v. “*abd*.” As noted here, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) lacked a strong system of sanctions “to suppress the kidnapping or sale of free persons.” See also Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 127–129.

aid the woman in resuming her life as a free person.³ The *qāḍī* therefore ordered that the woman be handed over to the letter writer—a Jew whose specific identity is not mentioned. The writer concludes his missive by asking his correspondents in Fustat for advice about how to handle the matter. His decision to consult with associates in Fustat likely explains how this document came to be preserved in the Genizah.⁴

This exceptional record provides a rare documentary view into the mechanisms of enslavement in medieval Egypt. Chroniclers and travelers to Egypt describe the area to the south and east of the city Aswān as a region known for the activities of slave-catchers. But their reports tend to be very general and to recycle the same information.⁵ This author's summary of the case presented to the *qāḍī* captures an uncommon glimpse of how two individual women had the dire misfortune of being apprehended in the course of their daily lives and sold into slavery.

The Cairo Genizah contains a wealth of information about the nature and logistics of the slave trade.⁶ The Genizah's documentary character allows for a view of the slave trade as it played out in a micro-historical context. This view complements the descriptions of the slave

³ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 7.

⁴ CUL Or.1080 J30, ll. 9-21. On the verso, the letter is addressed to “his excellency, my lord, the *shaykh* Abū al-Ḥasan” and “his excellency Abū al-Faraj and his brother, Sa’īd.” This case is similar to one discussed in a responsum of Moses Maimonides in which a writer asks about a slave woman who was presumed to be a Christian, but claimed before the judge that she was born Jewish. This case is discussed below in chapter four. See Moses Maimonides, *Responsa of Maimonides*, ed. Joshua Blau (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Ltd. Publishers, 1986), II: 373–375, no. 211.

⁵ See François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, “Desperately Seeking the Jewish Kingdom of Ethiopia: Benjamin of Tudela and the Horn of Africa (Twelfth Century),” *Speculum* 88 (2013): 383–404.

⁶ Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls”; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, passim, but especially I: 130–147, 431–437. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), s.v. “Slavery, Slave Trade”; Phillip I. Ackerman-Lieberman, “Legal Writing in Medieval Cairo: ‘Copy’ or ‘Likeness’ in Jewish Documentary Formulae,” in *From a Sacred Source: Genizah Studies in Honor of Professor Stefan C. Reif*, ed. Ben Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–24.

trade found in medieval literary sources, which tend to provide a bird's-eye-view of the trade's geography and workings, and descriptions of only the most elite tier of owners and their slaves. This remove tends to obscure the identities and actions of the form of slavery that was much more common and widespread—household slavery. The bills of sale, letters, and other legal records found in the Cairo Genizah represent one of the largest documentary corpora related to medieval Islamicate domestic slavery before the mid-thirteenth century.⁷ Scholars who study the Cairo Genizah have long paid attention to the subject of slavery.⁸ But when it comes to the study of the trade in slaves, the Genizah corpus has not been systematically investigated.⁹

One reason the Genizah has not been intensively used for the history of the slave trade is that polemics and controversy have at times surrounded the question of Jews' involvement in the wholesale trade of slaves. The distinction between individual and wholesale slave trading is an important one. Individuals frequently sought to buy slaves for their own homes through their own social networks and by dealing with wholesale slave dealers directly. The polemics in medieval sources and the debates in modern scholarship have centered on the extent to which Jews were wholesale dealers who trafficked in large

⁷ Similar types of documents related to slaves are found in collections of Arabic papyri and more will undoubtedly be discovered in the years to come. For bills of sale, see Rāgib, *Actes de vente*. For letters that mention slaves, see Werner Diem, ed., *Arabische Briefe auf Papyrus und Papier der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung* (Wiesbaden: Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991); Werner Diem, *Arabische Briefe des 7. bis 13. Jahrhundert aus den Staatlichen Museen Berlin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997).

⁸ Assaf, "Slaves and the Jewish Trade in Slaves", first published in Tsion (1938-1939); Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl"; Friedman, "Monogamy Clause"; Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*; Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*; Ghosh, "The Slave of MS. H.6."; Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*.

⁹ Rotman refers to Genizah documents in his analysis of the medieval slave trade, though he is mainly focused on the Greek and Latin sources. See Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. 2. The present study analyzes a more comprehensive corpus of original Genizah records.

numbers of slaves whether locally or in long-distance trade. Jews did engage in wholesale slave trading, but their involvement seems confined to particular times and places.

One such context is the Crown of Aragon as it expanded during the thirteenth century and its conquests produced a steady stream of enslaved captives. Jewish merchants dealt in such slaves throughout Aragonese territory in places including Mallorca, Valencia, southern France, and Sicily.¹⁰

Another oft-cited, and enigmatic, passage from a ninth-century geographic work by Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. ca. 911), describes the trading activities of a group of Jewish merchants known as the Radhanites (*al-Rādhāniyyah*), who transported goods including slaves, swords, furs and other luxury items along routes from Iberia to China.¹¹ There is no reason to doubt the

¹⁰ Stephen Bensch, "From Prizes of War to Domestic Merchandise: The Changing Face of Slavery in Catalonia and Aragon, 1000-1300," *Viator* 25 (1994): 78; Constable, "Muslim Spain," 280; Robert I. Burns, "Interactive Slave Operations: Muslim-Christian-Jewish Contracts in Thirteenth-Century Barcelona," *Medieval Encounters* 5 (1999): 135–55; Jonathan Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 65.

¹¹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *al-Masālik wal-mamālik (The Book of Itineraries and Kingdoms)*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 153–155. Cf. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān (The Abridged Book of Countries)*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 1885 ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 270–271. There is debate over the identity and significance of these merchants and their activities. See *EJIW*, s.v. "Radhanites"; Moshe Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17 (1974): 299–328; Adam J. Silverstein, "From Markets to Marvels: Jews on the Maritime Route to China Ca. 850 - Ca. 950 CE," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58 (2007): 91–104. Silverstein notes that Ibn al-Faqīh's account "almost certainly derives" from Ibn Khurradādhbih. Michael McCormick tries to reconstruct a plausible geography of this group's slave trading activities: McCormick, "New Light," 49. Andre Wink claims that Jewish bankers financed Muslim slave raids in Africa and that an "especially lively part of the Jewish overland trade seems to have been traffic in eunuchs and male as well as female slaves." André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 89, 97. It is unclear what specific raids, merchants, times, and places Wink has in mind, or which sources record these activities. That said, the tenth-century geographer Ibn Ḥawqal reports that Jewish merchants in France were the main group responsible for the castration of Slavic eunuchs destined for the Iberian slave markets. See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ (Configuration de la terre)*, trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1964), I: 109. While Ibn Khurradādhbih's and Ibn Ḥawqal's works clearly attest to Jewish participation in medieval slave trafficking, the volume and permanence of these ventures are not documented. In my opinion, the evidence concerning the Rādhānites and the Jewish eunuch factories in France lack the corroboration necessary to conclude much about the significance and longevity of these groups' slaving activities. As I discuss below, a more productive line of inquiry is to ask what the presence of Jewish slave trading

historicity of the group, yet there is also little evidence of how long their activities persisted, or how great the volume of their merchandise.

The question of Jews' involvement in the medieval slave trade is more problematic in the European context, where arguments about Jews' preeminence in the slave trade have tended to persist together with notions of a larger Jewish dominance of the medieval European economy. Michael Toch has demonstrated that both of these notions had a long life in twentieth-century scholarship due to the problematic reading of certain sources and later historians' uncritical acceptance of these interpretations.¹² Even as recently as the 1990s, the subject of Jews and the slave trade gained some popular traction in the polemic *The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews* published by the research arm of the Nation of Islam.¹³

The question of Jewish participation in the medieval slave trade commands disproportionate attention largely because of interest in slavery's modern forms and legacies—not because of interest in the topic in its own right. Scholars of the documentary Genizah have generally limited their synthetic treatment of slavery to assertions that sources from the so-called “classical Genizah” period between 950-1250 contain no evidence of Jewish wholesale trading.¹⁴ But the impulse to exonerate Jews from the charges of purveying human

(as in medieval Iberia), or its lack (as in Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt), tell us about the relationship between Jews and the state in these different environments and time periods. In other words, why could Jews serve the crown of Aragon as wholesale slave traders, but not apparently do so with regularity in the Islamic east.

¹² Toch, “Jews and Commerce.” In particular, Toch analyzes the impact of the work of Henri Pirenne and Charles Verlinden. See the extensive bibliography in his notes.

¹³ Eli Faber discusses this publication and related controversies in the 1990s. Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1–10. Faber's book is an extended rebuttal to the arguments that Jews dominated the Atlantic slave trade.

¹⁴ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 140; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 17, 453–454.

chattel says more about the commitments of modern historians than it does about the time and place under study, or the nature of medieval slavery.

There is no incontrovertible evidence that the Jewish merchants who deposited their records in the Cairo Genizah were wholesale slave merchants.¹⁵ One purpose of this chapter is to ask why this is so. Jewish merchants were wholesalers in many other commodities. One Jewish courtier famously sold his personal slave to the Fatimid caliph al-Zāhir (r. 1021–1036), and she bore the caliph a son who became the caliph al-Mustaṣṣir (r. 1036–1094).¹⁶ So why has the Genizah preserved no firm evidence that Egyptian Jews trafficked in slaves during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods?

The preoccupation with the question of Jewish slave trading has meant that scholars have ignored what the Genizah *can* tell us about the medieval global slave trade. The composition of the slave population attested in Judaeo-Arabic sources helps us reconstruct the constantly evolving geography of the slave trade between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Slave-owning societies such as those of Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt were constrained by precepts of Islamic law that forbid the enslavement of Muslims and *dhimmi* populations. They also faced the limits that societies outside of the *dar al-islām* (“abode of

¹⁵ Jessica Goldberg’s recent and thorough history of eleventh-century mercantile correspondence confirms Goitein’s and Friedman’s view. See Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*, 97–98. Goldberg’s point that slaves, weapons, and timber had implications for state power is an important one. The role of male slaves in the army certainly gave the Fatimid and Ayyubid states an interest in this trade. As this chapter illustrates, however, Jews did interface with wholesale slave traders for individual transactions. Merchants also shared information about slave purchases and transported individual slaves to owners. There is some evidence that Nahray b. Nissim and his associates acted as middlemen for associates who wished to secure a slave for themselves. See below.

¹⁶ During the Fatimid Caliphate, the slave woman Rasad gave birth to the future caliph al-Mustaṣṣir (r. 1046–1094). Rasad was the Sudanese concubine (and later *umm al-walad*) of the caliph al-Zāhir (r. 1021–1036). See Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 55–56. Rasad was in fact sold to al-Zāhir by the Jewish Qaraite courtier Abū Sa’d al-Tustari. See Walter Joseph Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Mediaeval Islam* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1937), 75, n.3; 78–85; *EJIW*, s.v. “Tustarī Family.”

Islam”) imposed on eligibility for enslavement, even if those societies were not always capable of enforcing their own political and legal injunctions. Since societies are generally averse to enslaving their own members, the study of the slave trade is a story of inter-regional relationships.¹⁷

Since both geo-political relationships and cultural attitudes impacted which groups were deemed eligible for enslavement, the Jewish slave-owners documented in the Genizah and their slaves participated in this greater story regardless of whether or not Jews organized long-distance slave-trading themselves. Household slavery in medieval Cairo cannot be fully understood without establishing the impact of the larger global context on the Egyptian environment.¹⁸

II: Slave Imports to Medieval Egypt

Arab chroniclers and various medieval travelers expressly mention slave imports slave trade to Egypt in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These accounts suggest, in particular, a regular and robust flow of slaves to Egypt from regions to its south—regions that contemporary authors called variously and inconsistently Nubia, Kush, or the lands of the

¹⁷ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 10; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 58–61.

¹⁸ On the subject of slave eligibility in the Islamic context, see Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 127–130; *EI* 2, s.v. “‘abd”; Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 1–15. For recent scholarship on slave eligibility and the slave trade in the greater Mediterranean, see Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery”; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. 2, “Medieval Slavery in a New Geopolitical Space”; Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 1–2, 18–20; John O. Hunwick, “Black Slaves in the Mediterranean World: Introduction to a Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora,” in *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, ed. Elizabeth Savage (Portland: Frank Cass, 1992), 10–14. In the early modern period, slave eligibility in the Atlantic world became restricted to black Africans. See Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For the long view, see David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, “Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor in Time and Space,” vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–22.

blacks (*bilād al-sūdān*). But as regular and robust as the flow may have been, a closer look reveals that the nature of this trade was varied. Chronicles and histories are most likely to record slaves that arrived to Egypt as prestige gifts from foreign powers. Such gifts were part and parcel of the diplomatic exchanges that rulers in Africa and around the Mediterranean used in the course of conducting foreign policy.

Prestige gifts are recorded in the chronicles of ruling dynasties and are perhaps better understood from the perspective of the states involved as diplomatic exchanges. The Zīrid amīrs in Ifrīqiyah, who were tribute-paying vassals of the Fatimids, sent gifts of slave women to the caliphs al-Ḥākīm (r. 996-1021) and al-Zāḥir. Al-Zāḥir in turn reciprocated the diplomatic gesture by sending female slaves trained as singers and dancers back to the Zīrids. Al-Zāḥir's son and successor al-Mustanṣir received gifts of Turkish slaves from the Byzantine emperor Michael IV, slaves and eunuchs from the Ṣulayḥid amīr of Yemen (another Fatimid vassal), ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī, and slaves from Iqbāl al-Dawlah ‘Alī b. Mujāhid (d. 1081), ruler of Dāniyyah in al-Andalus.¹⁹

Perhaps the best-known accounts of such prestige gifts are those in the history of Egypt composed by the Fatimid chronicler Muḥammad al-Musabbihī (d. 1030) and the later historian Aḥmad al-Maqrizī (d. 1442).²⁰ Al-Musabbihī recorded at least two instances during

¹⁹ Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 78. Gift of slaves to al-Ḥākīm: Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wal-Maghrib (The History of North Africa and Islamic Spain since the Conquest until the 11th Century)*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal and G. S. Colin (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2009), I: 261. Gifts to al-Zāḥir and his reciprocity: Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitāb al-hadāyā wal-tuḥaf)*, trans. Ghādah Ḥijjāwī Qaddūmī (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 104–105. Gifts from Michael IV: *ibid.*, 110. Gifts from Iqbāl al-Dawlah: *ibid.*, 113. From the Sulayḥids to al-Mustanṣir: Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid, ed., *The Fatimids and Their Successors in Yaman: The History of an Islamic Community*, Arabic edition and English summary of Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn’s ‘Uyūn al-akhbār, vol. 7 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 86 (Arabic), 50 (English).

²⁰ al-Musabbihī, *Akhbār Miṣr*; al-Maqrizī, *Itti’āz al-ḥunafā*; al-Maqrizī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*.

the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Zāhir (1020-36) when large processions of male and female slaves arrived in Cairo from regions to the south. The first mention is in the month of Jumādā al-Ūlā in the year 414 A.H. (August 1023):

On Tuesday, when eight days remained in the month (August 13, 1023), the gift of Ibn Makārim b. Abū Yazīd²¹ arrived from Muḥdathah in Aswān, and it was: twenty heads of horses, eighty fine camels, a number of black [slaves], females and males, a cheetah in a cage, Nubian goats, birds, monkeys and elephant tusks. (Ibn Makārim) conveyed some of his gifts himself and his son served as his chamberlain. He traversed Egypt (*al-bilād*) until he arrived in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful (the caliph al-Zāhir) and presented what he had with him. He was ordered to his encampment along the way to the houses in Cairo.²²

A gift in 1024 from the “land of the Nubians” is more representative of a longer history of reciprocal exchanges between Islamic Egypt and the Christian kingdom to the south: “At the end of this month, a gift arrived from the land of the Nubians comprised of male and female slaves, ebony wood, elephants, giraffes and other things.”²³

²¹ On the identity of Ibn Makārim, whose grandfather was granted the title “Treasure of the State” by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim, see al-Musabbihī, *Akhhār Miṣr*, 11 n. 5; Beshir Ibrahim Beshir, “New Light on Nubian Fāṭimid Relations,” *Arabica* 22 (1975): 2 n. 2. Muḥdathah was located north of Aswān. See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, I: 52.

²² al-Musabbihī, *Akhhār Miṣr*, 11–12. Beshir translates “*wa-fiddah min al-sūdān*” as “a number of Sudanese” where we might also translate “black (slaves)” or simply “blacks.” Medieval Arab authors recognized *bilād al-sūdān* (the land of the blacks) as a region of Africa stretching from coast to coast along the southern Sahara and the Sahel. See *EI* 2, s.v. “*sūdān*.” It is important to note that “Sudanese” (*al-sūdān*) does not denote the subjects of a sovereign entity the Sūdān. There were states in *bilād al-Sūdān*, including Nubia, but Arab authors mention these states by name when they intend them. For these reasons, I believe that “blacks” is a more appropriate translation. The chronicler Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī copied al-Musabbihī’s entry into his own account of Fatimid rule, *Itti’āz al-ḥunafā’*. See al-Maqrīzī, *Itti’āz al-ḥunafā’*, II: 134. Note that al-Maqrīzī omits the details concerning Ibn Makārim and the presentation of the gifts directly to al-Zāhir. He also changes “a number of blacks - females and males” to “a number of number of black male and female slaves” (*wa-‘addah ‘abīd wa-imā’a sūdān*).

²³ See al-Musabbihī, *Akhhār Miṣr*, 34. As indicated below, “gift” here refers to a specific tribute agreement between Islamic Egypt and Nubia known as the “*baqt*.” Al-Musabbihī writes that “*‘abīd wa-imā’a*” arrived. Generally *‘abīd* indicates black slaves in Arabic sources of this period. We can reasonably infer that the male and female slaves were black Africans. See also Beshir, “New Light,” 16. The Gregorian year listed in Beshir is a misprint. 1024 and not “1204” is intended. Al-Maqrīzī also includes this event, not quite word for word, in al-Maqrīzī, *Itti’āz al-ḥunafā’*, II: 143.

Al-Musabbiḥī describes the 1024 gift from “the land of the Nubians” in a matter-of-fact tone that reflects the normalcy of the gift. Nubia presented the slaves and exotic animals as part of reciprocal diplomatic relations, and not as a tribute payment. The origins of this reciprocal exchange date to the seventh century when Muslim forces failed to conquer Nubia during their initial incursions into the region. In 652, during the reign of the third rightly guided caliph, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (r. 644-655) Muslim chroniclers report that the governor of Egypt signed a treaty with the Nubians called the *baqt* (from the Greek word for pact, *πάκτων*).²⁴ The terms of the treaty specified the provisions that Nubia would supply to the Islamic state, including 360 slaves to be culled from prisoners of war. The state in return would provide wheat, cereals, and textiles of a value corresponding to the worth of the supplied slaves. Later Arabic historiography elided the reciprocal nature of this exchange (and the seventh-century Muslim defeat) and presented the agreement as a fixed, written tribute agreement imposed upon Nubia by the Islamic state. This interpretation appears to be a later distortion, however. Nubian monarchs had previously used prestige gifts as a means of conducting diplomacy with each other and with Mediterranean powers, including the Byzantine emperor Justin II (r. 565-578).²⁵ Before the mid-thirteenth century conquest of

²⁴ On the etymology of this word, see *El* 2, s.v. “*baqt*.”

²⁵ For an overview of the *baqt*, see Jay Spaulding, “Medieval Christian Nubia and the Islamic World: A Reconsideration of the Baqt Treaty,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28 (1995): 577–94; Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34–35 and passim; *El* 2, s.v. “*baqt*.” Spaulding surveys both the history and historiography of the *baqt* treaty. See also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khitat*, I: 560–566, which includes a chapter on the *baqt*. Spaulding is sharply critical of this account and notes that al-Maqrīzī omits the reciprocal nature of the agreement and thus presents it as a tribute that the Nubians paid to the Egyptian state. Spaulding argues that reciprocal gift exchange was an established means of conducting diplomacy in northeast Africa and that the initial agreement in 652 probably meant something very different to both Muslim and Nubian powers from how al-Maqrīzī’s account represents it. Al-Maqrīzī composed *al-Khitat* after the Mamluk sultanate finally subjugated Nubia, and Spaulding

Nubia by the Mamluk regime, the *baqt* is better understood as an indicator of diplomatic relations than as a one-sided tribute payment that Nubian powers made to Islamic Egypt.

The documentation of the *baqt* exchanges is spotty. The evidence suggests that the *baqt* did not always function according to the idealized stipulations that al-Maqrīzī outlines. The sporadic appearance of the *baqt* exchange demonstrates that relations between Muslim Egypt and Christian Nubia were strained—at least from the point of view of one of the parties.

Within the context of greater slave trade to Islamic Egypt between the tenth and early thirteenth centuries, it is also uncertain whether the *baqt* provided a significant percentage of the domestic slave supply. The gifts did not arrive invariably every year. The Nubian envoys also presented the slaves to the Fatimid caliphs, likely with an additional number of slaves provided to the Egyptian bureaucrats who facilitated the exchange. If contemporary accounts are to be believed, then the caliph and his entourage were more than capable of absorbing the numbers of slaves delivered with the *baqt* gifts.²⁶ Thus the *baqt* should not be construed as, or assumed to have been, a perennial and reliable source of slaves for Egypt. Yet, scholarly attention to the *baqt* as the example of slave traffic between Nubia and Egypt has overshadowed the slaving practices that, from the perspective of the quotidian trade in domestic slaves, were more likely at the center of this south to north slave trade.

The practices more likely to lie at the origins of the regular slave trade to Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt are predatory actions by raiders and kidnappers who violently enslaved free

argues that his interpretation reflects the later imbalance of power. See Spaulding, “Medieval Christian Nubia,” 594. Note that al-Maqrīzī reports the arrival of the *baqt* many times in *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā*. But he does not specify whether slaves were part of the gift.

²⁶ Spaulding, “Medieval Christian Nubia,” 591–593. On the numbers of slave women belonging to the Fatimid caliph, see Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 74ff; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 75–83.

people and then sold them to slave dealers who arranged their transport to larger markets. Predatory enslavement operated on multiple levels. On the one hand, the military participated in raids and conflicts—at sea and on land—that captured large numbers of people who became slaves. On the other hand, individual pirates and slave-catchers also turned a profit by capturing individuals and either ransoming them or passing them on to slave dealers. Smaller scale slave-catching has received less attention from modern historians, but it is described in travel and geographic literature and surfaces in the documentary Genizah as well.²⁷

The eleventh-century Persian traveler to Egypt Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. 465/1072-471/1078) described the region below the upper Egyptian town of Aswān as follows: “Farther upriver to the south is the province of Nubia, which is ruled by another king. The people there are black and their religion is Christianity. Traders go there taking beads, combs, and trinkets and bring back slaves to Egypt, where the slaves are either Nubian or Greek.”²⁸ On his way from Egypt to the Hijāz, Nāṣir passed through the Red Sea port of ‘Aydhāb, where he made another observation about the slaving economy south of Egypt. He writes of the Bajawi (Beja) people who lived in the mountainous desert region outside of the city: “This nation, the Bajawis, who live in this desert, are not a bad people and do not steal or make raids but tend their flocks. Muslims and others, however, kidnap their children and take them to sell in the cities of

²⁷ On captives captured by the Fatimid navy, see Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 113–114. Slave-kidnapping: see the document cited in n. 1 above and the medieval travel accounts cited below.

²⁸ Nāṣir b. Khusraw, *Book of Travels*, 51–52. The original work is in Persian. While the translation renders “Greek,” a more accurate translation for “*rumī*” is “Byzantine.” *EI* 2, s.v. “Nāṣir-i Khusraw.”

Islam.”²⁹ Khusraw’s observations are corroborated by other traveler’s accounts that indicate how Upper Egypt, specifically the hinterlands of Aswān and ‘Aydhāb, served as a veritable hunting ground for kidnappers and raiders who enslaved their victims.

More than a century later, the region southeast of Aswān continued to serve as a reservoir of slaves for the Egyptian markets. The Iberian Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela wrote about Egypt in 1170 at the very end of the Fatimid era, when the future Ayyūbid Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1138-1193) was on the verge of consolidating his power.³⁰ The geography and itinerary to which Benjamin alludes here are somewhat confused, but his description of predatory slaving practices support the information provided in Persian and Arabic sources:³¹

And from there (Aden) to the region of Aswān is a journey of twenty days through the desert. This is Sebā on the Nile River that descends from the land of Kush. There are some among the Kush who have a king and they call him the *sulṭān al-ḥabash*. There is a people among them that are like animals that eat the grasses that grow on the bank of the Nile and in the fields. They go about naked and lack the intelligence of human beings. They lie with their sisters and with anyone they wish. (Sebā) is very hot. When the people of Aswān go raiding in their land, they carry with them bread, grain, raisins, and figs. They throw this toward (these people), who come to get it. They obtain many prisoners and sell them in Egypt and all of the kingdoms around them. These are the black slaves, the sons of Ham.”³²

The specifics of Benjamin's anecdote about the methods of slave-catchers may

²⁹ See Nāṣir b. Khusraw, *Book of Travels*, 85–86.

³⁰ On the timing of Benjamin’s visit, see Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ix, 69 n. 4, 70. *EJIW*, s.v. “Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela.”

³¹ Benjamin writes that he was coming from the land of ‘Aden. It is most likely that he traveled from the Red Sea port of ‘Aydhāb to Aswān and that he never visited the port city of ‘Aden, but stopped over in Zabīd instead. On the reconstruction of Benjamin’s itinerary from India to Egypt, see Fauvelle-Aymar, “Desperately Seeking the Jewish Kingdom of Ethiopia.”

³² Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, 62, 68. My translation differs in some minor instances from Adler’s here. Fauvelle-Aymar, “Desperately Seeking the Jewish Kingdom of Ethiopia.” Jewish attitudes towards blackness are beyond the scope of this study. On this subject, see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2005); David M. Goldenberg, “It Is Permitted to Marry a Kushite,” *AJS Review* 37 (2013): 29–49; Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

reflect local knowledge and lore (or the knowledge of Benjamin's informants) rather than his own first-hand observations, but the kidnapping of vulnerable people living in the vast expanse between the caravan entrepôt of Qūṣ and the port of ‘Aydhāb is corroborated by documentary evidence from the Genizah. As the woman brought before the *qāḍī* testified, she was “a Jew in my hometown” before she was kidnapped from a water well.³³

Finally, later accounts suggest that severe poverty, material distress, and famine could compel families to sell their children. As al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442) notes in his history of Ayyubid Egypt, farmers and parents in Upper Egypt (*al-Ṣa‘īd*) were forced to reduce their children to slavery. He adds, “They sold their children for the cheapest prices. Some of them were enslaved to people in Cairo. And some of them—too many to count—were transported to Syria where they were sold to the corners of the earth as a captive is sold. The slave womens were used for sex by their owners.”³⁴ While al-Maqrīzī wrote this history in the fifteenth century, he relied for much of his information on earlier sources that are now lost.

Medieval chronicles and other narrative accounts provide suggestive details about the slave trade in the greater Mediterranean and Near East between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. More than that, they provide a valuable framework for constructing a larger, inter-regional view of the slave trade that we would otherwise be unable to recreate from documentary sources alone. Those sources suggest that there were four main methods of

³³ CUL Or.1080 J30.

³⁴ “*Wa-wuṭa‘a al-juwārī bi-malak al-yamīn.*” al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma‘rifat duwal al-mulūk*, VI: 113–114. *Malak al-yamīn* is used here in a form related to the Qur’ānic idiom, “what the right hand possesses” (*mā malakat yamīnuhu/yamīnuhā*). In the Qur’ān, this expression is used to denote the ownership of a slave (i.e., what one’s right hand possesses is, in this case, a slave). See Mustansir Mir, *Verbal Idioms of the Qur’ān* (Ann Arbor: Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies, the University of Michigan, 1989), 337. Thanks to Nathan Hofer for his help with this passage. On famine and slavery in Egypt, see Kirah, *Slave Girls and Slave Soldiers*, 20.

enslavement: kidnapping, raiding, piracy, and material distress. States forcibly transported slaves as part of the diplomatic exchange of prestige gifts while opportunistic slave dealers also funneled slaves from Egypt's southern frontier.

III. Genizah Records and the Inter-regional Slave Trade

Individual slaves surface in the documentary record, but it is rare to know precisely who enslaved them or how.³⁵ We can, however, be sure that the circumstances involved violence, coercion, and distress.

The erasure of slaves' origins is a problem endemic to the bills of sale for slaves preserved in the Genizah. These are the most numerous single type of surviving document that record the existence of slaves, and they provide crucial information about slaves' origins, both where they originated and where they were bought and sold. After all, both buyers and sellers required bills of sale to verify payment and the conditions of the sale, and for this reason, jurists created and preserved formularies that provided scribes with guides to composing slave bills of sale.³⁶ At the same time, the documents elide the violence and trauma that reduced people to saleable property; in a sense, bills of sale assume and perpetuate the erasure of a slave's prior life history.³⁷

³⁵ One exception known from the Genizah: see n. 1 above.

³⁶ Hai Gaon's formulary is published in Simḥa Assaf, "Sefer Ha-Sheṭarot (Book of Formularies)," *Tarbiṣ* 1, no. 3 (Supplement) (1930): 27–29. See also Ackerman-Lieberman, "Legal Writing," 2–3, and the formularies cited there.

³⁷ Many bills of sale were first identified by Goitein. See "Slaves and Slave Girls"; *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 131–147, 431–437. Mordechai A. Friedman has also pioneered the study of slavery in the households and economic activities of Genizah Society. "Master and Slave Girl"; "Monogamy Clause"; "Pre-Nuptial Agreements"; *Jewish Polygyny*; "Women and the India Trade," in *From Sages to Savants: Studies Presented to Avraham Grossman*, ed. Yosef Kaplan, B. Z. Kedar, and Yosef Haker, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-Toldot Yisrael, 2010), 157–85; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*. Ackerman-Lieberman has also studied bills of sale and published an English edition of bills of sale for the slave woman Ḍīyā in "Legal Writing." I have identified additional documents related to slavery through electronic searches of the Princeton Genizah Project (PGP). Thanks are

All preserved slave bills of sale from the Genizah contain the names of the buyer and seller and the price paid for the slave. Though formularies require that the slave's *jins* (origin) be recorded, Jewish scribes in medieval Egypt did not always include it. The personal name of the slave generally appears, but not invariably so.³⁸ Still, Genizah documents reveal a great deal about the geography of the slave trade in medieval Egypt.³⁹

IV. Shifts in Slave Origins

The other main description of slaves found in bills of sale is the *jins* of the slave. *Al-jins* is an Arabic term used in bills of sale drawn up in both Muslim and Jewish courts. The word literally means “species” or “genus,” but it is used in this context to denote the geographic origin, parentage, or socio-linguistic or cultural group of the slave.⁴⁰ Thus it is not uncommon to find a slave woman referred to as “the slave woman of the Nubian *jins*” or “a slave woman whose name is Dīyā, born into slavery (*muwalladat al-jins*).”⁴¹ More often than not, the word *jins* is assumed and duly omitted. In these cases the scribe records an identifier such as

also due to my colleagues Marina Rustow, Roxani Margariti, Eve Krakowski, and Oded Zinger for alerting me to documents from their own work that discuss slaves.

³⁸ See the attached appendix for bills of sale. In many instances, bills of sale are damaged such that certain information is illegible even though the scribe included it.

³⁹ See appendix. Bills of sale are not reliable indicators of the actual work that specific slave women did. The precise role of a slave woman in a given household must be inferred from other types of historical sources. While the terms for child-nurse (*dādah*) and concubine (*surrīyah*) are used precisely when they occur, the terms for maidservant (*waṣṣīfah*) and slave woman (*jārīyah* and *shifḥah*) must be interpreted in specific contexts. This context is missing in bills of sale. See the discussion in chapter two below. Cf. Frenkel, “Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society,” 251.

⁴⁰ J. G Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durrīyah: Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951), 96. The term is also used in bills of sale found in Arabic papyri contemporary with Genizah documents. See Rāgīb, *Actes de vente*.

⁴¹ T-S 8J8.16, l. 5; CUL: Or.1080 J273, Ackerman-Lieberman translates the phrase “*muwalladat al-jins*” as “born into slavery.” Ackerman-Lieberman, “Legal Writing,” 18. On the meaning of the term *muwalladah*, see chapter four. Another example: T-S 10J.6.7, l. 12 (not a bill of sale, but a will of inheritance): “the black slave woman of the Nubian *jins*.”

Nubian or Persian.⁴² Other types of documents such as wills, family letters, dowries, and deeds of manumission may also mention the *jins* of a slave, but less regularly than bills of sale.⁴³

Goitein first recognized that Nubia was by far the most common recorded source of slaves found in the Genizah. Among Genizah documents that document the *jins* of a slave, Nubians comprise 39% of the total slave population. The other groups are "black" (13%), Indian (13%), *muwalladah* (born into slavery or mixed race, 13%), Persian (6%), and Byzantine (6%). There are also single slaves identified as Frankish, North African (*maghribiyyah*), and Abyssinian, whom I have identified as "other" in order to simplify this classificatory scheme (10%).⁴⁴

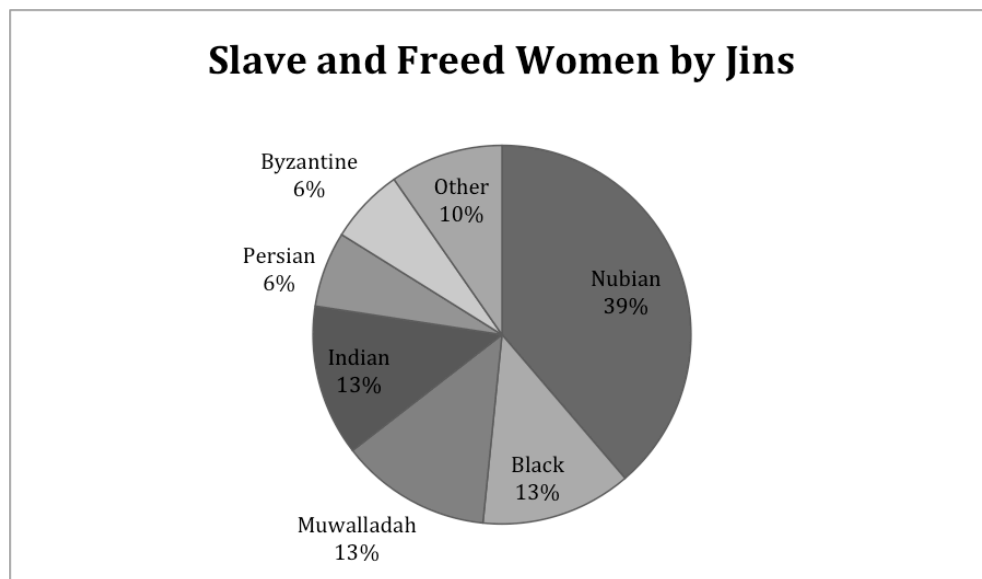


Figure 1

⁴² Nubian: T-S 16.188, ll. 10-11. Persian: T-S 8J8.4, l. 6.

⁴³ See appendix.

⁴⁴ I have checked and excluded from this group possible duplicates. For example, an Indian slave woman named Şalaf appears as part of a marriage dowry in the first half of the twelfth century in T-S 16.239. While this Şalaf is not definitively the same person as an Indian slave woman of the same name who is emancipated by one Sitt al-Ḥasab in 1157 in T-S 10J28.16, I count only one of these slave womans in the smaller sample I will discuss further. I exclude the second of two Indian slave women named Ghazāl for similar reasons.

The description of slaves as merely black presents a problem for identifying their origins. To begin with, scribes used a variety of words to denote blackness in addition to the expected Arabic words for black in color (fem. *al-sawdā*, *al-sūdāniyyah*). In an eleventh-century dowry, the geographic descriptor Cushite is used to describe a slave woman. While in rabbinic texts the term Cushite designated Abyssinia (or Ethiopia), Abyssinian slaves are not commonly documented in the Genizah corpus. It is much more likely that the term was chosen to emphasize the slave woman's blackness instead of her geographic origin.⁴⁵

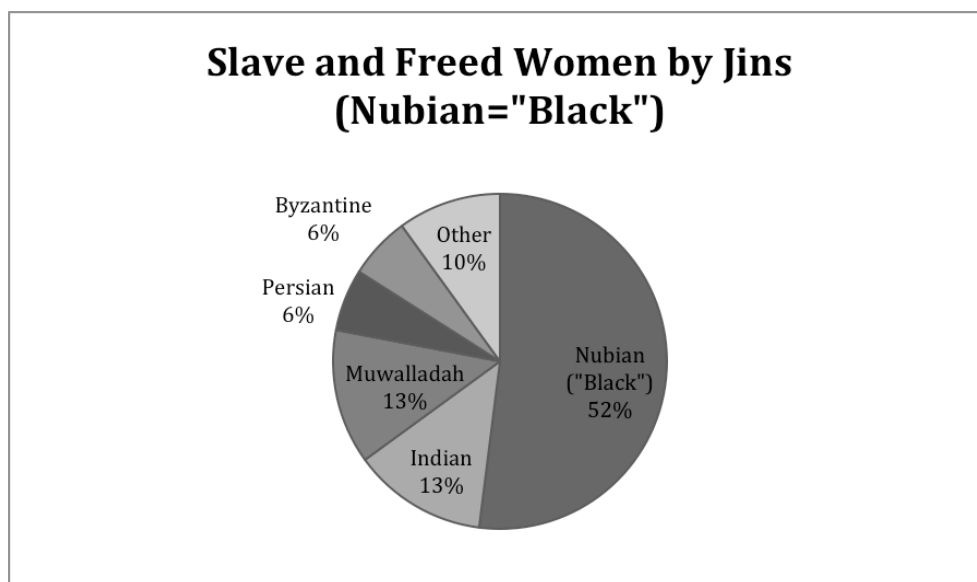


Figure 2

Complicating matters further is the conflation of Nubia with blackness, as does the author of a will of inheritance who identifies the slave woman being bequeathed as "the black slave woman of the Nubian race."⁴⁶ Medieval literary sources also conflated specific

⁴⁵ For female slaves: *sawdā* (adj., "black") or *al-sūdāniyyah* (noun, "the black woman"). "*Al-kūshi*": Halper 341, l. 5: "*jāriyah kushi*." David Goldenberg's recent article also illustrates how descriptors that once represented geographic locations and their inhabitants came to be conflated more generally with blackness. Cush, Zanj, and Nūba are three of these. Goldenberg, "It Is Permitted to Marry a Kushite."

⁴⁶ T-S 10J6.7, l. 12. "*ha-shifhah al-sawdā' wal-nūbiyyat al-jins*." See also *Ibid.*, 45–46.

geographic regions with blackness, Nubia and Cush among them.⁴⁷ Taken together, slave women identified as black and Nubian make up over half (52%) of the entire Genizah sub-corpus that documents female slave origins.

The patterns of slave origins found in the Genizah are also apparent in Arabic papyri.⁴⁸ These bills of sale record transactions in slaves between Muslim owners in the ninth and tenth centuries. 80% of these documents refer to Nubian or black slaves and, in one case, Nubian is also conflated with blackness.⁴⁹

The Genizah sub-corpus and the papyri do not provide a large enough sample to be representative of the overall geography of the medieval slave trade to Egypt between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁰ Medieval chroniclers and travelers observed that there were hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of slaves employed in the Egyptian state armies and in the Fatimid palace complex.⁵¹ Such reports are themselves problematic, however, because they lack other sources of corroboration and because such figures may have served rhetorical purposes. The documentary sources of the Genizah and in collections of Arabic papyri are especially useful because they record actual instances of individual slaves owned by Egyptian households. Moreover these are most of the known documentary records that exist for the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See appendix.

⁴⁹ P. Lond. Inv. Or. 4684. A second document, P. Lond. Inv. Or. 4684 (8), amends the price stated in 4684 (9). See Rāḡib, *Actes de vente*, 26–33. Both documents identify the slave woman being sold as a black Nubian.

⁵⁰ There are 39 instances that document the origins of slaves, or a group of slaves included in the same transaction. I have eliminated three mentions of slave origins because there is a chance that they mention the same slave. These potential duplicates are marked with an asterisk in the appendix. I only include unnamed slave women in my sample when there is other identifying information (such as dates or detailed data concerning geographic origins) that allows me to ensure I am not duplicating a slave woman I have already counted. By use of this criterion, the sample of slave women with known origins is reduced.

⁵¹ Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 74ff. The caliph al-ʿAzāz had more than 10,000 slave women. The Fatimid navy seizes 700 Byzantine captives.

slave trade to Egypt (and indeed to the Muslim Middle East) for the period. For this reason, these records allow us to draw the history of the medieval Egyptian slave trade into conversation with other recent scholarship on the slave trade in the greater Mediterranean. Genizah sources will demonstrate that the history and geography of the slave trade in the eastern Mediterranean must also take into account the relationship of the Fatimid and Ayyubid states with sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean trading systems.

V. Reasons for Patterns of Origins

The tenth and eleventh centuries mark a significant shift in the traditional sources of slaves for Muslim societies of the eastern Mediterranean.⁵² From the tenth century onward, Christian slaves in general, and slaves from the Byzantine and Venetian slave trades more specifically, became increasingly off-limits for slave traders carrying their human chattel to Muslim controlled territories. In contrast, Michael McCormick has documented a robust ninth-century slave trade in European slaves to the Islamic world.⁵³

The overall composition of the Genizah and papyri sample suggests that European women were not commonly available to slave owners outside the ruling classes from the late tenth century through the first half of the thirteenth century.⁵⁴ At the highest echelons of state

⁵² McCormick, *Origins*; McCormick, “New Light”; Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery”; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*.

⁵³ McCormick notes a shipment of 9,000 slaves from Italy to “Africa, Tripoli, and Egypt aboard 6 ships” in the year 867. He also documents 36 individual (named) slaves who were exported from Europe to the Islamic Near East between the late eighth and early tenth centuries. McCormick, *Origins*, 244–254, 773. See also McCormick, “New Light”; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*; Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery.”

⁵⁴ Nāṣir-i Khusraw notes that slaves in Egypt during the eleventh century were “Nubian or Greek (Byzantine).” *Book of Travels*, 51–52. Byzantine slave women are not found in significant numbers in the Genizah or in published Arabic papyri. It is possible that Khusraw notes here the slave population he observed in the service of the palace and other Fatimid officials. See *Ibid.*, 59: “The ministers of state and servants are all blacks and Greeks.” He does not mention slaves in his description of Fustat (Old Cairo). See *Ibid.*, 66–72.

power, Byzantine women are found in larger numbers probably because they were acquired as tribute gifts or from state sponsored raids on Byzantine territory.⁵⁵ When they are found, European slave women were also expensive in comparison to Nubian and black slaves.⁵⁶ Evidence in the Genizah suggests that this price discrepancy continued, and possibly widened, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵⁷ The expense and relative scarcity of European slave women suggest that this population was increasingly unavailable for slavery in Egypt and other Islamic territories. Developments in the northern Mediterranean as well as in the eastern Islamic world's relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean trading system may well explain this scarcity.

Observers in both Latin and Byzantine Europe also began to think of European slave exports to the Muslim world in terms of competition between themselves and their infidel adversaries across the sea. In 845, bishops in the Frankish town of Meaux bemoaned the exodus of pagan slave troops whom Christian and Jewish slave traders were driving to Muslim markets, remarking, "The very great number of the kingdom's enemies is being increased."⁵⁸ Pope Leo V even tried in the first quarter of the ninth century to ban all trade between Venetian ships and Arab markets.⁵⁹ This evidence suggests that cultural attitudes in Latin Europe were hardening in their opposition to the export of Christians to Islamic territories.

⁵⁵ Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 113–114.

⁵⁶ One slave described as white (lit: "šafṛān") sold for 30 dinars in the late ninth century, more than twice the price of other slave sold during the same period. P. Cam. Michaélidès inv. B 335. Compare to P. Chic. Or. Inst. Inv. 17680 (verso), P. Cam. Michaélidès inv. B 134, P. Yale inv. 2696 (Kraus 109), and P. Cam. Michaélidès inv. B 152, all from late ninth-century Egypt, edited in Rāgib, *Actes de vente*.

⁵⁷ For the Genizah corpus, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 138. On comparatively high prices of European slaves in the Islamic world, see McCormick, "New Light," 43.

⁵⁸ McCormick, "New Light," 45–46.

⁵⁹ Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. two.

In fact Christian and state rulers in both Latin and Byzantine Europe took steps to define Christians as ineligible for slavery universally, and even to stem the trade of all slaves from European shores to Arab markets. This history is told elsewhere in fuller detail, however, a series of papal and secular decrees between the ninth and eleventh centuries gives us some idea of the process.⁶⁰ Beginning as early as the eighth century, Christian Europe began to tighten restrictions on the enslavement of its own members.⁶¹ Over the course of the ninth century, Carolingian and Venetian rulers made a series of attempts to limit the trade in Christian slaves and captives, drawing up treaties and decrees that sought to stem the flow of Christian slaves from Europe to Islamic territories in 840, 876 and 880. This evidence suggests that slave trading temporarily continued and that there was a persistent push to control it.⁶²

While European slave exports across the eastern Mediterranean to the Islamic world continued in the late ninth and early tenth century, this status quo came to a halt with the Byzantine reconquest of Crete in the 960s under Nicephorus II Phocas. After the Arab conquest of the island in 845, pirates used Crete as a base for launching raids, among other things taking no small number of captives and collecting ransoms for them or selling them into slavery.⁶³ In 960 a Venetian *placitum* banned the trading of slaves between eastern and central Europe on the Adriatic Sea. This time, with the increased projection of Byzantine naval power in the Mediterranean after 965, the teeth of enforcement soon accompanied the ruling. The strategic conquest of Crete enabled the Byzantine Empire to block slave traffic

⁶⁰ Talbi, "Law and Economy in Ifriqiyah"; McCormick, *Origins*; *ibid.*; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*; Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery."

⁶¹ Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*; McCormick, "New Light," 45–46.

⁶² Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 74ff.

between the Balkans and the Arab world. Balkan enslavement was still a brisk trade, as the Byzantine Empire produced sufficient demand to consume the non-Christian slaves taken from these lands.⁶⁴

Egypt was not the only place to see its access to European slaves limited in the late tenth century. Mohamed Talbi has demonstrated that, after the reconquest of Crete, landowners in Ifrīqiyah could no longer purchase sufficient numbers of slaves at low enough prices. In turn, Talbi continues, in the late tenth century, Ifrīqiyah suffered a decline in agricultural production.⁶⁵ The slave trade over land still continued. European slaves were more common in Iberia and Iraq, where slave traders could unload their merchandise without venturing through the risky and expensive obstacles that Byzantium imposed in the eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁶ But the slave trade between the northern and southern shores shriveled during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The story of late tenth-century geo-politics in the eastern Mediterranean was not just a story of the rise of Byzantium, however. The Fatimids conquered Egypt in 969, and won battles against the Byzantine fleet in 975 and 998, enabling them to maintain their presence in the eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁷ The Fatimids also continued a trend begun under the Ṭūlūnid amīrs (868-905) of intensifying the commercial relationships between Egypt and the Indian

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Talbi, "Law and Economy in Ifrīqiyah."

⁶⁶ Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, 74ff.

⁶⁷ Archibald Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean A.D. 500-1100* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 200.

Ocean via the Red Sea.⁶⁸ These connections appear to intensify during the twelfth century, when the Crusades diverted some commercial traffic further south and east away from the Mediterranean. Also during this time, it appears that the Fatimids were in an alliance with the Zuray‘id rulers of the Yemeni port city of Aden, the most important entrepôt between Egypt’s Red Sea ports and the trading centers of the Indian Ocean.⁶⁹ When the Ayyūbid Sultanate supplanted the Fatimids in 1171, this regime, too, cultivated its ties with Aden and the India trade by building infrastructure that supported merchant activity along vital commercial routes.⁷⁰ In the long run, the Egyptian state’s turn toward the Indian Ocean will also begin to manifest itself in the presence of slaves from South Asia.

Likewise, in the twelfth century the Fatimid navy began to reassert its own presence in the eastern Mediterranean in response to Crusader invasions of the caliphate’s territory, but this resurgence would not persist into the thirteenth century.⁷¹ The results were mixed, however, as between 1099 and 1151, the Fatimids found little success against Frankish forces. During the last twenty years of Fatimid rule in Egypt, however, the navy was successful in confrontations with Byzantine and Frankish forces. Fatimid raids at sea and along the Levantine coast yielded considerable booty, including hundreds of captives.⁷² The strength of

⁶⁸ After the demise of the Ṭūlūnid dynasty, al-Ikhshīd and his successor Kāfūr also recognized the importance of the maritime commerce between Egypt and the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea. Thierry Bianquis, “Autonomous Egypt from Ibn Ṭūlūn to Kāfūr, 868-969,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. M. W. Daly and Carl F. Petry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 87, 118. See also *EI* 2, s.v. “Ṭūlūnid.”

⁶⁹ Margariti, *Aden*, 27–29.

⁷⁰ Michael Chamberlain, “The Crusader Era and the Ayyubid Dynasty,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. M. W. Daly and Carl F. Petry, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.

Margariti, *Aden*, 29, 91–100.

⁷¹ According to Archibald Lewis, the Fatimid navy had declined by the early eleventh century despite its victories against Byzantine forces in 975 and 998. See Lewis, *Naval Power*, 22.

⁷² Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 107–114.

the Egyptian navy under the Ayyūbids waxed and waned until the period of the Third Crusade (1189-1191) when European naval forces unleashed a long-lasting assault upon Ṣālah al-Dīn's forces at the port of Acre that ultimately decimated the sultan's fleet.⁷³ After this shift in the maritime balance of power, Egypt's southerly and eastward trade routes became all the more important.

The Egyptian pivot towards the India trade between the tenth and twelfth centuries may also partly explain the patterns of slave origins found in the Genizah. Egypt's eastern orientation also meant an intensification of connectivity with *bilād al-sūdān* along the caravan routes that ultimately connected Cairo, via the southerly urban center of Qūs, to Red Sea ports such as 'Aydhāb, Sawākin, and Dahlak.⁷⁴ These were precisely the same land routes that connected Lower Egypt to the known slave-catching regions described by Naṣir-i Khusraw and Benjamin of Tudela. Thus the drop in Europe's slave exports to Islamic territory should also be understood in light of Egypt and Syria's increased connections with the Red Sea, Yemen, and the Indian Ocean.

VI. Social Networks, Jewish Buyers, and the Turn to the South and East

Genizah records demonstrate that Jews in Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt also turned to the south and east. Egyptian Jews bought black African slave women more than slave women

⁷³ A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 100–116.

⁷⁴ On the role of Dahlak in the maritime trade between Egypt and Aden, see Roxani E. Margariti, "Thieves or Sultans? Dahlak and the Rulers and Merchants of Indian Ocean Port Cities, 11th-13th Centuries," in *Red Sea IV: Connected Hinterlands: The Fourth International Conference on the Peoples of the Red Sea Region*, ed. Lucy Blue et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 155–63 and the literature cited there. On Dahlak's role as an entrepôt for the Abyssinian-Yemen slave trade, see Roxani E. Margariti, "An Ocean of Islands: Islands, Insularity, and Historiography of the Indian Ocean," in *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 215–216.

from other regions. And to obtain slaves, they turned increasingly to their personal networks away from the Mediterranean. In a twelfth-century letter, a pregnant woman in Fustat requests that her uncle in the town of al-Bahnasā (in the Fayyūm, approx. 100 miles south-southeast of Cairo) purchase her a young black girl.⁷⁵ There are additional letters in which the writer requests that the recipient acquire and send the writer a slave girl.⁷⁶ Two of these letters are written from Alexandria to Fustāt. These three requests suggest that when Jewish families needed slaves, they turned to more southerly and internal Egyptian sources instead of slaves supplied directly from Mediterranean sea-routes. Such a pattern of slave-acquisition conforms to the evidence of a slave supply coming from Nubia and other parts of Africa.

When we consult letters that originated in Aden, however, we see different patterns of slave acquisition. A letter written in 1140 by an Adeni merchant to his associate informs him that he was unable to buy a male slave (*waṣīf*) from a shipment of slaves from East Africa (*bilād al-Zanj*) to Yemen.⁷⁷ While this reference to a wholesale seaborne shipment of slaves is

⁷⁵ T-S 13J21.18, ll. 16-17. Line 16 likely includes a term for slave girl (*jāriyah* or *waṣīfah*). But the space where this would be written is damaged and unreadable. Line 17 reads “*sawdā min al-jālib* (sic).” As Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman notes in an unpublished conference paper, the word *jālib* is related to the word for slave-importer (*jallāb*) and seems to be what is meant here. This context makes it clear that a slave girl is being requested. This document is discussed further in chapter two. Friedman interprets the word *jallāb* in T-S 20.130, l. 45 to mean wholesale merchant more generally and not slave-importer. See Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 334 n. 29. The context here is ambiguous. The ships discussed are arriving from Zabīd, a city known to receive Abyssinian slaves in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See Margariti, “An Ocean of Islands,” 216. Cf. Ghosh, “The Slave of MS. H.6.,” 170, where he renders the term “slave traders.”

⁷⁶ T-S 12.254, discussed below. T-S NS J 16, line 20 (formerly T-S NS 94J16), see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135. T-S 8J10.9, discussed below.

⁷⁷ T-S Misc.28.256. Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 452–456. Friedman points out that such a reference to a wholesale shipment of slaves is unique in the Genizah records. There are numerous references to this document in Goitein and Friedman, *Joseph Lebdī*, passim; Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*, passim. A letter discussed below does mention dealings with a slave-dealer (*nakhkhās*), but it does not appear that the transaction is part of a wholesale enterprise: T-S 8J10.9.

unique, there are other letters to and from merchants in Aden that mention slaves acquired in the context of the Indian Ocean trade.⁷⁸

India traders even assumed the risk and expense of sending slaves all the way to Cairo from their ports of call in the Indian Ocean. A family letter sent from India to Egypt in the twelfth-century documents the shipment of a six-year old slave child from India to a Jewish family in Egypt. The letter is badly damaged and much of the identifying information is lost. The author informs the recipient of the various items he has purchased for one of the ladies of the house, possibly the woman referred to as Sitt al-Ḥusn on the document's verso. He had recently returned to India, and says: "I have bought for Sitt [...] a slave girl who is six years of age, pearl bracelets, [...], clothing, and red silk." He further explains, "I will send them, if God wills, with someone who is traveling home with the Kārim."⁷⁹ In the period before the thirteenth century, the Kārim refers to convoys of ships traveling between Egypt and the ports of the western Indian Ocean and carrying merchants of various religious backgrounds.⁸⁰ The shipment of this slave fits into a broader trend evident throughout the Genizah corpus: buyers

⁷⁸ For example, T-S 16.345 (BL Or.5542.17) is a letter written in Aden by Maḥrūz b. Ya'qūb to Sulaymān ibn Abū Zikrī Kohēn mentions the arrival of a black slave (ʿabd). See Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 56–57, 480–484. The letter from Fustat to Aden is F 1908.44.i (Gottheil-Worrell IX) and it congratulates the recipient on the acquisition of a *ghulām*. Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 4 n. 1.

⁷⁹ T-S NS J23 (India Book VII 56), ll. 10–13. Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*, 126 n.4, 138 n. 57. My translation differs only slightly from Goitein's in S. D. Goitein, "New Light on the Beginnings of the Kārim Merchants," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1 (1958): 179. Goitein explains that the word *yakhruj* is often used by India merchants to mean returning home (toward the west) across the Indian Ocean. *Ibid.*, 178 n. 4. See also Joshua Blau, *A Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2006), s.v. "*kh-r-j*." See further discussion of this document in chapter two.

⁸⁰ On the *kārim* merchant convoy as it appears in Genizah documents and the history of this term's usage, see Margariti, *Aden*, 152–154. In the Mamluk period, the term *kārimī* came to designate an actual merchant consortium that played a great role in Indian Ocean commerce. Sato Tsugitaka notes that the later Mamluk *kārimī* merchants were known to transport slaves to Egypt from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trading spheres. See "Slave Traders and Kārimī Merchants during the Mamluk Period: A Comparative Study," *Mamluk Studies Review* 10 (2006): 154.

of slaves turned to networks that stretched south and east away from the Mediterranean. These patterns also reflect the Egyptian state's cultivation of commerce and infrastructure along the trade routes between Lower Egypt and the Indian Ocean.

Despite the evidence in documentary and literary sources that the main sources of slaves were in the south of Egypt and the Indian Ocean region, there were still some Byzantine and Frankish slave women found in Egypt during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. One possible explanation for the small and intermittent presence of European slave women in Egypt is piracy and the sale of female captives in Egyptian markets. There are many mentions of prisoner ransoms in Egypt, and these include a woman from "land of Edom," i.e., Christian Europe.⁸¹ Regardless of how the small numbers of European slave women arrived in Egypt, the evidence suggests that Egyptians did not have regular or easy access to the legal trade in slaves across the Mediterranean.

The overall impression, then, is that Judaeo-Arabic sources document the shipment, transfer, and sale of slaves within Egypt, from India via Aden, but not across the Mediterranean Sea. This pattern may be explained by the emergence of the Byzantine empire and its immediate spheres of influence as a no-slaving zone. As Jeffrey Fynn-Paul argues, the Byzantine empire and its Latin neighbors had declared their own subjects ineligible for slavery; they also sought to prevent the shipment of slaves from European territory to the Islamic world using papal and state decrees.⁸²

⁸¹ Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, II: 87ff. For the ransom of a woman from the land of Edom for 24 dinars see Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs*, II: 89.

⁸² Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery"; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. two. See p. 23 above.

There is another facet of the greater medieval Mediterranean slave trade that needs to be considered. Egypt had long exploited the *bilād al-sūdān* as a reservoir for domestic slaves and it continued to do so into the Fatimid and Ayyubid period.⁸³ Despite the fact that Nubia was a Christian kingdom during the Fatimid and Ayyūbid eras, it was a Christian state that lacked the buffer of a sea and the protection of a resurgent navy. Thus developments in the Mediterranean slave trade, specifically as far as Byzantine, Venetian, and church powers were concerned, were only one force that impacted the Egyptian slave supply. We should also consider that the most important component of the slave trade to Cairo, the preeminent urban center and trade emporium in the Islamic east during this period, were the slave reservoirs to the city's south and east—the *bilād al-sūdān* and the Indian Ocean.

The way that Jewish merchants in the eleventh century used their personal networks to buy and transport individual slaves reveal that the Jewish community turned to their southerly and eastern connections for these purposes. This southerly orientation is evident in correspondence tied to the exceptional merchant-magnate and communal leader Nahray b. Nissīm (ca. 1025-1098), his extended family, and other business associates.⁸⁴ These records indicate that others turned to Nahray b. Nissīm when they needed to purchase a slave. Nahray's business partners also wrote him requesting instructions for what they should do with individual slaves. In none of these transactions do we find these merchants utilizing networks around the Mediterranean littoral. They look within Egypt, away from the coast.

⁸³ In the Ayyubid period, the state relied less on slave soldiers from sub-Saharan Africa and favored Turkish troops instead. The Genizah suggests that domestic slaves continued to arrive from *bilād al-sūdān*, however. See Yaacov Lev, *Saladin in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 81–84.

⁸⁴ *EJIW*, “Nahray ben Nissim”; Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*, passim.

A letter from the Alexandrian merchant Mardūk b. Musā to Nahray demonstrates how one merchant could turn to his social network to secure a slave. Mardūk and Nahray were business associates and shared a variety of partners and contacts. In most respects, Mardūk's letter is unremarkable. He reports on various business transactions including the sums, commodities, and parties involved. Yet when Mardūk reaches the end of the page and begins to write in the right-hand margin, the subject matter (and his tone) change markedly:

I do not have anyone to bring me a cup of water, and I am in the utmost need of someone to serve me. I could not find one among the Jews (lit: in the Jewish Quarter)... Please, my master, secure for me a slave-girl who is suitable for domestic service from among those who are reliable, and who people testify is chaste. Secure me this. If such a thing is possible for me, tell me in (your) letter what her price is.⁸⁵

Mardūk first sought to purchase a slave from a Jewish party before he decided to ask Nahray for his help finding a suitable person. His strategy reflects the general pattern of Jews trying to buy slaves from other Jews.

Additional business and family letters illustrate how Jews turned to their own personal networks to secure a slave from outside their immediate, local market. Two letters to Nahray illustrate how these associates used correspondence to share information about slave prices and also to plan where specific slaves should be sent. The first example is a letter from Yeshu'a b. Ismā'īl in Alexandria to Nahray in Fuṣṭāṭ.⁸⁶ These two merchants worked in association for many years and, in this letter, Yeshu'a reports information about shared business interests.

⁸⁵ T-S 12.254, right margin, line 5, through the top margin, line 3. Beginning at line 9 of the top margin, Mardūk again reiterates how he has no one to watch his house, fetch him water, or greet guests at his door. Ed. See Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 7; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 126, 135; II: 589, where Goitein notes that "the Jewish Quarter" should not be understood as a physical place in this instance since Jewish neighborhoods in Alexandria all had proper names. For a list of Mardūk b. Musā's letters see Jessica L. Goldberg, "The Use and Abuse of Commercial Letters from the Cairo Genizah," *Journal of Medieval History* 38 (2012): 147–148 n. 111.

⁸⁶ ENA 2805.23, ll. 13–16.

One of the first pieces of news he discusses concerns the purchase of a female slave. He reports that the transaction was a good one, though he expresses worry over whether or not the price was good. The second letter to Nahray is from his cousin Natan b. Nahray. In this letter, Natan asks Nahray what he should do with a certain slave woman and whether he should send her to Nahray himself in Malīj (north of Cairo in the Nile delta) as Nahray had instructed him in a previous letter.⁸⁷ All of this correspondence discusses the acquisition and transport of slaves within Egypt.

Other individuals used letters to arrange the acquisition and transport of slaves in a manner that further suggests the prevalence of intra-Egyptian slave transactions and the transport of slaves from southern Egypt to the north.⁸⁸ Individual buyers could even make arrangements with slave dealers (sg. *al-nakhhās*) to have slaves sent to them up the Nile. A letter by an anonymous writer begins abruptly: “[...] to Ibrahīm the slave-trader (*al-nakhhās*).” He then instructs his associate: “Deliver my letter so that he purchases Nezer the slave woman (*al-waṣīfah*). Take her and deposit her with someone [convenient] until she arrives in your possession. I (already) paid you however much she owes for provisions or renting a space on a ship or anything else. If there is a remainder from her price [...] pay him with what you have [...]”⁸⁹ The letter is only partially preserved, but it is unique among Genizah documents in that it mentions the figure of an official slave-dealer and illustrates that

⁸⁷ F 1908.44HH (Gottheil-Worrell XXXIV), ll. 12-15.

⁸⁸ T-S 8J10.9. Discussed below. Rylands B3311, l. 4-5. In this letter a brother asks the recipient to acquire a slave woman for his sister. There are no preserved details concerning the logistics of this desired transaction.

⁸⁹ T-S 8J10.9, ll. 1-9. Goitein notes that the way in which Ibrahīm is referred may suggest that he is a Muslim. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 452. Jewish men named Avraham are also referred to as Ibrahīm. See Vienna: H 82. There is no way to determine Ibrahīm’s identity. A person named Yūsuf (or Yosef) is mentioned in line 11.

this Judaeo-Arabic writer had prearranged the purchase of a slave named Nezer from him. We learn also that he prepaid for her space on a ship and for the provisions necessary to sustain her on the trip. The ship is mentioned as a *markab* a type of boat used primarily for riverine traffic. The use of a *markab* indicates that Nezer was probably being transported along the Nile River.⁹⁰ The direction of travel is not indicated—whether it was up or down the Nile. Given the known slave reservoirs and south-north directions of documented slave imports, it's most likely that Nezer was being sent down the Nile from Upper Egypt to Fustat.

The expense involved in transporting Nezer along the Nile prompts questions about the cost of buying slaves over medium and long distances. On the one hand, the use of personal networks for slave acquisition fits into broader patterns of merchant activity in which individual traders relied on associates to manage business dealings in both regional and international markets.⁹¹ On the other hand, Arabic sources report that there were established slave markets in Fustāt.⁹² Why would a merchant send his wife in Cairo a six-year-old slave girl from India and take on the additional expenses and risk? Given that Genizah merchants did not leave evidence that they dealt in the wholesale slave trade, why would they go through the trouble of transacting in individual slaves over distances short and long? The simplest explanation for why Jews bought slaves over longer distance from trusted associates rather than from local markets lies in the nature of the slave as luxury item.

VII. The Regulation of Slave Ownership and the Egyptian Social Order

⁹⁰ On the *markab* and other types of riverine ships mentioned in Genizah records, see *Ibid.*, I: 295–308.

⁹¹ Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*.

⁹² See Kirah, *Slave Girls and Slave Soldiers*, 20ff; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 203.

As the subsequent chapters below will demonstrate, slave ownership and slave labor itself were most meaningful to masters and mistresses as instruments of their own social prestige. To import a slave girl from India may have added another layer to the slave's value as an accoutrement. She was, along with the pearl bracelets and red silk that she accompanied with the Kārim, a status marker.⁹³

The two letters above that mention the acquisition of young slave girls are not the only correspondence related to the topic. In fact for the majority of the eleventh century there are no dated bills of sale that pertain to slave transactions, only letters between business associates. After 1084 there are three bills of sale currently dateable to the eleventh century. The overwhelming majority of slave bills of sale date between 1100 and the mid-thirteenth century.⁹⁴ This pattern suggests questions about what kinds of sources survived in the Genizah from what specific periods and why. It may also suggest what kind of access Jews had to slaves in Fatimid and Ayyūbid Egypt at different times. There are other explanations that deserve to be considered carefully. The lack of slave bills of sale from the Genizah before 1084 is problematic. Could it be that there were periods when there was a relative scarcity of slaves in Egypt? If this was the case, it would explain the importation of slaves from further afield. Or perhaps there were periods when there was a restricted slave market for Jewish buyers.

The discrepancy in the distribution of bills of sale could be explained by other trends. The business correspondence of the merchants Yūsuf b. Ya'qūb Ibn 'Awkal (active c. 990-1030) and Nahray b. Nissīm predominate in the eleventh-century documentary corpus, in part

⁹³ T-S NS J23.

⁹⁴ See appendix.

because the volume of trade they were transacting far outstripped that of other merchants.⁹⁵ That explains the abundance of letters. In the twelfth century, there are large collections of documents in the hands of prolific scribes such as Ḥalfon b. Menashshe, Mevorakh b. Natan, and Natan b. Shemu'el. Many of the bills of sale are in their hands. These factors would explain the abundance of eleventh-century letters and twelfth-century bills of sale, though they would not explain the dearth of eleventh-century bills of sale.

A final factor to consider is the larger social and political climate. The rules of slave ownership in Islamic society were used to differentiate between the social status of Muslims and non-Muslims.⁹⁶ These rules are also paralleled in medieval Christian legal codes. In both societies, religious minorities were not allowed to own slaves of the dominant religious group. Jews could not own Muslim slaves in medieval Egypt and there is no documented case of this occurring.⁹⁷ The scarcity of eleventh-century bills of sale may reflect a temporary restriction upon Jewish slave buying imposed by the Fatimid state.

An exceptional episode from early eleventh-century Egypt underscores how Muslim rulers could target *dhimmī* slave ownership as a means of demonstrating the social superiority of Muslims. Al-Maqrizi's chronicle of Fatimid rule reports that the caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 996-1021) issued a decree on the 7th Muḥarram 395 A.H. (October 24, 1004) that forbade the slave

⁹⁵ For Ibn 'Awkal, see Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*, 36.

⁹⁶ The prohibition forbidding non-Muslims to own Muslim slaves is mentioned in the Pact of 'Umar. On the history of the pact, see Mark R. Cohen, "What Was the Pact of 'Umar? A Literary-Historical Study," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100–157; Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*.

⁹⁷ Goitein mistakenly identifies one case where the slave sold was a Muslim. T-S 10J7.6d, sec. 2. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 136, 433 n. 33.

traders (*al-nakhhāsīn*) from selling male and female slaves to Jews and Christians.⁹⁸ Al-Ḥākim's decree threatened any slave dealers with harsh measures if they disobeyed the order. This decree occurred in the context of other limitations on Jews and Christians that were meant to mark their inferior social status, such as the dress stipulations (*ghiyār*) requiring them to wear a belt known as the *zunnār* and a badge, both articles in black, "the symbol of the seditious 'Abbāsids."⁹⁹ In 1008, four years after prohibiting the sale of slaves to the *ahl al-dhimma*, al-Ḥākim ordered that slave women and slave men at the market be separated from each other. Additionally, only buyers and sellers were permitted access to the market. This decree was also announced in the context of other restrictions meant to humiliate religious minorities and affirm the social superiority of Muslims.¹⁰⁰ The regulation of slavery in this manner, and in the context of the other related restrictions, underscores its function as a marker of social status.

Al-Ḥākim was, by almost any account, an exceptional figure due to his erratic and enigmatic nature and because of the zeal with which he persecuted Christians and Jews during his reign. The persecutions he ordered were unprecedented in Fatimid rule before and after his reign. His successor al-Zāhir (1021-1036) reversed the most severe decrees and restored the relative security of life for Jews and Christians that had previously marked Fatimid rule in Egypt. There is no further indication of how the slave market was regulated by the Egyptian state *vis-à-vis* its *dhimmi* population until the end of Fatimid rule in 1171.

⁹⁸ al-Maqrizī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā*, II: 53; Paul Ernest Walker, *Caliph of Cairo: al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, 996-1021* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 65–66.

⁹⁹ al-Maqrizī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā*, II: 53; Walker, *Caliph of Cairo*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ al-Maqrizī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā*, II: 76; Walker, *Caliph of Cairo*, 76.

It does seem, however, that state restriction and supervision of the slave market *vis-à-vis* the *ahl al-dhimma* continued in the later Fatimid period and into Ayyubid rule. In a later twelfth-century manual for market inspectors, *The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisba* (*Nihāyat al-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba*), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shayzarī (d. 589/1193) iterates a relaxed prohibition: “The sale of a slave woman, or a male slave, to any *dhimmī* is not permitted if the slaves are Muslims. [That is] unless the trader is absolutely certain that the slave is not a Muslim.”¹⁰¹

Al-Shayzarī’s work belongs to a genre of later medieval Arabic writing known as *ḥisba* manuals. The idea of *ḥisba* has two primary meanings, the first signifying a Muslim’s obligation to “order good and forbid evil.” The second usage of *ḥisba*, and in the sense of al-

¹⁰¹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr al-Shayzarī, *The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Reckoning (al-Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisbah)* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at lajnat al-tālīf wal-tarjamah wa-’al-nashr, 1946), 84. This work has been translated as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr al-Shayzarī, *The Book of the Islamic Market Inspector: Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisba (The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisba)*, trans. R. P. Buckley, *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement* 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). The death date for al-Shayzarī listed here is according to Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur: Supplementband* (Leiden: Brill, 1937), I: 832. Little is known about al-Shayzarī himself since there is no extant biography for him. He was a contemporary of the Ayyubid ruler Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin, 1138-1193) as illustrated by his dedication of another work to the sulṭān. Al-Shayzarī’s work *The Right Course of Action in the Politics of Kings (al-Nahj al-maslūk fī siyāsāt al-mulūk)* is dedicated to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Al-Shayzarī’s works reflect a familiarity with the region of greater Syria, though it is not known if he was born or active here. In *The Utmost Authority*, al-Shayzarī also demonstrates conversance with the eastern Mediterranean Islamic world more broadly as he instructs market supervisors that Egyptian flax from Giza is of the finest quality and that spinners should not mix fibers from Nablus (in Palestine) with those from Egypt. Similarly he urges money-changers from exchanging Egyptian dinars for those from Syria, or dirhems from Qayrawān in north Africa for those known as *aḥadī*. On flax, see al-Shayzarī, *The Utmost Authority*, 70. Instructions for money changers: *Ibid.*, 74–75. Buckley indicates that *aḥadī* dirhems may refer to coins minted by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf in Iraq at the behest of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685-705). The coins bore the inscription “*qul huwa Allahu aḥad* (‘Say that God is One’).” See al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 94 n. 3. Whether al-Shayzarī wrote his *ḥisba* manual for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, in Egypt, or in Syria is uncertain. *The Utmost Authority* was, however, influential in shaping future *ḥisba* manuals that were written in Egypt and meant for Egyptian audiences. As Buckley notes, the Egyptian Ibn Ukhuwwa (d. 1338) “appropriated much of al-Shayzarī’s material” for his manual *Ma‘ālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*. A later Egyptain, Ibn Bassām (14th century) also based his work on al-Shayzarī’s and named it after *The Utmost Authority*. Currently, eight of the fourteen known manuscripts of *The Utmost Authority* are held in Egyptian collections. See *Ibid.*, 13–14. Such cultural and legal practices may also explain why we have no confirmed cases of slave transactions in bills of sale between mixed private parties (i. e. between Jews and Muslims). There is one bill of sale in which a Christian clerk sells a slave woman to a Jew. See T-S Ar.42.174.

Shayrazī's work, is in relation to a state official appointed specifically to supervise markets, but also to oversee moral and social behavior more generally. Such officials were called *muḥtasibs* (market inspectors), a term derived from the same root as *ḥisba*. Market supervisors and inspectors, though not yet called *muḥtasibs*, are reported to have been appointed in seventh-century Arabia by the prophet Muḥammad and his successors at which time the office seems to have been called "market officer" (*ʿāmil ʿalā sūq*).¹⁰²

Al-Shayzarī and other authors of *ḥisba* manuals regulated the slave trade in other ways. For instance, al-Shayzarī also suggested regulations for the entire slave market—including Muslim buyers and sellers:

"The slave-dealer (*al-nakhhās*) should be reliable, trustworthy and upright, known for chastity and respectability, because he handles people's slaves, male and female. Often he may be alone with them in his house. He should not sell a slave woman or a slave to anyone, until he knows the vendor or produces someone who does, and writes down his name and description in his ledger, lest the item sold be free or stolen."¹⁰³

Jews and Muslims had long been writing bills of sale for slaves as demonstrated by surviving examples and by the manuals of formularies that instructed scribes in their composition.¹⁰⁴

Yet the instruction that the slave-dealer himself keep a ledger (*daftar*) is an example of further regulation. For the Fatimid period, D. S. Richards has edited an example of such a notebook.

¹⁰² al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 3–4. These reports come from later works such as Ibn ʿAbd Barr al-Qurṭūbī's *al-Istīʿāb fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*. For an overview of the history of *ḥisba* writing and the offices of *muḥtasib* and its predecessors the *ʿāmil al-sūq* (officer of the market) and *ṣāḥib al-sūq* (commander of the market), see al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 1–24.

¹⁰³ Translation from D. S. Richards, "Fragments of a Slave Dealer's Day-Book from Fuṣṭāt," in *Documents de l'islam médiéval: nouvelles perspectives de recherche*, ed. Yūsuf Rāḡib (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1991), 89. A similar injunction is issued by al-Saqāṭī: "The dealers should be instructed not to sell any male or female slave that belongs to someone not known to them personally or by name, unless he gives a local guarantee who is himself known personally and by name, especially foreigners who import slaves from abroad." Translated in *Ibid.*, 89–90. Richards identifies al-Saqāṭī as 13th-century Iberian author. However, the *Kitāb fī ādāb al-ḥisba* of al-Saqāṭī of Malaga dates to ca. 1100. See *El 2*, "ḥisba."

¹⁰⁴ Ackerman-Lieberman, "Legal Writing."

Richards estimates that the document, which is a fragment unearthed during an archaeological dig in Fustat, dates between the mid-tenth and mid-eleventh centuries. In this notebook, the *nakhkhās* has recorded slave transactions and noted prices, dates of transactions, buyers, sellers, and short descriptions of the slaves sold. The names and *jins* of the slaves are not generally mentioned.¹⁰⁵ The existence of this ledger does suggest, however, that slavery was regulated during the Fatimid period and other external evidence confirms the likelihood.¹⁰⁶

With the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969, the office of the market supervisor was called *muhtasib* and its size and importance seem to have been greatly expanded. In the Fatimid period, there were public ceremonies of investiture held for high officials of the state, and the *muhtasib* was included in this echelon of the bureaucracy. These ceremonies were marked by processions including horses and camels and the bestowal of gifts such as swords and turban's of gold. In addition to these displays, diplomas of investiture for the office of the *muhtasib* were read aloud in the mosques of Ibn Ṭūlūn and 'Amr b. Al-Āṣ.¹⁰⁷

In eleventh-century Egypt, one Dāwūd b. Ya'qūb al-Kutāmī was appointed to the Fatimid office of *ḥisba* and also as a supervisor over the markets (*al-aswāq*).¹⁰⁸ As Buckley

¹⁰⁵ D. S. Richards, "Written Documents," in *Fuṣṭāṭ Expedition Final Report*, ed. George T. Scanlon and Wladyslaw Kubiak, American Research Center in Egypt Reports 11 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), vol. II; Richards, "Fragments."

¹⁰⁶ Jewish scribes also kept notebooks. In one such notebook are notes related to a slave transaction, but not written according the formulae of a proper bill of sale. See T-S 10J7.6d, sec. 2. Other records concerning slaves and freed slaves are also kept in scribal notebooks. More research is necessary to understand if there is a relationship between these practices and the practices of Muslim slave-dealers and scribes.

¹⁰⁷ al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 9. For Buckley's translations of such diplomas, see his appendices.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 102 n. 1. See al-Musabbihī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 13–14. Buckley has Dāwūd b. Ya'qūb al-Kutāmī, *Akhbār Miṣr* reads Dāwwās b. Ya'qūb. Buckley changes Dāwwās to Dāwūd based on how the name is written in al-Maqrizī, *Itti'āz al-*

notes, these posts may not have been redundant. Rather supervision of *al-aswāq* may have referred specifically to supervision of the slave and horse markets, an office consolidated during the Mamlūk sultanate as *nāẓir al-aswāq* (supervisor of the markets). Evidence before and contemporary with Dāwūd's appointment also supports the notion that supervision of *al-aswāq* may have denoted supervision of the slave markets.¹⁰⁹

In earlier Islamic states, such market supervisors generally held multiple positions in addition to this position. In late ninth-century Baghdad for example, the official Aḥmad b. Al-Ṭayyib (also known as al-Sarakhsī) held the position of *muḥtasib* at the same time he was head of the office of inheritance and in charge of the slave market.¹¹⁰ Another officer in the Buwayhid regime (the ruling dynasty in Baghdād between 945 - 1055) also held the office of the *ḥisba* and the slave markets simultaneously.¹¹¹

The evidence suggests, then, that slavery was well regulated in Egypt during the Fatimid and Ayyubid eras and sometimes excessively so. The question remains of whether slave-buying by *dhimmi* was restricted after the reign of al-Ḥākim (996-1021) and if such restrictions could help explain why there are no slave bills of sale in the Genizah that date before 1084. The discriminations of al-Ḥākim also serve to highlight the politics of slave owning and slave trading that were always present even if they were not always visibly

ḥunafā, II: 135. Here al-Maqrīzī notes that Dāwūd was “*qallid al-ḥisba wal-aswāq awl-sawāḥil* (Invested with the offices of *ḥisba*, the markets, and the ports).”

¹⁰⁹ al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 102 n. 1. For Dāwūd's appointment, see al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā*, II: 135. For *nāẓir al-aswāq*, see also Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fi šinā'at al-inshā'*, 1913-1920 ed. (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa'l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963), IV: 198. Here the office is spelled *naẓir al-aswāq* and is noted as responsible for “*sūq al-raqīq wal-khayl wa-nahū-hā* (The market of slaves, horses, and their like).”

¹¹⁰ al-Shayzarī, *Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102 n. 1. On the Buwayhids, see *EI* 2, s.v. “Buwayhids or Būyids.”

contested within medieval Egypt. As Jessica Goldberg notes, one of the reasons Jews are not found as wholesale traders in slaves is that certain commodities had strategic value for the state.¹¹²

The state regulation of the slave market raises compelling avenues for further research. In the various polities around the greater Mediterranean over time, is there a correlation between Jewish slave trading activities and the relationship between Jews and the state? More specifically, does the lack of unambiguous evidence of Jewish wholesale slave trading in the Genizah indicate the social and economic status of the Jews of the Fatimid caliphate and Ayyubid sultanate more generally? Finally, how does the logic of source survival dictate what historians are able to know about slavery from Genizah documents? And is it possible to understand further the specific biases that inhere in the Genizah corpus for specific times, places, and topics?¹¹³

VIII. Conclusions

This study of slavery demonstrates its intertwined, global nature. Both slave origins and the means by which Jews acquired slaves, as mentioned in the Genizah, are inextricably part of a broader story. The main question about the slave trade should not be “Were the Jews represented in the Genizah wholesale slave traders?” Rather it should be “What does the Genizah tell us about the medieval slave trade?” All the slave transactions I have mentioned

¹¹² Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*, 98: “The second fact (about what Genizah merchants did not routinely traffic in) is that weapons, timber, grain, and slaves are also the goods associated most closely, in this period as in most of the recorded history in the Mediterranean, with political power. Trade in these goods required a greater degree of engagement with the politico-military elite than most Genizah merchants had or wished to have...a very few Genizah merchants did have such connections. Their existence and their limited numbers...reflect an organization of power that circumscribes the activities and aspirations of the Genizah merchants.”

¹¹³ The work of Roger Bagnall on slavery in Graeco-Roman Egypt demonstrates the potential of such an approach. See Roger S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

here overwhelmingly concern transactions, requests and attestations pertaining to individual slaves and their origins. The importance of this evidence for understanding the broader inter-regional slave trade has not been fully realized because research on this topic has largely begun and ended with the question of the involvement of Jews as major intermediaries in slave trafficking.

Medieval Egypt provides an excellent vantage point from which to analyze slavery and the slave trade as a problem on both the local and global scales. There are two main reasons for Egypt's importance in the study of the medieval slave trade. First, two of the largest documentary corpora for the social history of the medieval Near East survived in Egypt—the Cairo Genizah and the bulk of extant Arabic papyri. Second, Cairo came to enjoy a preeminent position in global trade during the period when both Genizah documents and Arabic papyri are abundant. As the 'Abbāsid capital of Baghdad entered into a gradual period of decline in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, Cairo emerged as the most important commercial emporium for trade to and from Africa, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The riches generated by trade, industry and state patronage meant that many segments of Cairo's urban population were wealthy enough to purchase slaves for domestic use from the diverse regions mentioned above. This demand for domestic slaves, alongside a consistent demand for slave-soldiers to serve the state, intensified a slave trade that had existed in Egypt for centuries and that would persist into the twentieth century. Thus, the composition of Egypt's slave population is a key to understanding the ebb and flow of the slave trade in the greater Near East during the tenth to thirteenth centuries.

Over the last decade, historians of Latin Europe and Byzantium have made great strides in documenting and describing the slave trade to, from and within Europe. As McCormick, Fynn-Paul and Rotman collectively illustrate, European states increasingly opposed the enslavement of Christians, and even pagan subjects—let alone their export to Islamic markets.¹⁴ These historians demonstrate how the geography of slaving changed dramatically after the ninth century due to growth in the European economy, changing cultural attitudes towards the enslavement of Christians and a resurgent Byzantine navy. Yet as McCormick notes, the larger picture remains incomplete and “a rich harvest is still to be gathered in the Arabic and Hebrew records”.¹⁵

This chapter demonstrates how Egyptian Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic sources can be used to document the changing geography of the slave trade in the eastern Mediterranean between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. These sources confirm that the supply of European slaves in Egypt tightened after the tenth century.

Furthermore, Egyptian sources reveal trends not visible in the massive corpora of European documents amassed by McCormick and Rotman. Genizah evidence indicates that the restriction of the slave trade from Europe was balanced by an Egyptian turn to slave imports from the Sudan and the Indian Ocean. It is only in the twelfth century and later that Indian slaves begin to surface in bills of sale contracted in Fustāṭ. It is also during this time that mercantile letters reveal the efforts of merchants to purchase slaves in Aden and during their business trips to the western coast of India. There is also a continued predominance of

¹⁴ McCormick, *Origins*; McCormick, “New Light”; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. two; Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery.”

¹⁵ McCormick, *Origins*, 124.

black slaves in Egypt during this time. The Fatimid's were especially reliant upon black slave-soldiers during this time because the 'Abbāsid forces to their east obstructed access to the reservoirs of Turkish slave-cavalry that had long formed the elite corps of Islamic imperial armies.¹¹⁶

These shifts in the geography of slaving are part of a longer story of slave eligibility in Europe, Africa, and the Near East. The suppression of slave recruitment in Europe, its hinterlands and Central Asia intensified the shift to Africa as a source of slave labor. This shift continued through the Mamlūk Sultanate in Egypt (1250-1517).¹¹⁷ The European slave trade was revived in earnest in the fifteenth century. While the location and military power of the Ottoman Empire prevented European slavers from penetrating other potential slaving areas in the Black Sea region and beyond, black Africans were a geographically proximate population deemed eligible for enslavement.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Bacharach, "African Military Slaves"; Lev, "Army, Regime and Society."

¹¹⁷ The Egyptian female domestic slave population during the fifteenth century was overwhelmingly composed of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) and black African slaves. See the many slave women listed in al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*.

¹¹⁸ For an thorough explanation of how Africans became central to New World slavery, see Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 77–102; Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*.

Chapter Two

Domestic Slavery and the Social Status of Free Women

I. Introduction

The oblique mention of slavery in most Genizah documents belies the real extent to which domestic slavery was ubiquitous in medieval Egypt, and to which many slaves were fully enmeshed in household life. One context in which the persons and roles of slave women come to the fore is in the deathbed wills and testimonies of their owners. In one such document, a gravely ill woman writes to her sister:

My lady, my sister, I inform you—may God make me your ransom—that I have fallen seriously ill with remote hope for recovery.

My lady, I (hereby) relate my will to you, if almighty God decrees my death. Take care of my little daughter and strive to give her an education, although I know that I am imposing on you excessively. (For) there is—I swear by my father—no money to provide maintenance for (the little girl), *let alone (for her) education. But she has a model in the saintly lady (our mother)*. Do not let her appear in public. Do not neglect her nurse, Sa‘ādah, or her son. And do not separate them from her, because they are fond of her (*li-anna-hā taḥannū ‘alay-hā*) and I have willed the Sudanese (nurse) to her.

However, the younger maidservant, ‘Afāf, shall be given to Sitt al-Sirr—but nothing else—and this only after your debts to Abū Sa‘d and others have been paid. Cursed be he who acts against my dying wish.

(I say this), for I have noticed more than once that you favor the elder (daughter) over the younger one. But you know that I took an oath more than once—and the last one in her presence—not to will anything to Sitt al-Sirr, for reasons that cannot be mentioned, but about which you know.

My lady, let Abū al-Barakāt—may I be his ransom—come and attend to me, for I am in distress. Do not act against anything I have mentioned to you all. When it comes to the elder slave woman—cursed be he who separates her and my younger daughter—(there shall be) no sale or anything else. My lady, only God knows how I wrote these lines!¹

¹ New York: ENA NS 48.6 (formerly JTS Genizah Misc., 6). Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135. My translation differs in some minor aspects from S. D. Goitein, “Side Lights on Jewish Education from the Cairo Genizah,” in *Gratz College Anniversary Volume*, ed. Isidore David Passow and Samuel Tobias Lachs (Philadelphia: Gratz

The contents of this last will and testament illustrate how the author conceived of the role that her slave woman played in the rearing of her youngest daughter. She refers to the Sudanese slave woman Sa‘ādah as both the family’s child-nurse (*dādah*) and, more generically, as the elder slave-girl (*al-jāriyah al-kabīrah*). The writer does not mention the kinds of work that Sa‘ādah or the maid (*waṣīfah*) ‘Afāf performed in the household beyond giving the daughter an education. However, the use of the term *dādah*, and the clear description of the attachment between the youngest daughter and Sa‘ādah indicate that Sa‘ādah was involved in child-rearing. The mother clearly states the intimate emotional connection between the child-nurse and her young charge, and there are other clues in the letter that indicate Sa‘ādah’s role as care-taker to the soon-to-be-orphaned girl.²

The author is suspicious of her own female blood relations whom she might normally call upon to help raise her younger unmarried daughter. The only relative whom the writer praises is her own mother; it is not clear that she is still alive or able to care for the younger daughter. The dying woman evinces a wary ambivalence toward her elder daughter (Sitt al-

College, 1971), 85–87. The document is undated, but Goitein suggests a possible date range for this document based on the mention of a woman with the uncommon name Sitt al-Sirr. She appears in a marriage contract (ENA NS 48.18) written in the scribal hand of Ḥalfon b. Menashshe who was active between 1100–1138. Goitein also speculates in his commentary on ENA NS 48.6 that the dying mother was entrusting the education of her daughter to the slave, Sa‘ādah herself. The document gives no explicit evidence that this was the case, however. See *Ibid.*, 86. Oded Zinger noted in a private communication that there is no indication of the sex of the author despite Goitein’s observation that the writer was a woman. The tone of the letter does, however, strongly suggest that it was written from one sister to another. The letter is also unsigned and has no address listed on the verso. In all likelihood, ENA NS 48.6 is a draft or copy. Considering the careful hand of the scribe in this document, the marginal insertion on the verso of the phrase “*wal-yamīn al-akhīrah kānat bi-ḥada[rati-hā]*” may have prompted him to recopy the entire will. On the subject of deathbed wills and testaments more generally, see S. D. Goitein, “Dispositions in Contemplation of Death: A Geniza Study,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 46/47 (1979): 155–78. Note the discussion of slavery on p. 156. See also Yosef Rivlin, *Inheritance and Wills in Jewish Law*, in Hebrew (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1999).

² ENA NS 48.6.

Sirr) and sister. She insists on the terms of her inheritance, ordering that the younger maidservant, ‘Afāf, be given to Sitt al-Sirr, “but nothing else,” and “only after your debts to Abū Sa‘d and others have been paid.”³ She also writes rather directly to her sister having noticed “more than once” her favoritism toward Sitt al-Sirr over her younger daughter.⁴

Our author appears to trust the Sudanese slave, Sa‘ādah, more than anyone in her youngest daughter’s upbringing. The relationship and trust between her and her older daughter, Sitt al-Sirr, are clearly damaged, and she sought to compensate for what she viewed as unreliable support from her natural kin by insisting that her “elder servant,” Sa‘ādah, be supported and attached to her younger daughter.

This example is part of a larger pattern that appears repeatedly in Genizah documents involving female slaves and their owners. It is not at all uncommon to find slave women surfacing within Jewish households in medieval Egypt at the most crucial and intimate of life’s moments, particularly at times of illness and death. The role and status of the Sudanese child-nurse Sa‘ādah is typical of mistress-slave relations across the Genizah corpus. Female slaves functioned not only as caretakers for their mistresses and their children, but also as their protégés and extensions of their legacies.⁵ While slaves and their mistresses also came into conflict, female domestic slavery generally served the interests of free women, performing

³ Ibid., 13-16.

⁴ ENA NS 48.6v, ll. 1-5 and right margin.

⁵ Goitein viewed the “practice of buying little slave girls, bringing them up in the Jewish faith, and then liberating them, equipped with means for a livelihood” as an “innovation” of medieval Jewish culture. See S. D. Goitein, “Human Rights in Jewish Thought and Life in the Middle Ages,” in *Essays on Human Rights: Contemporary Issues and Jewish Perspectives*, ed. David Sidorsky (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 252. While I do not agree with Goitein’s assessment that Jews’ manumission of slaves was an innovation, what he describes is attested in the Genizah. See the discussion below.

valuable labor for the household and alleviating their burdens, much more than those of their male spouses and relatives. Freedom from work, especially from labor outside the home, was a marker of social status.

What this means is that women, not only men, used slavery to construct and assert mastery, honor, and social prestige. The ways in which men and women did this, however, differ in the Genizah corpus. An analysis of how free women used slavery to advance their own self-interest demonstrates the ways in which mastery itself is gendered.⁶ In the case of medieval Egypt, as was the case in many other slave systems, female slave owners gained social status from the exploitation of slave women.

II. Slave Women as Practical Kin

Slaves such as Sa'ādah served as caretakers for children and for their adult owners alike. The thirteenth-century testimony of one dying mistress paints her relationship with her slave in poignant terms.⁷ Sitt al-Dalāl lay ill in her bed surrounded by witnesses. She said to the assembled group: "I inform you that she, my slave woman Munā, has attended graciously to me during this and previous illnesses in ways that my mother and sister have not done. Now witness that this slave woman shall not be sold, bought, or harmed."⁸ In addition to

⁶ Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30 (1955): 321–66; Ruth Mazo Karras, "Desire, Descendants, and Dominance: Slavery, the Exchange of Women, and Masculine Power," in *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery, and Labor in Medieval England* (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1994), 16–29; Sally McKee, "Greek Women in Latin Households of Fourteenth-Century Venetian Crete," *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993): 229–49; Sally McKee, "Households in Fourteenth-Century Venetian Crete," *Speculum* 70 (1955): 27–67; Marmon, "Domestic Slavery"; Sally McKee, "Inherited Status and Slavery in Late Medieval Italy and Venetian Crete," *Past & Present* 182 (2004): 31–53; Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*; Richardson, "Singing Slave Girls"; Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society."

⁷ T-S Misc.25.107. Goitein discusses this document in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 144. There he cites it as T-S Box 25, f. 107. See also the partial transcription in Rivlin, *Inheritance and Wills*, 394–396.

⁸ T-S Misc.25.107, ll. 12–15. Sitt al-Dalāl enjoins that Munā shall not be sold, bought, "*wa-lā tadām*." Goitein indicated this to mean that "nor be molested in any way (that is, not be taken as a concubine)." He seems to have

caring for young children, slave women were called upon to attend to their mistresses when the latter were incapable of taking care of themselves, and when their own kin could not, or would not, come to their aid.

Slave women like Munā and Sa‘ādah functioned in relation to their mistresses as what Pierre Bourdieu calls “practical kin.”⁹ Bourdieu’s distinction between “practical kinship” and “official kinship” (or genealogical kinship) highlights the difference between relationships based on usefulness and reciprocity (practical kinship) and those based on an idealized typology of relations (official kinship).¹⁰ In this sense, practical kinship comes into being and is perpetuated through meaningful actions on the part of those with working social ties. In instances when official, genealogical kin would not perform the duties that family members required, or were too far away to perform them, a woman turned to her slave as a practical kin.

Ties of practical kinship in many ways mirror the pervasive patron-client relationships that ordered the medieval Islamic world. Roy Mottahedeh and Marina Rustow have illustrated how people spoke in the language of patronage and relied on the expectation of

misread this passage, however, or worked from a faulty transcription. His note to his translation indicates that he read “*taṣāb*” and not “*taḍām*.” He refers to an entry in Dozy to justify his translation implying sexual exploitation. See Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Beirut: Librairie Liban, 1968), I: 850b. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 144; 436, n. 92. Rivlin transcribes the word as “*taṣām*,” and notes Goitein’s mistake in his own note. Rivlin does not note that this scribe uses dots above the *tsadi* to denote a *dahd*, as he clearly does in this word and above the *gimmel* in *jāriyah*. See Rivlin, *Inheritance and Wills*, 395–396.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 33–38. Eve Krakowski observes how family marriages documented in the Genizah could serve “to transform empty ‘official kinship ties’ into living bonds of ‘practical kinship’ - rather than to strengthen an already cohesive family unit.” See Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” 161. Mistress-slave relationships have a different dynamic, but the tension between ‘practical’ and “empty ‘official kinship’” ties is highly relevant.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 33–38.

mutual benefit and loyalty that these relationships implied.¹¹ Free women's ties to their slaves also reflect a degree of reciprocity.

The exchange of subordination for protection also parallels the status of non-Muslims in the Islamic state. Jews and Christians were protected and recognized as belonging to licit religions provided that they acknowledged and performed their social inferiority.¹² Implicit for slaves in the Islamic world in such reciprocal exchanges of subordination for protection was the opportunity of emancipation. Free women used the implicit promise of manumission as a means to project their own social prestige and piety. Slave owning allowed free women to protect their own interests by forcing slaves to perform labor and go out into public on their behalf.

III. Slave Girls as Protégés and Legacies

Even after a mistress's death, or a slave's manumission, slaves and freed women continued to serve as vehicles for their owners' or former owners' legacies. In a last will and testament given from her death bed, the wealthy woman Sitt al-Ḥusn sought to ensure the manumission and material well-being of her two young slave girls Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr. Sitt al-Ḥusn's will indicates that she was a woman of some means, since she left behind considerable property and ample provision for her burial expenses. She was also married

¹¹ Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, 2001 reprint (London: I.B. Tauris, 1980); Marina Rustow, "Formal and Informal Patronage among Jews in the Islamic East: Evidence from the Cairo Genizah," *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 29, no. 2 (2008): 341–82.

¹² *EI* 2, s.v. "dhimma"; *EJIW*, s.v. "dhimma", and the bibliography provided there.

(after a previous divorce) to the respected scholar Natan b. Shemu'el, a man known by his honorific title “Diadem of the Scholars” (*nezer ha-ḥaverim*).¹³

It appears that Sitt al-Ḥusn had no surviving children, since no blood relatives besides her second husband are mentioned in her will. In fact, the first parties she mentions as her heirs are her “virgin slaves Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr” (*al-juwār al-abkār*).¹⁴ The will states that the two slave girls are to be freed after their mistress's death and given one-quarter of the house she owned in partnership with a deceased associate. Sitt al-Ḥusn then adds to her bequest an intriguing stipulation: “She gave to the community one-half of the house in which she had lived, (so that) the two slave girls [could live there] for the rest of both of their [lives]—in the part that belongs to the community (and) where the will was witnessed—on the condition that the slave girls profess the Jewish faith.”¹⁵ A final stipulation regarding the slave girls' inheritance is made at the end of the will: “If something should remain from the income of one-eighth of the aforementioned house (which Sitt al-Ḥusn instructed her executor to sell in order to pay for her burial expenses), it shall be given to the slave girls mentioned above; likewise, (they shall be given) all clothing suitable for women.” What were

¹³ T-S 13J22.2. See Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 8; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135, 138; II: 244, 416; III: 273, 411; IV: 353, 358; V: 147–149.

¹⁴ In medieval Judaeo-Arabic and Arabic, one frequently finds *al-juwār* in lieu of *al-juwārī* as the plural noun “slave girls” (or “slave women”).

¹⁵ T-S 13J22.2, ll. 23–28. My translation differs from Goitein's version. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 147–149. Goitein includes the sentence: “Both the gift and the permission to live in the house depended upon this condition.” I believe that this was intended to be his own comment upon the text and not a part of his translation.

Sitt al-Ḥusn's motivations for indicating such concern for the manumission and maintenance of her two slaves?¹⁶

Sitt al-Ḥusn's provisions are expressions of the values she wished to project. Both medieval Jewish and Islamic traditions viewed the manumission of slaves as an expression of piety.¹⁷ Additionally, one-half of Sitt al-Ḥusn's house was designated *lil-qodesh* (as a pious foundation for communal purposes). A bequest to the community was a charitable act in perpetuity, since the property could be rented and these proceeds administered to aid community members in need.¹⁸

At the same time, Sitt al-Ḥusn's provisions for Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr are unusually generous.¹⁹ Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr receive, albeit conditionally, lodging and a potential income from a portion of the house, in addition to Sitt al-Ḥusn's wardrobe (which, given her wealth, would have been of great value). In this instance, the slaves are receiving both their freedom and material support in a manner that exceeds normal expectations associated with the act of manumission or of deathbed bequeathal.

¹⁶ The Mālikī and Ḥanafī schools of Islamic law provided legal frameworks for masters to will a charitable endowment (*waqf*) to their freed slaves. See Ron Shaham, "Masters, Their Freed Slaves, and the Waqf in Egypt (Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43 (2000): 162–88. Shaham observes that in many such cases the masters, who willed a *waqf* to their freed slaves, were childless. He argues that this practice reflects the fictive kin ties between masters and slaves (also freedmen) and that slaves gained social and economic protections through such ties. See also Mary Ann Fay, "Women and Waqf: Toward a Reconsideration of Women's Place in the Mamluk Household," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 33–51. Sitt al-Ḥusn's actions also provide an interesting comparison to Bodl. MS Heb. f. 56.12, in which a man sells his servant (*waṣīf*) to pay for his burial expenses.

¹⁷ For the Islamic context, see Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 5–6. *EI* 2, s.v. "‘abd."

¹⁸ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 99–103. Goitein generally translates *al-qodesh* as "communal chest". On the *qodesh*, see Moshe Gil, "Maintenance, Building Operations, and Repairs in the Houses of the Qodesh in Fustat: A Genizah Study," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14 (1971): 136–95.

¹⁹ There are additional examples in which freed slaves receive lodging from their mistresses. In one case, a former owner also asked her freed woman to relinquish part of the property she had been granted. ENA NS 16.11. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 134. Manumission and its conditions are discussed in chapter four.

Further still, Sitt al-Ḥusn's deathbed will reflects an investment in the young slave girls' economic and social futures. Why note that Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr are virgins? What is the meaning of the clothing she gives to the girls? And how do we understand the provision that the two soon-to-be freed women profess Judaism? If we consider that family slaves often functioned as practical kin, then Sitt al-Ḥusn's actions and stipulations make better sense. It seems likely, as Goitein suggests, that the woman viewed (or at least treated) these two slaves as practical kin—as her own daughters, essentially. The assertion that the two girls were virgins serves to confirm their chastity and moral redoubt and also to mark them as eligible for marriage to free, upstanding Jewish men. The bequest of clothing represents both material status and the bestowal of honor and status upon the two girls, who are moving from the generally dishonored status of slavery to nascent full membership in Egyptian Jewish society.²⁰

Sitt al-Ḥusn's stipulation that the girls live as Jews underscores an ostensible motivation behind their emancipation. Such a condition should be understood as a strategy to further ensconce the two girls within the Jewish community where Sitt al-Ḥusn's (and her husband "the Diadem's") high status was a social currency that could help ensure them matches to suitable spouses and some modicum of social standing. In these ways, Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr appear as part and parcel of Sitt al-Ḥusn's legacy. In its entirety, the deed of inheritance is focused on creating such a legacy. By bequeathing one-half of her house to the community, Sitt al-Ḥusn ensured a perpetual source of rental income that could be used for communal interests and charity. By selling another one-eighth of the house for a proper,

²⁰ Cf. T-S NS 321.54 and the discussion of it in chapter four. A communal welfare official (*parnas*) attempts to enlist aid finding a marital match for the freed women Mubārakah.

dignified burial, Sitt al-Ḥusn took a step to shore up her own individual legacy. In fact, the will states that if the proceeds from the sale of one-eighth of the house were not sufficient to pay for her funeral (including her “burial garment, coffin, cantors, tomb, and pall-bearers, and all (other) burial expenses”), then her husband should sell an ornamented headband for the extra expenses.²¹ But in the social universe that Sitt al-Ḥusn was soon to leave behind, one conspicuous element was missing from her legacy: offspring. “The virgin slaves Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr” took the place of natal children as bearers of this wealthy woman’s legacy.

IV. Slave Names and the Projection of Social Prestige

Personal slave names such as Dhahab (lit. Gold) and Sitt al-Sumr (Lady of Brownness) are one of the most common pieces of information found in last wills and testimonies, bills of sale, and other records concerning slavery. Other female slave names such as Gazelle (Ghazāl), Success (Tawfiq), Incense (Rahj) and Dexterity (Ḥidhq) appear with relative frequency, and what they have in common is that they reflect what slave owners valued in their slaves, or what they wanted their slave-owning to project.²² In addition to bills of sale and writs of manumission, family letters also refer to a slave by her personal name, although less

²¹ T-S 13J22.2v, ll. 3-8. An “*iṣābah*,” possibly a turban.

²² For *Ghazāl*, see British Library: OR 5566C16 and ENA 4011.62v. It’s possible that these documents refer to the same slave woman. Tawfiq: ENA 4020.11 and T-S NS 320.42. There are at least five mentions of this name in the documentary Genizah corpus. Dhahab: T-S 13J22.2 and T-S 12.140. Rahj: T-S 13J2.20 and ENA 4011.63. “To perfume a room” and “incense” are just two meanings of the Arabic *Rahj* (written in Judaeo-Arabic script in the Genizah documents). Goitein wrote that the name signified another secondary meaning - arsenic. He speculated that Arsenic was chosen “possibly called so because of her light, silvery-white complexion. See Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 9. Goitein also translates *Rahj* as “Arsenic” consistently in *A Mediterranean Society*. I suggest that “Incense” or “Perfume” was more likely the meaning intended. There are several other slave names mentioned in Genizah sources that mean perfume, or allude to pleasant scents. See for example, Nāshiyah (T-S 8J12.2) and ‘Abīr (T-S 8J8.4). The notion that Nubian slave women had “silvery-white” complexions is not convincing. Further, as I argue below, slave names generally reflect the owner’s own values and projections, and not the slave’s phenotype. Ḥidhq: T-S 16.188 and T-S 20.93.

frequently than in legal sources, and these provide valuable information about the slave onomasticon. In family and business letters, slaves are more commonly identified merely as “slave woman,” since the writer assumes the recipient either knows the slave in question or does not need to know her name.

Slave-names given by masters illustrate how slave owners both imagined themselves and projected their self-image onto their slaves. Rather than consider slave-names as accurate descriptors of a slave’s personality or appearance, one should interpret these names as reflections upon their owners’ social status and aspirations. Since slaves were expensive, it is no surprise that Jewish slave owners generally belonged to the upper and middle classes. This fact explains why we find so many bills of sale, marriage trousseaus, and letters in the Genizah that mention slaves at all.²³

Slave names reveal patterns that fit into a tripartite typology. In the first category are slaves with names that conveyed socio-economic status and well-being. As a case in point, the most frequently attested slave name in the Genizah corpus is Success (Tawfiq). Another name that projects the self-image and aspirations of the owner is Prodigality (Saraf). Both male and female slaves were also given names such as Prosperity (Sa’d and Sa’adah).²⁴ In these cases,

²³ In some cases, the personal names used for slaves overlap with components in free women’s names. E. g. Ghazāl is a name used for slaves relatively frequently in the Islamicate context. In the Genizah, we also find mention of free women named Sitt al-Ghazāl. See for example, Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 347–348.

²⁴ See T-S 18J1.30 (Sa’adah) and BL Or. 10653.5 (Sa’d) in which a slave mother and her son are sold. See also the male slave name Fortune (Muwaffaq) in T-S 16.15.

slave ownership is made possible by an individual's (or family's) socio-economic status and also serves as an outward symbol of this affluence.²⁵

A second category of slave names encompasses myriad variations on the themes of luxury and sensuality. Slave names such as Gazelle, Queen of the Dark Brown (Sitt al-Sumr), Wild Rose (Nasrīn), Perfume ('Abīr) and Elegance (Ẓarf) emphasize luxury goods and qualities that have sensual undertones. While these names are most commonly given to female slaves, male slaves also bear names of luxury items such as Pearl (Durrī) and Turquoise (Fayrūz).²⁶ Similarly to the names that convey socio-economic status, these names may also mark the trappings of material success and fine living. Other names in the second category—Gazelle, Queen of the Dark Brown and Wild Rose—suggest that slaves were viewed by their masters as adornments, even if they were classed as maids and servants who were expected to perform day-to-day household labor such as fetching water, cleaning, and cooking.

A third category of slave names is distinguished by its emphasis on personal qualities that had cultural resonance and prestige. These names include Quick (Sanskrit, Ashū), Knowledge ('Ilm), Intelligence (Ḥidhq), Sincere (Ṣāfi), Fidelity (Wafā') and Cleanliness (Ṭuhr).²⁷ This subset of names less clearly asserts the material status and aspirations of the slave owner. Instead, slave names like Knowledge and Dexterity project cultural and social

²⁵ The practice of master's giving their slaves names that emphasize the owner's own self-image in a different historical context, see Rivkah Harris, "Notes on the Slave Names of Old Babylonian Sippar," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 29, no. 1 (1977): 46–51.

²⁶ Sitt al-Sumr: T-S 13J22.2 and T-S AS 147.23. Nasrīn: T-S 13J3.7, T-S NS 309.12 and T-S NS J357. 'Abīr: T-S 8J8.4. Ẓarf: T-S 16.15. Durrī: ENA 4011.41. Fayrūz: Bodl. MS Heb. b. 13.39 and T-S 13J33.10.

²⁷ Ashū: SPIOS D55.10. 'Ilm: T-S 10J11.31 and T-S 20.41. Ṣāfi: T-S 12.582. Wafā': F 1908.44SS (old: Gottheil-Worrell XLV). Ṭuhr: T-S 10J17.3. Goitein translates Ḥidhq as "Dexterity." The root implies dexterity of mind, or cleverness. Thus "Intelligence" or "Cleverness" is a better translation. Thanks to Jennifer Grayson for suggesting this alternate translation of Ḥidhq.

prestige. The name Blessed (Mubārak, Mubārah, Berakha) is also given to male and female slaves (and also manumitted slaves and free persons).²⁸ This particular name is meant to express the piety of the owner. As I discuss below, slaves were occasionally manumitted or protected in various ways by their masters (sometimes from their deathbeds) in pious terms. The name Blessed is consistent with this behavior—specifically when a master or mistress intends to project piety through his treatment of a slave. Collectively, these names indicate circumspection in morals and behavior as well as a certain efficacy and industriousness in trade and labor. Certainly, these may be qualities that a master hoped his slave would embody, but the traits are also ones that a slave owner would want to project outwardly.

While slave names speak most clearly about the masters themselves, the same names can reveal much about the nature and experience of slavery with what they *lack*. Slave names conspicuously lack any kind of genealogical patronymic (Ar. *nasab*) that we see in names of free persons who appear in the Genizah. The lack of this information speaks volumes about the predicament of slaves as “naturally alienated” beings - persons who have been removed from the natural kin and social networks that had previously ordered their lives.²⁹

Consider the most common and detailed appellations of slave names in bills of sale from the Genizah. A representative sample documents the sale of a slave-girl by two brothers to their sister Zayn Sitt al-Dār in the year 1105. The subject of the sale is identified briefly as

²⁸ Mubārak: T-S 16.20. The Mubārak mentioned in ENA 2727.28 could be a slave or a free (manumitted) servant. Mubārah: T-S K 15.113 and T-S NS 321.54 (a freedwoman). Berakha is the name the Jewish merchant Abraham ibn Yijū gave to his slave Ashū when he manumitted her. See SPIOs D55.10 and the discussion in Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 55–57, 632–633.

²⁹ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 35–65.

“the slave-girl (*jāriyah*)” after her price is enumerated and then briefly as “the Nubian, the one known as Dexterity.”³⁰ Other bills of sale do not mention the personal name of the slave anywhere in the document. Another slave transferred between parties in the mid-thirteenth century is referred to only as “an Abyssinian slave-girl.”³¹ Despite the variations in how slave names are written in documents of sale, no slave appears with a name as fully articulated as their free counterparts.

What female slave names lack is best understood by analyzing the name of a free woman. The pregnant slave woman ‘Ushshāq was sold for fifteen dinars in an undated bill of sale. In the document, ‘Ushshāq is identified only by her personal name (*ism*) and as “this slave woman” (*hādhihi al-jāriyah*). This particular bill of sale does not record ‘Ushshāq’s *jins*.³² The brevity of ‘Ushshāq’s name, and of all slave names, is made even more conspicuous when compared to the names of their free masters. For example, the buyer in this transaction is the woman Sitt al-Ḥusn (daughter of [our] teacher) Avraham, the wife ([our] t[eacher]) Yefet. The seller was another woman who is identified as Sitt al-Fakhr daughter of (our) teacher Ya‘aqov ha-Kohen.³³

There are multiple components to the names of the two free women identified in this bill of sale.³⁴ As ‘Ushshāq does, both women have personal names (*isms*) that are meant to honor them. In this respect, Ḥusn (beauty) and Fakhr (glory) could easily be used on their

³⁰ T-S 16.188. For a similar formulation, see T-S 18J1.12 where a man sells “my slave-girl (*jārīatī*) Salt (Milḥ) the Nubian” for fifteen dinars.

³¹ T-S 6J1.32.

³² T-S 13J6.7, ll. 1, 3.

³³ T-S 13J6.7, ll. 6, 12.

³⁴ For an overview of naming practices in the Islamic world, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989).

own as slave names.³⁵ But in these cases, the *isms* are preceded by the title *Sitt al-*(Lady of) and thus the women's *isms* are Lady of Beauty and Lady of Glory. Such a construction is rarely used for slaves in the Genizah. The only known example is Sitt al-Sumr (Lady of Dark Brownness, or Lady of the Dark Brown); though a freedwoman named Sitt al-Rūm (Lady of the Byzantines) is also attested.³⁶ But "lady of" is applied differently to free women and slaves: for slaves, the construction stresses their foreign, exotic origins, while for free women, it dignifies and lends authority to their personal names.

The most meaningful difference between the names of the slave and the free is the use of a *nasab*, or genealogical patronymic. Sitt al-Ḥusn is the *daughter of* Avraham and Sitt al-Fakhr, the daughter of Ya‘aqov ha-Kohen. The *nasab* articulates vertical kinship relationships, which constituted a potentially significant aspect of these two women's social identities. Both their fathers also share the common honorific "teacher" (*rav*) prefixed to their names. Further, Sitt al-Fakhr is marked as the descendant of a Kohen, an identification that indicated certain religious prerogatives.³⁷ Sitt al-Ḥusn is identified as the wife (*zawjah*) of *rav* Yefet, a further marker of her social position.

Not all kin networks were effective social ties. But when they were strong, kinship ties provided women protectors and advocates that could be crucial to their well-being before and

³⁵ In fact, Fakhr is the name of a slave woman who converted to Judaism, married a Jewish man, bore him a daughter, and then subsequently divorced. BL Or. 10588.3. See chapter two and chapter four.

³⁶ T-S 13J22.2. There is a slave named Sumr sold in T-S AS 147.23. As I discuss in chapter four, it is probable that these two documents refer to the same slave. Sitt al-Sumr (T-S 13J22.2) is also discussed in chapter two. Sitt al-Rūm (Lady of the Byzantines): T-S 10J4.9 and T-S 12.8. See the discussion in chapter four.

³⁷ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 266.

after their first marriage.³⁸ Regardless, it is clear that patronymics state something that free persons may well have taken for granted: an insider status and belonging that stand in stark contrast to the slave's position as an outsider and natively alienated being.

The erasure of genealogy is a persistent feature of slavery over time and it is most apparent in what slave names lack. This omission signals the erasure of a slave's native kin network and prior social belonging. Such deracination makes the position of the slave one of general vulnerability and dependence upon the master. As innocuous as slave names appear in Genizah records, they speak to one of the central traumas of slavery: the forcible removal of the slave from the familial and social ties that previously ordered her existence.

An important corollary to the slave's natal alienation is the owner's mastery and control of his slave. The lack of natural kinship ties is more than just symbolic of the slave's vulnerability and outsider status. Kin relations provided free persons, especially women, with a network of protectors and intercessors in a society that was profoundly ordered by these relationships. Male kin were expected to provide for their female relatives in times of distress. Free women often relied upon this monetary and social support and noted when its absence negatively impacted them.³⁹ Natal alienation meant that slaves were excised from such networks and, thus, reliant upon their masters. In this manner, such alienation served as a

³⁸ Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 213–217.

³⁹ Two recent dissertations demonstrate how strong natal kinship relations could be mobilized in support of a woman's interests and rights. Krakowski, "Female Adolescence"; Oded Zinger, "Women, Gender and Law: Marital Disputes According to Documents from the Cairo Geniza" (PhD Diss., Princeton University, in process). See also a document discussed in chapter three. In Budapest: 232.1 the wife of Abū al-Faraj describes how conflict with her husband is compounded by the fact that her father cannot support her and her brother is not a forceful personality.

means of social control because it heightened and crystallized the dependency of the slave.⁴⁰ Such dependency solidified the master's possession of his chattel. Thus when owners refer to their slaves in letters and legal documents, there is no need or basis for referring to them as anything other than "*jārīyatī*" (my slave) or "*jārīyatuhu*" (his slave). Letters do mention slaves by their personal *isms*, but they just as often refer to a specific slave by his or her classification - *jāriyah*, *waṣifah*, or *ghulām* (a male slave business agent). Free people are most often identified in legal documents and letters according to their personal *ism* and their *nasab*. Slaves do not appear simply as non-persons; but slave names (and their absence) demonstrate that slaves were not considered full persons and members of medieval Egyptian Jewish society.

V. Domestic Slave Labor

Thus far, I have emphasized the social value of slavery in order to highlight one aspect of slavery's dynamics in medieval Egypt: its symbolic function. Yet such an emphasis risks minimizing the daily labor that slaves were also purchased to perform. However, when we try to describe the precise nature of female work before 1250, we encounter the limits of the medieval sources. Although the Genizah is enormously rich in information for the period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, it sheds surprisingly little light on the topic of domestic labor. As Goitein notes, the discussion of female domestic work "is all but absent

⁴⁰ For an interesting reversal of these roles, see a responsum of Abraham Maimonides in A.H. Freimann and S.D. Goitein, eds., *Abraham Maimuni: Responsa* (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1937), 149–153, no. 98. Here a manumitted slave extends material support to his former mistress at a time of her economic distress.

from Genizah records.”⁴¹ The reason so few Genizah documents discuss domestic labor in highly specific terms is likely that the authors of these documents took the nature of household work for granted. Despite this general trend, the Genizah does shed some valuable light on the topic of domestic work.

The terminology that Jews in medieval Egypt used for slaves suggests that there were different designations for them based on the types of labor they might perform. While the Sudanese slave Sa‘ādah is the only one who appears in a Genizah document as a child-nurse (a *dādah*), other sources describe the child-care duties of slave women.⁴² The more common Arabic terms used to denote slave women are *jāriyah* and *waṣīfah*.⁴³ At first glance, these two terms appear to be interchangeable, but there is evidence that they may be used differently in certain contexts. Sa‘ādah, for example, is described as both a *dādah* and a *jāriyah* for the younger daughter of the dying woman I discussed above, while the slave designated for her older daughter, Sitt al-Sirr, is called a *waṣīfah*. A wedding dowry for an extremely wealthy bride also lists four slaves of whom two, ‘Izz and Dalāl, are described as *juwār* (a plural form of

⁴¹ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 129, 134–135. Goitein is only slightly exaggerating, as I explain below. Maya Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 347. As Shatzmiller notes, the sources on women’s labor in the Islamic world proliferate after the 13th century. Krakowski also finds this to be true. See Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” 54. See also Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 13–15; Shaun Elizabeth Marmon, *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: M. Wiener, 1999), 9. Matthew S. Gordon observes that the study of Islamicate slavery has privileged two groups of slaves, elite female singers (*qiyān*) and Turkish military commanders, and focused far less on domestic slavery. See “A Life-Course Approach,” 71.

⁴² Sa‘ādah: ENA NS 48.6. See above. The Nubian slave (*jāriyah*) Sha‘ith is described by Goitein as a nurse. She is not referred to as such in the deed of quittance that mentions her. Her child-care duties are described, however. See T-S 16.134, ll. 16–18. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135, n. 26.

⁴³ *Jāriyah* is by far the most common designation—a term whose connotations emphasize the running to and fro that these slave women performed in household duties. In rare instances, *jāriyah* may also refer to a girl who is not a slave. See T-S Ar. 54.78, an engagement agreement in which the future bride, a young girl, is referred to as a *jāriyah*. Thanks to Oded Zinger for bringing this document to my attention. The overwhelming majority of *jāriyahs* mentioned in Genizah letters, however, are slave women. The document-type and context of *jāriyah*’s usage are sufficient to determine whether or not “slave-girl” or “young girl” is intended. The Hebrew term *shifḥah* is also used and, rarely, the Aramaic term *amta*.

jāriyah), while the other two, Nusā and Wafā, are described as “*waṣīfatayn* (sic),” a misspelling of the dual form *waṣīfatayn*, or two *waṣīfahs*. The juxtaposition of these two terms suggests that they were meant to differentiate between the roles of these slave women. Goitein’s suggestion that the *juwār* were “kitchen maids” and the *waṣīfahs* “personal attendants” seems to be a plausible interpretation of this document.⁴⁴ *Jāriyah* does, however, describe more than slaves who worked in the kitchen or did other manual labor. The term can also describe slave women who were personal attendants.⁴⁵ The juxtaposition of these terms, as in the trousseau of this rich woman, suggests that slaves performed various types of household labor, and that owners sometimes differentiated between slaves on the basis of this work.

Mardūk b. Mūsā’s urgent request to Nahray b. Nissīm for a slave suggests the inconvenience created when there was no woman in the home to take care of domestic duties, including labor and child care-taking.⁴⁶ His complaint also illustrates shared assumptions about the labor of slave women: “I do not have any one to bring me a cup of water. I am in the utmost need of someone to serve me.... Please, my lord, secure for me a slave woman who is suitable for domestic service.”⁴⁷ The phrase “slave woman for domestic service” (*jāriyah lil-khidmah*) is used in other Genizah sources to emphasize the role of female servants. The term is also frequently used by writers who wish to emphasize that a slave is not

⁴⁴ T-S J1.29. The precise identity of this bride (and her groom) is unknown. The document is in the hand of Natan b. Shemu’el (ca. 1128-1153). See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135, 432; III: 125, 129; IV: 298–305, 380–381, 322–325.

⁴⁵ See the case of the free woman Sitt al-Dalāl and her *jāriyah* Munā below.

⁴⁶ T-S 12.254.

⁴⁷ T-S 12.254, left margin, l. 5ff.

a concubine, or, conversely, to suggest that the slave is probably a concubine.⁴⁸ In these cases, however, the authors do not elaborate on what specific work domestic service included.⁴⁹

Goitein is not, then, entirely correct that the discussion of female domestic labor is absent from the Genizah. Certainly the evidence is extremely thin when compared with the detailed records that discuss mercantile work.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, recent work by Eve Krakowski on the economics of female adolescence demonstrates that the Genizah contains more information about women's domestic labor than has been assumed.⁵¹ Krakowski points out that free adolescent females were taught to produce textiles that could be used within the family, as part of a wedding dowry. This work included spinning flax and wool, as well as embroidery. These activities were viewed as a contribution to the overall household economy. There is no direct indication in the Genizah that slave women did textile work, but it would

⁴⁸ This idea is phrased slightly different in various sources. For example, Mardūk requests that Nahray “*yahasas li fi jārīyah taṣlah lil-khidmah*”, or “secure for me a slave woman who is suitable for domestic service.” The authors of T-S 10K8.13 and DK 231.2, legal queries to Abraham Maimonides discussed below, write about slave women who are concubines and not “*jārīyah khidmah*” – slave women who perform domestic service. The slave woman Ghazāl is also returned to “the service” (*khidmah*) of her master's house. See BL Or. 5566C16, l. 2.

⁴⁹ Goitein and Miriam Frenkel both discuss the labor performed by a servant identified only as Mubārak in ENA 2727.28, verso, l. 13ff. This early twelfth-century letter was composed in Acre shortly after Crusaders conquered the city. The writer is thankful for Mubārak's labor: “He is the groom, he takes care of the bedding, he is the cook, he does the washing and he looks after my wardrobe”. While these tasks may reflect common domestic tasks, Mubārak is not described as a “slave” in this document. The name Mubārak is common for converts to Judaism – both slave and free. The labor Mubārak performs, however, is probably indicative of what many slaves did for their owners. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 132; Frenkel, “Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society,” 251.

⁵⁰ Jessica L. Goldberg, “On Reading Goitein's *A Mediterranean Society: A View from Economic History*,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 26 (2011): 171–86; Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*; Goitein and Friedman, *Joseph Lebdi*; Goitein and Friedman, *Abraham Ben Yijū*, 2010; Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*; Goitein and Friedman, *Ḥalfon*.

⁵¹ However, Krakowski also agrees with Goitein and Schatzmiller that there is a relative dearth of specific information. Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” 54.

have been another way that they could have contributed to the household economy in a manner that supported the interests of free women.⁵²

Wedding documents, too, suggest specific tasks that women were expected to perform. In one post-nuptial agreement recorded (ca. 1000) in the Egyptian city of Madīnat al-Fayyūm, the woman Salmah bat Natan is reconciled to her husband, Ibrāhīm b. Salām.⁵³ Ibrāhīm testifies that Salmah had demonstrated great condescension toward him and his relatives. At some point, Salmah even tore up their wedding contract. She eventually showed contrition and asked that she be reconciled to her husband, taking upon herself “to be neat and not refuse to do any housework.... She will honor, respect, and serve him and not sit idly in his house, but work the flax and wool and attend to the needs of her home, (such as) making the dough and preparing food.”⁵⁴ The activities of spinning and food preparation feature here as the prime examples of what it meant for a woman to “attend to the needs of her home.”

More data about domestic slave labor can also be culled from reports about women’s work from outside of the Genizah. As in Jewish households, the most common female

⁵² Ibid., chap. 1. Krakowski demonstrates that textile production was “(t)he paramount field of female labor...” See also the responsum of Yosef b. Abitur: “She spins in their house every day, enough to offset the cost of her maintenance and more...” Ibid., 58–59.

⁵³ Vienna: H 82, l. 5 (previously PER H 82). The husband is called both Avraham and Ibrāhīm [sic] in the document. The dates proposed by Assaf for this record are 978, 998, and 1008. As Goitein notes, all three of these are plausible. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 214–215. The document’s state of preservation makes it difficult to be certain. See H 82, l. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid., ll. 9, 14–16. The injunction to work flax and wool may also function as an allusion to Proverbs 31: 13, which describes the woman of valor (*eshet hayil*) as one who seeks out wool and flax to work with her hands (“*darshah tsemer u-fishtim, va-ta’ash be-ḥefets kafeha*”). The *eshet hayil* became the archetype for an “ideal” Jewish woman in later rabbinic writings. See *Midrash Mishlei* 31:9–29 and David R. Blumenthal, “Images of Women in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Marriage, Sex, and Family in Judaism*, ed. Michael J. Brody and Michael Ausubel (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 15–60.

economic activities in Fatimid Egyptian society were spinning and weaving. Women also worked by attending to the needs of other women in professional positions such as hair-dresser (*māshiṭah*), hair remover in a bath house (*ṣāni'ah*), and midwife (*qābila*). Others worked in roles including singer (*qaynah*), wailing mourner (*nā'iḥah*), wet-nurse (*dāyah*), female corpse-washer (*ghāsilah*), and, in the cities, prostitutes (*baghāyā, fawāḥish*).⁵⁵ Free women occupied these roles, though slaves are known to have been singers and wailing mourners. Owners could rent out singing slaves for profit, and such women commanded a higher price on the market accordingly. The labor that women performed in the broader society probably indicates the services that some slaves provided for their mistresses, such as hair-dressing and body-care. There is no evidence that owners prostituted their slaves (though free women seem to have had pimps), but slaves did serve as concubines for their masters.⁵⁶

Other indications of the range of female domestic slaves' labor appear in a well-known medical treatise by the eleventh-century Iraqi Christian physician Ibn Buṭlān, a work intended as a guide to purchasing slaves.⁵⁷ For jobs including cooking, singing, dancing, and nursing, Ibn Buṭlān recommended female slaves. Medieval authors also stereotyped slaves by their *jins*

⁵⁵ Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 201–203. Genizah documents do not contain a great deal about prostitution. See also chapter three. On prostitution in Aden, see S. D. Goitein, "Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Genizah," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50 (1987): 455, 458; Friedman, "Women and the India Trade," 172–175.

⁵⁶ Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, chap. 3. Cortese and Calderini primarily discuss concubinage and slave women's activities in the Fatimid harem. See also Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 139, n. 62. Here Goitein cites, St. Petersburg: Firkovitch II 1700 f. 14. In T-S NS 320.5, l.14 it appears that the sale of a *jāriyah mughaniyyah* (singing slave woman) is mentioned. Thanks to Oded Zinger for bringing this document to my attention. Slave concubinage is discussed at length in the next chapter.

⁵⁷ Ibn Buṭlān: Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 204–205. Ibn Buṭlān visited Fatimid Egypt during the eleventh century. A recent publication suggests that Ibn Buṭlān's treatise may have been influenced by an earlier Greek work. See Simon Swain, *Economy, Family, and Society from Rome to Islam a Critical Edition, English Translation, and Study of Bryson's Management of the Estate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

(in this context, geographic origin and sociolinguistic grouping), associating particular ethnic groups with certain traits and predispositions. Berbers were thought to be suitable for housework, sex, and child-bearing; black women for serving as wet-nurses; Persians for taking care of children; Arabs for serving as singers and musicians; and Byzantines for guarding valuable items in a trustworthy manner. Stereotypes do not necessarily reflect common practice, but these generalizations do detail the kinds of work that medieval slave owners expected their servants to perform regardless of *jins*.⁵⁸

A rabbinic responsum from the medieval Maghribi city of Tilimsān is also useful for identifying the specific labor referred to generically as *khidmah* and its meanings and symbolism. The query's main concern is with whether Jews are permitted to own slave women who refuse to convert to Judaism if there are no other suitable slave women available for purchase.⁵⁹ The author explains why the question of purchasing slaves is an urgent one: "Anyone who does not own a maidservant is in great anguish. His children or his wife must bring water upon their shoulders from the springs, and wash their clothes and go to the public ovens with non-Jewish slave women and prostitutes."⁶⁰ This source suggests that anyone who

⁵⁸ Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 204. Indian and Armenian women were considered unruly and thus not well suited for domestic slavery.

⁵⁹ Precedents in Jewish law encouraged masters to sell slaves who did not convert to Judaism after a period of time. See B. Z. Wacholder, "The Halakhah and the Proselyting of Slaves During the Gaonic Era," *Historia Judaica* XVIII (1956): 89–106; Efraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Laws Regarding Slavery: As a Source for Social History of the Period of the Second Temple, Mishnah and Talmud* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

⁶⁰ For the text of this responsum, see A. E. Harkavy, ed., *Zikhron kamma ge'onim u-ve-yehud rav Sherira ve-rav Hai beno ve-ha-rav rabbi Yiṣḥaq al-Fāsī* (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1887), 224–225. Miriam Frenkel discusses the query in Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 251. A second medieval responsum indicates that not all Jewish women were used to milling grain and that slave women were considered necessary for this task. Simḥa Assaf, ed., *Teshuvot ha-geonim: ve-liqqutei Sefer ha-din le-Yehudah Barsiloni* (Jerusalem: ha-Madpis, 1927), 21, no. 2. Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 610 n. 338.

could afford to do so owned a domestic slave. This responsum reflects that Jews in medieval Tilmisān viewed the labor of slaves as a necessary component of a family's social status.

As Catherine Hezser notes, Jewish law in late antiquity often conflated the labor of slaves with the work of free women. In practice, this meant that slave women relieved wealthier wives of specific domestic duties. These duties include the tasks that Jewish legal sources describe as appropriately delegated to slave women: milling, baking bread and washing clothes.⁶¹ Yet access to slave labor meant more than just relief from physical labor. Slaves protected the modesty of free women who either chose domestic seclusion or were coerced into it. Errands such as fetching water and retrieving bread from communal ovens meant exposure to lower-class women and to the gaze of men from across the socio-economic spectrum. A free woman's ability to have a slave perform these public activities protected her sense of privilege and modesty.

Krakowski's work on female adolescence in the Genizah demonstrates that a woman's ability to seclude herself was a marker of high social status. The link between seclusion and status in Near Eastern cultures in this period was a strong one.⁶² Free women chose to practice seclusion, though there is also evidence of how husbands and other family members could exert considerable pressure upon wives and female relatives to isolate themselves physically in the private space of the household. One twelfth-century court record from Fustat concerns a woman whose husband was traveling for business. The purpose of this court record was to award necessary financial support to this woman and her personal slave. The document

⁶¹ Mishnah, *Ketubbot* 5:5. See Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 73.

⁶² Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 138–139.

identifies the woman as one of “the elite of the city who remain secluded in their homes.” In other words, this woman required support for herself and her slave because she was a member of the elite and thus needed the slave to perform public errands on her behalf.⁶³

In this light, the admonition of the dying mother to her sister and her bequest of slaves to her daughters in the document that we examined at the beginning of this chapter resonate more clearly: “Do not neglect my younger daughter.... Do not allow her to appear in public.”⁶⁴ We may read here an unstated assumption that the bequest of the slave Sa‘ādah and her son to the younger daughter were also intended to protect her modesty. The mother’s concern with modesty is also evident in her disappointment with the elder daughter Sitt al-Sirr: “I will not will anything to Sitt al-Sirr for reasons which cannot be mentioned.”

Two conclusions emerge from this evidence about slave labor in the household. First, Genizah and medieval Arabic sources indicate that domestic tasks were the primary focus of female slave labor. The household might not be crippled in its absence, but the burden on free women would be increased.

Second, Jewish law equated the labor of free women and female slaves. Slave women could effectively stand in for their free mistresses as domestic workers. Domestic labor encompassed both tasks necessary for the functioning of the household (e.g., washing clothes, fetching water, serving food and drink) and public errands such as taking bread to communal

⁶³ Ibid., 138. T-S NS J401k, l. 13-14. The record states that maintenance will be given “*la-hā wa-li-man yakhadamu-hā* (to her for someone to serve her).” The final sentence of the document is illegible, but may well read “*wa-yakūn dhālika jāri[yah]*...” T-S NS J401k, l. 16. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 193, 467. For more on how the status of higher-class women depended upon the roles of slaves and lower class women, see Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” 138, n. 155.

⁶⁴ ENA NS 48.6, ll. 6, 10.

ovens, which would otherwise expose household dependents (women in particular) to mixed public environments where they might work alongside prostitutes and non-Jews, both free people and slaves.

That said, documentary sources are relatively silent on domestic labor. Historians are thus ultimately able to learn much more about how slave work buoyed the status of the free than about how a slave herself experienced such work. For women wealthy enough to own a slave, the practical use of slaves also had symbolic implications: slavery supported free women's projection of social prestige. At the same time, the presence of female slaves in the household was not always an unequivocal boon for the mistress of the house, as I will argue in the next section.

VI. Female Slaves Undermine Mistresses

Slave women were not inert beings, though they often appear in the sources as muted subjects. Yet by reading the surviving sources carefully, we can detect moments in which slaves challenged and undermined their mistresses' authority.⁶⁵

One mid-twelfth century document suggests the nature of such quotidian conflicts between a mistress and her slave. It shows how day-to-day actions could escalate to the point that they prompted actions that led to a written record. In 1154, a groom known as Abū al-Makārim had a legal deed drawn up for himself and on behalf of his wife. The preserved source is fragmentary, but it clearly indicates that Abū al-Makārim “restored” the slave-girl Ghazāl to his household and to his wife's service (*khidmah*), though the document indicates

⁶⁵ Chapter three will analyze how the presence of slave women in the household could also allow men to exploit the slaves as concubines to the detriment of their wives. The subject of slave resistance and the personal histories of slave women are dealt with extensively in chapter four.

that the slave was officially the property of the husband.⁶⁶ The space where the wife's name would have been written is torn and thus it is not fully legible. The preserved text records her as "the daughter of our lord the head of the rabbinic academy, may his memory be a blessing [...]" and later that her full name was "Lady of (Sitt al-) [...]"⁶⁷ As the daughter of a member of the communal elite, Ghazāl's mistress fits the profile of female slave owners more generally. She is part of a family (either natal or through marriage) that can afford to purchase a slave woman, and she has a sense of honor and social prestige to protect and project.

The phrasing of this legal deed suggests that Ghazāl had in fact undermined the wife's status. Although the left quarter of the document is torn off and missing, we are able to decipher the central thrust of this record from the remainder. The document contains a series of conditional statements that serve both to chastise and warn Ghazāl concerning her apparently rebellious behavior: "If the slave woman's behavior is evil towards the Lady [...], Abū al-Makārim must sell this slave woman." If Abū al-Makārim himself fails to sell Ghazāl in this instance, then the deed gives his wife the right "to sell her and dispose of her as she [wishes]."⁶⁸ Finally, some damaged lines read "[...] concerning small affairs and great ones," a

⁶⁶ BL Or. 5566C16, line 2: "A'āda Ghazāl jāriyati-hi ilā khidmah bayti-hi." Thanks to Oded Zinger for his help with an earlier draft translation of this document and for his comments.

⁶⁷ BL Or. 5566C16, ll. 1-4. Goitein suggests that the wife was the daughter of Maṣlī'ah ha-Kohen Gaon b. Shelomo, who was in office 1127-1139. Yet this document is dated 1134 and not 1154 as Goitein thought. Since this woman's father was dead (as indicated by the language, "may his memory be a blessing," it could not be Maṣlī'ah. Goitein speculates that another slave-girl, Musk, could have also been sold for disobedience to her mistress. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 140.

⁶⁸ BL Or. 5566C16, ll. 3 – 8. A third conditional is only partially preserved in line 10: "[If] she has misgivings about her [...]. Nonetheless we can infer from the document that, in such a case, the Lady has the right to sell Ghazāl. The situation here suggests one rationale for the inclusion of what Mordechai Friedman has called "the slave -girl clause." This is a clause inserted into marriage documents and meant to protect the bride. These clauses state that the husband may not buy a slave woman hated by the wife. For more on these clauses and their wider social and historical context, see chapter three and the sources cited there.

phrase that most likely seeks to emphasize the strict discipline to which Ghazāl was expected to perform for her mistress.⁶⁹ The tone and wording of this deed suggest that Ghazāl had defied her mistress by acting disobediently and refusing to perform the tasks asked of her. Ghazāl directly challenged her mistress' mastery.

This legal record of Ghazāl's chastisement is unusual in that it was created as a direct response to the slave's "evil behavior" toward her mistress. Other documents hint at friction between slaves and their mistresses. In fact, when slave resistance against an owner makes its way into documentation, it is generally an act that is antagonistic to female owners rather than male ones. Two additional examples suffice to illustrate this trend.⁷⁰

In a mid-twelfth century letter, a mother writes to her son and conveys information about family business. At one point she inserts a tangential reference to her slave Tawfiq: "Furthermore, the slave woman Tawfiq left for the wife of your maternal uncle. Your aunt turned her (Tawfiq) against me until she went to her."⁷¹ A second illustration comes from a responsum of Abraham Maimonides. In the query, the author describes the actions of an

⁶⁹ Ibid, line 11: "*min ṣaghīri al-umūr wa-kabīri-hā.*"

⁷⁰ See also T-S 8J22.18. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 243 n. 116. Goitein identifies another instance of a slave woman defying her master in T-S 13J37.12 (recto and verso). See "Slaves and Slave Girls," 11; *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 140. Goitein argues that the *jāriyah* Musk was bought (recto) and then quickly resold (verso) within a matter of months. He speculates that the reason for the quick resale could have been that Musk and her mistress did not get along. As a result of this discord, the mistress's husband was compelled to sell the slave. The recto is indeed a bill of sale for the slave woman Musk. The verso appears to be a bill of sale whereby Musk's master transfers the slave to his wife's possession and control (in particular, see ll. 6-7). Friedman's analysis of this document also suggests the latter explanation. Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 352.

⁷¹ Halper 400, ll. 11-12 (previously Dropsie 400). The letter is to Abū al-'Izz b. Bishr from his mother. The letter does not provide the date, but it is sent to Abū al-'Izz "[at the shop of the shaykh Abū al-Riḍā b. al-Leb[di]]." A shaykh Abū al-Riḍā is greeted at the end of the mother's letter. Friedman suggests that the Abū al-Riḍā mentioned in Halper 400 is likely the same "Abū al-Riḍā, the perfumer known as Ibn al-Lebdī" named in a court deposition from 1156. An Ibn al-Lebdī and an Ibn [A]bū al-Riḍā Ibn al-Lebdī are also mentioned in T-S K15.6, an alms list from 1178. See Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 272-273. Based on this information, the letter should be dated to the twelfth century. See also Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 14; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 246, 480 n. 161; Goitein and Friedman, *Joseph Lebdī*, 273. This incident is discussed further in chapter four.

abusive mistress, explaining that the mistress was sharing the labor of a slave woman with another party from month to month. “The slave woman remained with (the mistress) for three days,” he continues, but “(t)he slave said that (the mistress) beat her in the presence of non-Jews. The slave woman converted to Islam and was put up for sale.”⁷² Since it was illegal for Jews to own Muslim slaves according to Islamic law, a slave’s conversion to Islam compelled her Jewish or Christian owner to sell her.

There are some instances in which slave women pressed their male owners for certain privileges, but the contexts and meanings of these encounters are different from female slave-mistress resistance.⁷³ A domestic female slave’s challenge to her mistress threatened the status of free women within the household and, potentially, their ability to project social prestige and honor outwardly. Within the social universe of the domestic sphere, a slave woman was one relation whom a free woman had the prerogative to use and to control. Furthermore, the uses of female domestics directly impacted free women’s own social experiences to an extent that it did not for men. Although men gained from the exploitation of slave women’s labor,⁷⁴ the absence of slave women did not constrain them in their construction of mastery, honor, and prestige. The absence of slave women did, however, limit elite women’s opportunities to

⁷² Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 149–153, no. 98. Mentioned in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 141–142, 435 n. 77. This responsum and the details of the case are discussed at greater length in chapter four.

⁷³ For instance, a slave woman demanded that her master not sell her to another party: T-S 13J36.11, ll. 20–23. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 142, 435 n. 81. Whether the slave woman’s demand was ultimately honored is not known. The author seems impressed by the slave’s audacity as he remarks “My God (*allāh, allāh*)” after he describes her actions. T-S 13J36.11, ll. 23–24 Chapter three analyzes how men used domestic slavery to assert their mastery.

⁷⁴ Jewish men used slave women for sex, too. Slave concubinage is discussed in the next chapter.

extend their mastery through the protection of their modesty and freedom from domestic labor.

VII. Women Seeking Slaves

The importance of elite women's slave ownership to their greater social standing is evident in the extent to which they frequently appear in Genizah records as slave owners. As owners, free women oversaw their slave's activities and controlled the disposal of the slave through sale, inheritance, or manumission. Moreover, women also initiated slave transactions and asserted their rights to ownership in situations when there were questions about who the rightful owner of a given slave was.⁷⁵ Slave ownership and acquisition were not just the domain of men.

Some women and their relatives specified that they wanted a young slave child. In a twelfth-century letter, a pregnant woman in Fustat writes to her maternal uncle Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Hilāl, who was the deputy overseer of finance in the Middle Egyptian town of al-Bahnasā. The writer informs her relative that she is in the sixth month of her pregnancy and that she needs a favor from him. The left third of the document is torn away, so the first part of her request is missing. The surviving text reads: "I ask that you grant me a favor and [...] an imported black one who is five to six years old."⁷⁶ Presumably, Abū al-Ḥasan's niece intended to acquire a black slave child in time to assist her household after the birth of her own child.

⁷⁵ These are just some examples that indicate women as owners of slaves. Bills of sale in which both seller and buyer are women: T-S 13J6.7 and T-S 18J1.17. Women bequeath or inherit slaves: T-S 12.140 and T-S NS J347. Women free slaves: ENA NS 16.11 and T-S 8J12.3. Women assert their rights to slave ownership: Budapest: 232.1 and a responsum of Abraham Maimonides, #98 in Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*.

⁷⁶ T-S 13J21.18, ll. 5, 16-17. The dating of this document is made possible by an identification of the handwriting. The script belongs to the prolific scribe Ḥalfon b. Menashshe who was active in the first third of the twelfth century. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135, 265, 466; II: 377, 610; III: 22-23, 231; IV: 349; V: 132-133. On the

There is no further record to indicate whether Abū al-Ḥasan was successful in obtaining a child slave for his sister's daughter. Yet traffic in individual slave children was not uncommon among Egyptian Jews, as discussed above in chapter one. Given Abū al-Ḥasan's government position and his location in the more southerly town of al-Bahnasā (closer than Cairo to known slaving regions), it is quite probable that he was able to secure a young slave for his niece.⁷⁷

Husbands also recognized the potential importance of young slave girls to their wives. One twelfth-century Jewish merchant active in the Indian Ocean trade wrote to his wife in Cairo: "I have bought for Sitt [al-Ḥusn] a slave girl who is six years of age, pearl bracelets, [...], clothing, and red silk..."⁷⁸ This merchant's decision to include a six-year old slave girl in a list of luxury goods he is sending home to a female family member illustrates how slaves functioned as adornments for their mistresses. Further, these two cases suggest that the age of five or six was understood as a threshold at which slave children could be useful as domestic servants. We find younger slave children being sold, usually with their mothers. But there is no indication that owners actively sought children younger than the age of five.⁷⁹

Purchase was not the only manner in which women obtained young slave children. Slaves were often passed down, like the Sudanese nurse Sa'ādah, through bequests. A will

town of al-Bahnasā and its Jewish community, see Norman Golb, "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt, VI: Places of Settlement of the Jews of Medieval Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33 (1974): 120.

⁷⁷ In another letter, a brother asks the recipient to "purchase a slave woman to help her (his sister)." Manchester: Rylands B 3311, l. 4-5.

⁷⁸ T-S NS J23, ll. 10-13. It appears that the slave was bought for a woman named Sitt al-Ḥusn. The document is torn where her name would have been written on the recto. A Sitt al-Ḥusn is mentioned on the verso, l. 5. Goitein, "New Light on the Beginnings of the Kārim Merchants," 179. This shelf-mark is also cited by Goitein and Friedman as India Book VII 56 (old no. 214). See Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*, 126, n.4 and 138, n. 57.

⁷⁹ See chapter four.

drafted by the scribe Mevorakh b. Natan (ca. 1155-1171) provides a glimpse into how one young child slave became bound to a new mistress.⁸⁰ The will belongs to one Abū al-Ḥasan and was drafted while he was confined to his bed with a life-threatening illness. In his will, Abū al-Ḥasan emancipates his two female slaves, Kashf and Gharrada.⁸¹ The scribe then adds the following qualification to Kashf's manumission: "The young girl (*al-ṣaghīrah*), Kashf, shall remain with my young sister Sitt al-Ri'āsah until she is old enough to make her own choices. Then if she wants to remain, she shall remain. And if she chooses to leave, she shall leave."⁸²

Kashf's situation differs from that of the Sudanese nurse Sa'adah, a mature caretaker with a child of her own. Sa'adah's mistress wished her to continue to care for her youngest daughter upon her death. Yet Kashf is clearly a minor, and perhaps even a small child. The question arises, then, of Abū al-Ḥasan's motivation for retaining Kashf in the company of his younger sister Sitt al-Ri'āsah. In Sitt al-Ri'āsah's wedding trousseau from four years earlier, a

⁸⁰ T-S Misc.24.137.4v. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 570; III: 38, 435, n. 19, 443; IV: 456, n. 110; V: 132, 542 n. 23, 543, 629. Goitein cites this document as the verso, but it appears as the recto in *FGP*. Goitein provides an appendix of a corpus of documents in the hand of Mevorakh b. Natan. See *Ibid.*, III: 364–369.

⁸¹ As Goitein notes, Abū al-Ḥasan's sister Sitt al-Ḥasab manumitted her slave woman Ṣalaf a few years earlier in 1157. See T-S 10J28.16. Goitein suggests that the manumission of slaves out of piety must have been a "family tradition." *A Mediterranean Society*, IV: 456. On the motivations for the emancipation of slaves, see the next chapter below. I am not certain how to vowel this slave's name, which probably means "Song Bird." See Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durrīyah*, 513; Cf. Albert Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (Paris, 1860), II: 453.

⁸² T-S Misc.24.137.4v, ll. 12ff. The relevant passage is on the bottom half of the page and is written perpendicular to the text above it. The above quotation concludes with a phrase written in the right margin, perpendicular to what precedes it. Even though Sitt al-Ri'āsah is described as "*al-ṣaghīrah*", it is not clear that she was a minor. Her wedding trousseau is dated to 1156, about four years before this will was drafted. See St. Petersburg, RNL: Yevr.-Arab. II 1700 cited in Goitein, *MS* as Firkovitch II NS 1700, f.25a. Goitein writes that Kashf would be faced ultimately with the choice of remaining or to "accept her liberty becoming a 'Jewess.'" Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, IV: 456. There is no indication in the text, however, that Abū al-Ḥasan made the emancipation conditional upon conversion to Judaism in any way. Note that Mevorakh writes "*in arādat al-qu'ūd taq'ud*" when we also see "*in irādat al-qu'ād taqa'ad*" in other Judeo-Arabic documents from the period. Blau, *Dictionary*, s.v. "*q-^ʿ-d*". Other Genizah documents also reveal that masters wished for slaves to have choices about their fates. See T-S 13J14.4 as discussed in chapter four.

female slave named ‘Ūd al-Zān is listed as part of her dowry.⁸³ Perhaps ‘Ūd al-Zān was sold to another owner, died, or was otherwise removed from Sitt al-Ri’āsah’s control. In any event, whom did Abū al-Ḥasan intend to benefit by conditionally emancipating the young slave Kashf? Genizah documents, rabbinic responsa, and other Arabic sources provide some sense of what Abū al-Ḥasan thought he was doing when he provisionally manumitted Kashf and what the young slave may have meant to her new mistress, Sitt al-Ri’āsah. Abū al-Ḥasan’s concerns may have ranged from practical ones about household labor to protecting his sister’s modesty. Or perhaps he recognized that his sister was attached to Kashf in some way.

VIII. Slave Girls, Orphans, and Clientage

There is one more segment of medieval society that may yield insight into Abū al-Ḥasan’s motivations and the relationships apparent between free women and their slave girls more generally. Krakowski shows how the medieval Jewish Egyptian community supported a class of unmarried female orphans. The Egyptian Jewish community’s attitudes towards orphans offer a potentially helpful analogy for understanding female domestic slavery and the relationships between mistresses and their slave girls.⁸⁴

For female orphans whose fathers died before first marriage, the community made an effort to ensure that they were provided for from their father’s estate. As Krakowski underscores, however, orphans lost this right upon attaining maturity, even if they were still unmarried and thus had fewer options for securing a livelihood. Despite this legal position,

⁸³ Yevr.-Arab. II 1700, f. 25a. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, IV: 330.

⁸⁴ Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” xi. See also, chapter one, part III.

responsa and legal records demonstrate that unmarried orphans were treated as “intrinsic dependents” that “required external support for their social protection.”⁸⁵

Orphans surface in two contexts similar to the ones in which we find slave girls mentioned. The first is as domestic laborers in return for material support. In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides encourages this practice in lieu of slave ownership: “A man’s household dependents should include the poor and orphans in place of slaves. It is better that he make use of these ... and benefit them by his property, rather than benefiting the offspring of Ham.”⁸⁶

A second context in which orphan girls appear is as recipients of charity.⁸⁷ As Krakowski illustrates, providing a dowry for an orphan so that she could marry was regarded as an act of charity equivalent to redeeming a captive.⁸⁸ This equivalence, drawn in medieval Rabbanite sources and in documentary sources from the Genizah alike, serves to emphasize the vulnerability and pitiful plight of the orphan girl. At times, individuals took the initiative to provide an orphan with a dowry. In other instances, it appears that there were loosely organized communal drives to raise funds for the dowry of an orphan who was about to marry an impoverished man.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 68–69. See nn. 109 and 110. *MT Matanot Aniyim* 10:17.

⁸⁷ In his work on poverty in Genizah society, Mark R. Cohen concludes that Jewish and Muslim sources are silent when it comes to institutions that resemble orphanages. In the Jewish community, Cohen observes that orphans (fatherless children) “were cared for by a mixed economy of public and private charity.” See Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, 236. See also Cohen, *Voice of the Poor*.

⁸⁸ Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” 67–74.

⁸⁹ Krakowski, “Female Adolescence.”

Orphans required upkeep, but at cost to their protectors. It is important to remember that slave girls, too, required ongoing material support, in addition to the cost of purchasing and transporting them to their owners' home. A court deposition from 1098 reflects that the sums for the upkeep of a slave girl were not trifling. A man named Tiqwā b. Amrām makes a claim against his business associate Shelah b. 'Ayyāsh for money he had given him to carry out business on his behalf in Syria and Palestine (al-Shām).⁹⁰ When his partner came back empty-handed, Tiqwā went before a judge and demanded the forty-eight dinars he had provided. He took the opportunity to request additional "expenses for a slave girl of tender age, whom he had brought up for" his associate.⁹¹ In response to the latter accusation, Shelah responded: "As for the slave girl's expenses, I left her with them so that they could put her to work (in exchange) for her expenses. I was not responsible for any expenses other than her clothing."⁹²

Other documents indicate that women tried to provide for orphaned girls in both material terms and by giving them an education. In some circumstances, widows or divorcees would take in an orphan. One woman who no longer lived with her absent husband kept an orphan, as she put it, "to keep me company."⁹³ Individuals made efforts to arrange upkeep for orphans by enlisting the help of others in the community and by arranging lodging. In one undated letter, a woman informs the recipient that the grandmother who had been taking care of two orphaned sisters had died and that she (the author) now looked after them. She explains that there is a local woman with no children of her own who could teach the girls,

⁹⁰ T-S 8J4.14a, ll. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 212–214. Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 58, n. 77; Goitein and Friedman, *Maḍmūn*, 331.

⁹¹ T-S 8J4.14a, l. 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ll. 15–18.

⁹³ T-S 18J3.2. See Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 67–68.

saying that the girls will live alone and support themselves with communal funds: “A place should be rented for them somewhere close to my home ... and these two dinars should be given to the older girl so she can use it [for...] maintenance, silk, and other things.”⁹⁴

When we point the lens back towards slave girls such as Kashf, some parallels emerge that underscore some of the central characteristics of slavery in the medieval Jewish Egyptian community. Both orphans and slaves experience natal alienation. In the case of orphans, this alienation may be only partial, as the defining condition for orphanage is the death of one’s father; orphans could still have a living mother. But, as Mark Cohen notes, Jewish law and custom considered the court to be “the father of orphans,” a fact that emphasizes the community’s custodianship of them. Further, the death of the father entitled an unmarried orphan girl to communal aid.⁹⁵

The natal alienation of the orphan was, then, less complete and had a less violent origin, even if its material consequences could be severe.⁹⁶ The orphans discussed above were, however, part of the Egyptian Jewish community and this belonging gave them privilege compared to slaves.⁹⁷ Natal alienation was more thorough in the case of slaves than of orphans. It is also perhaps one of the most enduring features of slavery through time and space. Slaves are forcibly uprooted from the kin networks and social relations that had

⁹⁴ T-S 12.493, ll. 14-18. On this document, see *Ibid.*, 142 n. 162; Goitein, “Side Lights on Jewish Education,” 88–89, 101. Goitein adds that the silk is for embroidery. The orphaned sisters could use this skill and the material to make textiles of higher value.

⁹⁵ Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, 236–239.

⁹⁶ A classic study of slavery and natal alienation is Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Caretakers of orphaned children represent their plight in very stark terms. For example, see T-S 8J18.19.

⁹⁷ The woman mentioned above who was looking out for two orphaned sisters writes, “(S)omeone should come to the house and teach them prayer so that they should not grow up like animals not knowing (the prayer) “Hear, oh Israel.” T-S 12.493, ll. 7-9.

ordered their lives. Despite owners' awareness of their slaves' geographic origins and their presumptions about the characteristics those origins implied, slaves themselves experienced utter deracination.

For socio-economic purposes, an unmarried orphan girl and a freed female convert to Judaism presented a similar problem to the community. They were "intrinsic dependents," and there was a risk that they would become members of the chronically poor.⁹⁸ This threat is one pressure that explains the patterns evident in some mistress-slave girl relationships. Owners like Sitt al-Ḥusn took steps to insure that manumitted slave women such as Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr had sufficient maintenance and security to avoid descent into the ranks of the chronically poor.

A second explanation for the phenomenon of Jews provisionally binding slave protégés like Kashf to their families can be found in the deep currents of medieval Middle Eastern Islamic society. Ties of clientage bound masters and their freed slaves to each other from the earliest years of the Muslim state. In classical Islamic law, the very act of manumission created a patron-client bond (*walā'*). As patron, the manumitter assumed specific obligations towards his freedman and his freedman's relations. The patron also gained

⁹⁸ In his work on medieval poverty, Cohen distinguishes between "structural" and "conjunctural" poverty. Structural refers to "permanent destitution" (chronic). Conjunctural poverty occurs due to "specific, intermittent circumstances." The working poor could end up in this category due to sudden events or particular circumstances. See Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, chap. 1, "A Taxonomy of the Poor." Slave and freedwomen could fall into either category depending on their own circumstances and the economic circumstances of their owners. I discuss slaves and freedwomen who appear on alms lists edited by Cohen in chapter four.

specific rights to the freedman's estate. The freedman's personal future could depend upon the success or failure of his former master.⁹⁹

Goitein notes that the legal position of Jewish freed slaves was different from that of their counterparts in Islamic law. For one thing, Jewish masters did not retain or gain any rights to their freed slaves' property, person, or offspring.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, however, Jewish masters maintained ties with their freed slaves (and vice versa) in ways that resemble bonds of clientage. Freed men and women are continually referred to as the freedman or freedwoman of their former master. Even at her marriage, a former slave and convert to Judaism is identified in her marriage contract as the freedwoman of her former owner.¹⁰¹

During a famine at the beginning of the thirteenth century, a freedman returned to the home of his former mistress and loaned her four dinars to assist her through the crisis.¹⁰² Another responsum of Abraham Maimonides reports that a freedwoman left a small bequest to a group of women in her community, but that her former master's son made aggressive claims to her estate.¹⁰³ In Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt, the bonds of clientage between Jewish slave owners and their (actually or potentially) freed slaves are apparent in social practice whether

⁹⁹ The institution of *walā'* and the history of its meaning, variances, and implications are complex. For an overview, see *EI* 2, s.v. "*mawlā'*", ("II. In Historical and Legal Usage," by P. Crone). For clientage in the context of the later Mamlūk domestic slavery, see Marmon, "Domestic Slavery."

¹⁰⁰ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 145.

¹⁰¹ T-S 16.105. The bride Mu'tazz is identified as "the freedwoman of Mosheh b. Paḥtiel." See also "Munā, the freedwoman of Ibn Futayḥ" in a wedding contract from 1184, Bodl. MS Heb. f. 56.53a; and her identification as "Munā, the freedwoman, the wife of Abū al-Faraj b. al-Tinnīsī" in Bodl. MS Heb. c. 28.54a. Goitein, *MS*, I: 145. The freed woman Fakhr married, had a child, and then divorced. Subsequently, her husband hired her to care for the child. BL Or. 10588.3. S. D. Goitein, "Genizah Papers of a Documentary Character in the Gaster Collection of the British Museum," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 51 (1960): 34–46. See the discussion in chapter four.

¹⁰² Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 149–153, no. 98. Freed women were also known to give loans. See chapter four for the case of Sitt al-Rūm. T-S 12.8 + T-S 10J4.9.

¹⁰³ T-S 8J16.4. See chapter four.

or not Jewish law officially recognized this bond. Thus when a mistress freed her slave, outright or provisionally, both parties might expect to maintain an ongoing social relationship. The concern that masters demonstrate for equipping their freed slaves materially is also consistent with the web of social ties that clientage created.

IX. Conclusion

The attachments evident between caretakers and orphans, and between masters and slaves, bear comparison because they focus our attention upon the cultural and social practices that encourage these bonds. In many regards, the natal alienation of these two groups meant that they were vulnerable in similar ways. They lacked kin networks and were under great stress to secure or to produce enough for their material sustenance. The Jewish community of medieval Egypt also took similar steps to mitigate the risks that slaves would fall into chronic poverty. There were communal resources marshaled informally for these purposes and there were also individual initiatives that aimed to protect young, unmarried girls.

In a time and place where the central features of slavery are dishonor and social death, such similarities between orphanage and slavery would seem unthinkable. But dishonor and social death are not central motifs in domestic slavery as viewed through the prism of the Cairo Genizah, and indeed not in the medieval Islamic world more generally.¹⁰⁴ Rather, the practice of slavery in medieval Egypt appears largely as an extension and marker of personal and family honor. The domestic labor that slaves performed promoted the honor of the free

¹⁰⁴ On the “perpetual condition of dishonor” and “social death” as central to the experience of slavery through time, see Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. See also Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 30–35.

women whom it freed from such work more than it enlarged the overall household economy. Domestic slaves were still instruments. But they were instruments of honor and prestige and this function mitigated their own social position.

In this light, the young slave girl Kashf's manumission takes on a wider range of potential meanings. Abū al-Ḥasan frees Kashf, but stipulates that she remain with his sister Sitt al-Ri'āsah until she is old enough to make decisions for herself: "Then if she wants to remain, she shall remain. And if she chooses to leave, she shall leave."¹⁰⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan's action implicitly recognizes his slave's humanity and her intrinsic dependence as a young freed woman. In the meantime, Kashf remained in a kind of liminal state that must have been quite common for slave women in medieval Egyptian Jewish households.

Kashf's provisional manumission also recognizes the expectations of the medieval Jewish Egyptian community that free women had an interest in caring for young, unmarried girls who otherwise lacked supportive kin networks. In some cases, it does appear that women supported young women out of a sense of duty and genuine concern. In other cases, free women suggest that their decision to take in an orphan directly served their own self-interests.

Slave women served their mistresses in both menial and intimate ways. As slaves performed these functions they became bound to their households as practical kin and were recognized as such. Beyond the work that slaves performed, they were also adornments to

¹⁰⁵ T-S Misc.24.137.4v

their mistresses in life and in death. The ownership of slaves and the support of one's freed slaves helped construct elite female honor and social prestige.

Domestic slavery did not, however, always create social capital. The presence of female slaves could also undermine the social position of their mistresses. The next chapter takes a closer look at one of the thornier problems created by the exploitation of female slaves: when Jewish men took slave women as concubines. They continued to do this despite the attempts of jurists such as Moses and Abraham Maimonides to ban the practice and regulate master-slave sex more closely. The decision to outlaw concubinage despite its ongoing existence had unintended consequences that imperiled the opportunities that some free women had to gain from their household's possession of slaves.

Chapter Three

Male Mastery and Illicit Slave Concubinage in the Egyptian Jewish Community

I. Introduction

While many upper class women used female slaves as a means to protect and project their own social status, slave women and their mistresses could also become embroiled in family conflicts that threatened that status. In such moments of domestic discord, a slave woman herself could become the pawn, or the bone of contention, in disagreements between estranged spouses. Family disputes involving slave women underscore not only how deeply slaves were implicated in the lives of their owners, but also how female slavery could undermine, as well as bolster, the honor of free women.

An unnamed slave woman was central to a protracted disagreement between a quarreling couple whose details are preserved in two twelfth-century Genizah petitions to Shemu'el "the great nagid (leader)" (1141-1159). Both petitions complain to him about the behavior of a certain Abū al-Faraj al-Qazzāz (the silk weaver).¹

¹ Budapest: DK 232.1 (alt: DK II) and T-S 10J17.22. Goitein discusses T-S 10J17.22 in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 24, n. 54. He also mentions DK 232.1 in n. 55, but it seems he did not realize that the two cases deal with the same individuals. See also the discussion in Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 33, n. 104. Oded Zinger discusses DK 232.1 in "Women, Gender and Law," chap. four. The Shemu'el addressed here is almost certainly Shemu'el ben Ḥananyah, who was a Jewish communal leader in Fustāṭ 1141-1159. 1159 is the latest date when Shemu'el is attested in the Genizah. Jacob Mann asserts that Shemu'el died in this year or shortly thereafter. See Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, I: 228ff. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, VI: 101. Abū al-Faraj is a common name in the Genizah documentary sources. The particular circumstances of this case, which are present in both letters, indicate that this Abū al-Faraj is the same person, and not two separate people with the same name. Abū al-Faraj's wife is unnamed. She identifies herself only as 'abdatu-hu ("his slave") in the address on the verso of DK 232.1. "His slave," or "your slave," is a common expression used by supplicants in petitions to their would-be patrons as a sign of deference and respect. Geoffrey Khan notes that expressions of obeisance are common in the Fāṭimid *ruq'a* (petition). In the examples Khan provides, the term used for slave is more commonly *mamlūk*, though 'abd is also used. See Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006), 306–310. In this instance, Abū al-

In the first petition, the wife of Abū al-Faraj begins the exposition of her problem:

I inform your Excellency, our lord, may you rule forever, that I am a desolate woman. I do not have (anything) except recourse to God and to you. I have fallen in with a man who is not ashamed by his untoward words. My father does not provide for me from his income and my brother is (too) young and bashful (to help). I have fallen, truthfully, into great distress.

Your Excellency ordered (my husband) ... to go and renew our wedding contract (*ketubbah*) to its original form. My husband said, "I have made an oath that I will not (promise) anything except 10 dinars and that I will give (my wife) the slave woman." He intended that the slave-girl would not leave (our) house.... He also gave me ownership over the slave woman, but declared that he would not give me her daughter; he kept the daughter.

Your Excellency ordered that (my husband) send (the slave woman) out to the adjacent, separate quarters. (But he) resisted and delayed sending her out, and he kept her as she is, in the house of his sister. Further, when he was before your Excellency, he did not accept your mediation. You, our Lord, ordered him to pay a sum of money and to remove the slave woman from his sister's possession...

The petition describes further tactics that the husband had used to delay resolving the issue and to avoid handing over the slave woman.² It then continues:

He has left me and the young girl (our daughter). We are cast to the floor. He pays us absolutely no attention. He keeps the slave woman at his sister's and he maintains her as needed. My matter is not sufficient for His Excellency, the *shaykh* Abū Ishāq. (My husband) has found someone who supports him in what he says. I have no defender

Faraj's wife is addressing Shemu'el, not her husband, as "his slave." For a recent edition and study of a petition to the Fāṭimid princess Sitt al-Mulk found in the Cairo Genizah, see Marina Rustow, "A Petition to a Woman at the Fatimid Court (413–414 A. H./1022–23 C. E.)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 73 (2010): 1–27. Rustow considers why a petition to Sitt al-Mulk she found in the Bodleian library at Oxford ended up in a Genizah since its contents had no connection to Jewish concerns. Her argument is that Jews (and Christians in other contexts) sought out decommissioned petitions as examples for their own petitions to state authorities. The two petitions to Shemu'el that I discuss here reflect the influence of Fatimid chancery style upon Jewish communal petitions. Here Rustow also mentions another petition (Philadelphia: Halper 379) to this Shemu'el b. Ḥananyah written on behalf of an impoverished woman whose husband was in prison for failure to pay the poll tax. See also Marina Rustow, "The Diplomats of Leadership: Administrative Documents in Hebrew Script from the Genizah," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times: A Festschrift in Honor of Mark R. Cohen*, ed. Arnold Franklin et al. (Leiden: Brill, in press), 306–51.

² See the relevant discussion in Zinger, "Women, Gender and Law," chap. 4.

except almighty God and you. May the Holy One, blessed be He, not lock your door in the face of any desolate, ill-treated person or a person who is tied to you. Peace.³

In this petition, the wife of Abū al-Faraj presents the details of a conflict with her estranged husband. From her perspective, his most troubling actions revolve around his decision to take her own slave woman and sequester her at his sister's house.

A second, subsequent petition concerning Abū al-Faraj confirms important aspects of the case as described above by the wife.⁴ By this time the dispute between the couple has escalated and the author of the second petition has taken up the wife's case. Whereas Abū al-Faraj's wife observes in the first petition, "(h)e keeps the slave woman at this sister's house and maintains (the slave) as needed," the author of the second petition stresses that "I inform our lord, (with regards to) the matter of the slave-girl, that (Abū al-Faraj) does not pay her the broker's commission (that he owes her because he eventually bought the slave woman for himself). Indeed, he put her up with his sister and he spends more and more of his time with her."⁵

In the context of these petitions, the unnamed slave woman is discussed primarily as a piece of contested property. Bills of sale from the Genizah demonstrate that a slave woman often commanded a price of twenty dinars and was valued at even higher amounts in

³ DK 232.1. It is unlikely that this petition is written in the actual hand of Abū al-Faraj's wife, though it is clearly written in her voice and from her point-of-view. The second petition concerning this case is not written in her voice. See the discussion of T-S 10J17.22 below.

⁴ T-S 10J17.22. The petition is mentioned in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 579; III: 45, 432; V: 238–239, 572. The wife is never mentioned as such in the sections of T-S 10J17.22 that are readable. Rather the feminine third-person singular pronoun (*-hā*) is used in reference to the woman to whom Abū al-Faraj owes money. See ll. 11-12 and 14.

⁵ DK 232.1v, l. 3-4. T-S 10J17.22, ll. 20-22: "u'limu sayyida-nā fi qaḍiyyah al-jāriyah anna-hu lam yukhrij-hā al-dilālah bal qad ja'l-hā 'inda ukhti-hi wa-huwa akthar awqāta-hu muqīm fi akthar al-awqāt 'inda-hā."

marriage contracts.⁶ The monetary value of slaves partially explains why estranged spouses argued over their possession. Yet, the language and focus of the petitions suggest that the supplicants are concerned with the slave woman and her daughter for more than just pecuniary reasons.

When we contextualize the Abū al-Faraj petitions within a larger corpus of Cairo Genizah records concerning slaves, the reasons for the distress caused by his possession of this unnamed slave woman emerges more clearly. In the oblique language of the twelfth century, these petitions in fact suggest that Abū al-Faraj is guilty of unlawfully retaining his wife's slave as his own concubine.⁷ He later buys the slave woman for himself, but neglects to pay the tax normally incumbent upon the buyer (“the broker's commission”).⁸ Yet even after the

⁶ See for example Bodl. MS Heb. d. 66.48 + 47, ENA 4011.63, and ENA 4020.11. The slave woman Tawfiq is valued at 25 dinars in T-S NS 320.42. In T-S 16.70, a marriage contract, an unnamed *rūmiyyah* (Greek) slave woman is valued at 80 dinars. Sums in marriage contracts do not necessarily indicate what a slave would sell for in the marketplace as the values listed could be inflated. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 139. For the sake of comparison, a skilled laborer would make 20 dinars in about six months of work. Average household monthly expenses amounted to roughly three dinars. See *Ibid.*, I: 97, 368–370.

⁷ Twelfth-century Egyptian Judaeo-Arabic documents rarely use the specific terms for concubine. The responsum (T-S 10K8.13) of Abraham Maimonides discussed below is an exception. Wedding contracts use formulae that forbid a husband from taking a concubine, but these clauses occur less frequently than the general prohibition against men acquiring slave women whom their wives abhor. On this topic, see below. Writers more frequently find indirect ways to indicate that a slave is being used as a concubine, most commonly by saying the equivalent of “she is not a slave for domestic service” (*wa-laysa hiya jāriyah khidmah*). See Budapest: DK 231.2 (alt: DK 231f), l. 6. Edited in Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 322–324. This usage reflects social mores of the time by which individuals were reticent to broach subjects that were considered immodest. See S. D. Goitein, “The Sexual Mores of the Common People,” in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, 6th Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), 41–61. But this practice also indicates the struggle of Jewish jurists and communal officials to regulate a social practice for which they lacked both a consistent vocabulary and an effective legal framework. See the analysis below in this chapter.

⁸ I suggest this is the correct interpretation of the otherwise ambiguous phrase “*fi qaḍiyyah al-jāriyah anna-hu lam yukhrīj-hā al-dilālah*” in T-S 10J17.22. *Al-dilālah* occurs in slave bills of sale in the context of assessed and in phrases such as “*ju'l al-dilālah*,” where it refers to a fee (commission) paid to brokers. Such fees were paid by the buyer as is often specified in documents. For bills of sale that date to the mid-twelfth century (as do these petitions) and use the phrase *ju'l al-dilālah*, see T-S 13J37.12 and T-S 8J8.4. A bill of sale that specifies that the broker's commission and other fees will be paid by the buyer: T-S 13J3.7, a bill of sale for the slave woman Nasrīn

purchase, Abū al-Faraj's decision "to spend more and more of his time" with this slave woman at his sister's house continues to irk communal figures as evidenced in the second petition written on the wife's behalf.

This case underscores a stark trend apparent in Genizah sources related to slavery. As chapter two illustrates, slave women served Jewish mistresses as protégés, caretakers, and by performing public errands on their mistresses' behalf. In documents that attest to relationships between Jewish men and slave women, however, the range of relationships is much narrower. Men buy and sell slave women. They procure slaves for their wives or other family members and associates. In several instances, men free and marry their former slave women. And, most conspicuously, they take slave women as concubines, in defiance of communal norms. There are few exceptions to these patterns: Jewish men either transact in slave women or become their sexual partners, either licitly or illicitly.⁹

There are no further known records that detail how, or if, the Abū al-Faraj dispute continued to evolve. But other sources from the Genizah indicate that such domestic conflicts were not unusual and that when it came to slave women, married men evaded, or even outright defied, their personal and legal responsibilities to their spouses. Responsa literature, marriage contracts, and legal formulae demonstrate the prevalence of family conflicts involving female slaves and suggest how men, in particular, unsettled and shaped domestic

dated to 1148. On the subject of commissions more generally, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 1:160–161; 183–186; 445, n. 6.

⁹ Mardūk b. Mūsā's request for a slave woman to fetch him water and help him run his home appears to resist this generalization. Yet Mardūk was a widower who sought a slave to care for his children in the stead of his late wife. Mardūk b. Mūsā: T-S 12.254. His case is discussed above in chapter one. Another exception is discussed in chapter four in relation to the girl Akramiyyah.

life through their relations with female slaves. The examples discussed below indicate that the presence of slave women had particular import for the status and dignity of free women as well as the construction of male privilege in the domestic realm. Slaves themselves also stood to gain, or lose, status and material security as a result of their involvement in these domestic affairs.

II. Illicit Jewish Concubinage in Medieval Egypt

In his “Slaves and Slave Girls in the Cairo Genizah,” Goitein stressed that slave concubinage was illegal and regarded as “a grave sin,” in contrast to its acceptance in Muslim society. Nevertheless, as Goitein was well aware, Jewish men took slave concubines despite the laws prohibiting such practices. His explanation for the tension between social practice and this legal proscription is that Jewish concubinage was a result of the influence of the majority Muslim culture, an explanation others have repeated.¹⁰ A second explanation Goitein offers is that slave women were in a state of “utmost dependence” and vulnerability and were therefore “easy prey” for their lustful masters.¹¹ Both of these explanations omit some of the other factors that contributed to Jewish concubinage. The notion that Islamic culture corrupted Jewish men is not only apologetic, but omits the fact that Islamic law regulated concubinage and included some protections for the concubine herself as well as her children.

One crucial difference between the practice of concubinage among Muslims and Jews in Egypt can be found in the Islamic legal concept of *umm al-walad* (lit: “mother of the child”).

Legal opinions on this law and its implementation varied across schools of Islamic law and

¹⁰ Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 6; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 134–135; III: 143, 170; V: 311, 321–322, 486–487. See also Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 32–33.

¹¹ Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 6–7; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 134–135.

through time. Yet a consensus emerged within what became Sunnī orthodoxy that a slave concubine who bore her master's child became *umm al-walad* and would be manumitted upon the master's death. Additionally, an *umm al-walad* could not be sold or given as a gift.¹² As sources from the Genizah illustrate, illegal concubines of Jewish owners and their children were not guaranteed such protections: since Jewish law outlawed concubinage, it lacked an effective legal framework for regulating a persistent social practice. The failure to regulate concubinage consistently and predictably led to unintended consequences for slave women and Jewish family life.

The second explanation, that Jews used female slaves as concubines because slave women were vulnerable, fails to take the volition of the slave into account. Jewish men likely did exploit their slave women sexually. Though direct documentary evidence of this is lacking, it is implied and it was certainly expected as the discussion in the next section illustrates. But along the spectrum of coercive relationships that existed in the medieval Islamic world, concubinage should be understood as a position of relative strength and privilege for a slave. A concubine could have greater status than a slave designated exclusively for domestic service, precisely because of the uneven exchange with her master of sexual access for a potentially favored status. Despite the coercive structures of the master-slave relationship, there is evidence that slave women benefited materially if they became favored concubines. Material benefits could be an inducement for a slave woman to cooperate with a concubinage

¹² On *umm al-walad* see the article by Joseph Schacht in *EI* 2, s.v. "*umm al-walad*." For a discussion of this law in the Mālikī *madhhab*, see Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law*. A recent study that analyzes how the status of *umm al-walad* could impact the social experiences of slave women is Richardson, "Singing Slave Girls."

agreement in circumstances where she had other, albeit limited, opportunities to assert herself against it.¹³

The statement that concubinage was illegal and a “grave sin” is also misleading. Yes, concubinage could be construed as a sin, and jurists were known to take firm stands against it. Yet Jewish legal attitudes toward relations between slave women and Jewish men in fact vary a great deal and demonstrate an uneasy ambivalence toward such relationships. The approaches to the regulation of master-slave sex and cohabitation range from accommodation to excommunication. Such inconsistent and uneven approaches are evident in legal codes and responsa that date between the second half of the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth century.¹⁴

One conclusion I draw from this evidence is that there was not an effective, practicable framework for the regulation of concubinage among the Jews of Egypt in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The consequences of this failure extended beyond unsanctioned sex and the cohabitation of Jewish men with their slave women. Most significantly, the lack of regulation exposed free women to increased marginalization within the household and threatened their social status. The experience of the concubine, too, was open to potentially greater caprice in a social environment in which, as a legal persona, she technically did not exist.

¹³ For more on the sexual exploitation of slaves, see below. I discuss the relationship between concubinage and a slave’s status below and in chapter four.

¹⁴ For the Egyptian context, I will discuss primarily the work of Moses Maimonides and his son Abraham below. Precedents from ninth to eleventh-century Iraq also illustrate that there was a long-standing tension over concubinage that was never effectively resolved. On the Iraqi context, see Wacholder, “Halakhah” and the discussion below in this section.

III. Relations between Male Masters and Slave Women in Jewish Law and Literature

The great legal compendium of Moses Maimonides (1137/38-1204), the *Mishneh Torah*, deals expressly with laws that governed the purchase and ownership of domestic slaves. On the subject of sexual relationships between Jewish men and their slave women, Maimonides states the law unambiguously in the main section on slaves:

If a Jew has sexual intercourse with a foreign slave¹⁵—whether or not she is his slave—the child born as a result is a foreigner for any purpose, and can be bought and sold and used as a slave....¹⁶ And (it is permissible) to sell (the foreign slave's) sons and daughters, as it is said, “From among them you will buy, and from their families that are with you, which they begat in your land (Lev. 25:45).” Every one of them is like a foreign slave for any purpose.¹⁷

Yet in other sections, the *Mishneh Torah* in fact reflects a degree of ambiguity. In *Melakhim* 4:4

Maimonides writes:

So, too, (the king) may take wives (*nashim*) and concubines (*pilageshim*) from the territory of Israel. Wives are those who have a marriage contract and are acquired by an act of legal betrothal (*bi-ketubbah ve-qiddushin*). Concubines lack a *ketubbah* and *qiddushin*; he acquires one through an act of sexual intimacy (*bi-yhud*), and she is (then) permitted to him (the king). But a concubine is forbidden to a commoner (*ha-hedioṭ*). He may, however, acquire his Hebrew slave woman only after he has designated her.¹⁸

¹⁵ On the difference between a foreign slave and a Hebrew slave, see nn. 18 and 19 below.

¹⁶ *MT Avadim* 9:1. Cf. nn. 21-23 below.

¹⁷ *MT Avadim* 9:2.

¹⁸ *MT Melakhim* 4:4. My translation differs slightly from Abraham Hershman's translation in Moses Maimonides, *The Code of Maimonides: The Book of Judges (Book Fourteen)*, trans. Abraham M. Hershman, vol. III, Yale Judaica Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 215. Hershman writes “maidservant” for “*be-amah ha-ivriyah*.” In Jewish law, there is a difference in the legal status of a Hebrew slave, as indicated here, and a non-Hebrew (or foreign) slave, who is designated by the term ‘*eved kana'ani*’ (a Canaanite slave). For a brief discussion of the use of “Canaanite” to denote slaves in medieval Jewish literature, see Evyatar Marienberg, “‘Canaanites’ in Medieval Jewish Households,” in *The Gift of the Land and the Fate of the Canaanites in Jewish Thought*, ed. Katell Berthelot, Joseph E. David, and Marc Hirshman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 285–96.

A second passage on the issue can be found in the Book of Civil Laws (*Sefer mishpatim*), in the section on the laws of inheritance (*Hilkhot naḥalot*). The law indicates the problems that emerged when Jewish men had children by their slave women:

A man had a slave woman (*shifḥah*), had a son from her, and he behaved toward him as one treats (his) sons. Or he said, “He is my son and his mother is a freedwoman” (i.e., he manumitted her). If the man is a scholar or a trustworthy man who is exacting in his strict observance of the commandments, then the son shall inherit (from) him. Nevertheless, the son is not allowed to marry a Jewish woman until he produces proof that his mother was emancipated and (only) afterwards gave birth, since she was previously presumed to be a slave woman. (But) if (the father) is a commoner, and needless to say, if he was among those who act freely in this way (i.e. he was not exacting in his strict observance), then (the son) is presumed to be a slave (*‘eved*) for all purposes. The brothers (the father’s legitimate sons) may sell him. If he is his father’s only son, then the father’s wife shall marry according to the laws of Levirate marriage (because the son is not considered legitimate).¹⁹

These laws capture two aspects of the stance of Jewish law toward formal concubinage (*pilagshut*) and childbearing slave women more generally. In Maimonides’s view, slave concubinage was an archaic and illegal practice. Yet the law acknowledges that master-slave sexual relations occurred, and that they sometimes resulted in children. The status of such offspring within the Jewish community was a compromised one. As *Naḥalot* 4:6 indicates, Maimonides approved of marriages contracted between men and their converted, freed slave women provided that the emancipation had occurred before the marriage or any sexual

¹⁹ *MT Naḥalot* 4:6. See also *Naḥalot* 2:12 which rules that a man’s son by a *shifḥah* or non-Jew cannot be considered the first-born son for purposes of inheritance. For an English translation see Moses Maimonides, *The Code of Maimonides: The Book of Civil Laws (Book Thirteen)*, trans. Jacob J. Rabinowitz, vol. II, Yale Judaica Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 266.

relations. The children from these marriages were also deemed legitimate for the purpose of inheritance and marriage (again with the caveat that emancipation preceded any birth).²⁰

Yet Jewish law was not univocal in these respects, as Maimonides was well aware. Continuing in *Naḥalot* 4:6, he notes that there are some other legal authorities who do not make distinctions between the status of master-slave offspring born to “trustworthy” scholars and those born to a “commoner” (meaning that the son of a slave woman would inherit from his father in both cases).²¹ We do not know precisely which authorities Maimonides refers in this passage, but legal attitudes towards *pilagshut* in Iberia differed from Maimonides’ stance. Indeed, in his commentary on the *Mishneh Torah*, Joseph Caro (1488-1575) notes that the Spanish jurist Moses b. Naḥman (Naḥmanides, 1194-1270) did not recognize a distinction between the right of kings and commoners to acquire concubines: both had this right.²² As Ephraim Kanarfogel explains in his analysis of later twelfth and thirteenth-century Jewish

²⁰ *MT ‘Avadim* 9:1. Maimonides completed his legal compendium *Mishneh Torah* in Egypt. He placed the section on slavery laws in *Sefer Qinyān* (*The Book of Acquisition*). Laws pertaining specifically to the status of the offspring of Jews and non-Jewish slaves are listed *MT ‘Avadim* 9:1. See also *Ibid.*, 9:6 for the injunction that a master must emancipate a slave woman who “are used by people for licentious purposes.” See also *MT ‘Avadim* 7:7. The Iraqi context (between the ninth and early eleventh centuries) may be partially reconstructed from the content of responsa, though the geographic origin of the query is not generally known. For a study of *MT*, see Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). T-S Misc.27.4.23 + T-S Misc.27.4.29 relate to the appearance of a freed woman and her husband before a judge for the purpose of ascertaining the legality of their marriage. See the discussion and citations below, especially Friedman, “Master and Slave Girl.” Of relevance to this discussion are also the responsa of Abraham b. Yijū, the twelfth-century Jewish merchant that Mordechai Friedman has edited and studied. Ibn Yijū was a trader who lived in Mangalore on the west coast of India. He freed an Indian slave woman named Ashū, at which point she adopted the name Berakhah. I have not dealt with these sources here, because they do not have a direct bearing on the Egyptian context since Ibn Yijū bought and freed Ashū/Berakhah in India. It also appears that Ibn Yijū later married Berakhah. On this subject see Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 55–56, 69–70, 73–74, 89, 633, 639 n. 17, 692; Ghosh, “The Slave of MS. H.6.” Friedman also suggests that the sexual-cultural environment in the Indian Ocean realm differed from the Egyptian milieu. See Friedman, “Women and the India Trade.”

²¹ *Naḥalot* 4:6.

²² Joseph Caro, *Kesef Mishneh: ‘Ishut* 1:4. See also *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit: Macmillan/Ketter, 2007), s.v. “Naḥmanides.” See also *Kesef Mishneh* 9:1. Here Caro cites Isaac ben Jacob al-Fāsi (active in the Maghrib and al-Andalus, 1013-1103) to the effect that there is a geonic opinion that if a man has intercourse with his slave woman, the son is considered his son. See *Kesef Mishneh ‘Avadim* 9:1. Thank you to Oded Zinger for this reference.

Iberian law related to concubinage, Iberian rabbis seem to have permitted the practice because they believed it helped curb sexual promiscuity, assuming that the *pilegesh* was designated to her owner exclusively.²³

Despite the interpretation of Jewish law that Maimonides codified in the *Mishneh Torah*, the legal rulings he issued via his responsa indicate mixed messages when appearances suggested an arrangement that could be construed as slave concubinage. In certain responsa, Maimonides permitted men to marry their slave women despite the substance or appearance of prior sexual relations. More specifically, he encouraged marriages that were conducted before the official emancipation and conversion of the slave woman as alternatives to ongoing

²³ Nahmanides, *Kitve rabenu Mosheh ben Nahman*, ed. Charles Chavel (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 1963), I: 381–382. Ephraim Kanarfogel, “Rabbinic Attitudes toward Nonobservance in the Medieval Period,” in *Jewish Tradition and the Nontraditional Jew*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale: J. Aronson, 1992), 17–26. Perhaps Maimonides refers here in part to Abraham ben David of Posquières (c. 1125–1198, known as Rabad). See the note in the *Bar Ilan Responsa Project* that follows *Naḥalot* 4:6. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Abraham ben David of Posquières.” For a longer and broader view of marriage and sex practices in Judaism, particularly as it relates to how concubinage was construed over time, see Louis M. Epstein, “The Institution of Concubinage among the Jews,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 6 (1934): 153–88; Louis M. Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942); Louis M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1967); Louis M. Epstein, *The Jewish Marriage Contract: A Study in the Status of the Woman in Jewish Law* (New York: Arno Press, 1973); Yom Tov Assis, “Sexual Behaviour in Medieval Hispano-Jewish Society,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Steven J. Zipperstein, Chimen Abramsky, and Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: P. Halban, 1988), 25–59; Kanarfogel, “Rabbinic Attitudes”; Walter Jacob, “The Slow Road to Monogamy,” in *Marriage and Its Obstacles in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa*, ed. Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer (Tel Aviv: Rodef Shalom Press, 1999), 57–75; Walter Jacob, “Concubinage as an Alternative to Marriage,” in *Marriage and Its Obstacles in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa*, ed. Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer (Tel Aviv: Rodef Shalom Press, 1999), 207–12; Michael S. Berger, “Marriage, Sex, and Family in the Jewish Tradition: A Historical Overview,” in *Marriage, Sex, and Family in Judaism*, ed. Michael J. Broyde and Michael Ausubel (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); Michael J. Broyde, “Jewish Law and the Abandonment of Marriage: Diverse Models of Sexuality and Reproduction in the Jewish View, and the Return to Monogamy in the Modern Era,” in *Marriage, Sex, and Family in Judaism*, ed. Michael J. Broyde and Michael Ausubel (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 88–115. For an analysis of Jewish slave concubinage in the early modern Ottoman empire, see Yaron Ben-Naeh, “Blond, Tall, with Honey-Colored Eyes: Jewish Ownership of Slaves in the Ottoman Empire,” *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 315–32.

cohabitation between a master and his slave woman.²⁴ A generation later, Maimonides' son Abraham (1186-1237), in his own responsum concerning a slave woman, would take a less flexible stance by repeating the injunction from the *Mishneh Torah* that concubines (*pilegshim*) were reserved for kings.²⁵

Maimonides' Iraqi predecessors also confront and accommodate master-slave sex and concubinage in their rulings. The geonim of the Sura academy in Iraq issued responsa regarding concubinage that demonstrate how jurists were willing to indulge in legal fictions in order to accommodate social practice.²⁶ One notable case relates to a legend about the first exilarch (*resh galuta*) of the Islamic period, Bustanay b. Kafnay (ca. 618-670), and his offspring. It is reported that the Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644) appointed Bustanay as exilarch after the Muslim conquest of the Sassanid empire. Additionally, 'Umar gave Bustanay a captive Sassanid princess named Azādwār as a slave concubine. Bustanay married Azādwār as a second wife and had three sons by her. These sons were in addition to the two elder sons Bustanay had by his first wife, a Jew. When Bustanay died, the elder sons challenged the

²⁴ I discuss one notable example in chapter four below: Moses Maimonides, *Responsa of Maimonides*, II: 373–375, #211. See Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 256. Frenkel argues that these rulings reflect how Maimonides and his contemporaries yielded to "a widespread social phenomenon."

²⁵ Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 33, no. 21. On Abraham Maimonides, see *EJW*, s.v. "Maimonides" and "Abraham ben Moses" and the sources cited there. To these I would also add Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 319–330; Mordechai A. Friedman, "Responsa of R. Abraham Maimonides from the Cairo Genizah: A Preliminary Review," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 56 (1990): 29–49. See also my discussion below of Abraham Maimonides' responsa from the Genizah.

²⁶ The Iraqi rabbinic academies of Sura and Pumbedita (named after the cities where they were initially located) were centers of Jewish scholarship that dated to at least the mid-seventh century and the Muslim conquest of the region. The heads of the academies were the geonim (sing. gaon). The period of their activity between the seventh and eleventh centuries is traditionally known as the Geonic period. An excellent history of the geonic period and the activities of the geonim is Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

legitimacy of Azādwār's children by arguing that Azādwār had never converted to Judaism and that her offspring were therefore slaves and could not inherit.²⁷

A gaon of the Sura academy, Naṭronay (ca. 853-869), then involved himself in the dispute and issued a forceful legal ruling.²⁸ He declared that the offspring of Bustanay's slave woman (called a *shifḥah* in the responsum) should be considered legitimate heirs. As B. Z. Wacholder explains, "The legal fiction behind this ruling was that, there being no evidence to the contrary, it should be assumed that the master freed his slave before he had sexual intercourse with her."²⁹ Naṭronay invoked a Talmudic principle: "One does not have illicit sexual relations when one can do it legally."³⁰ A later gaon, Aharon, issued a minority opinion that had even more far-reaching implications: that any sexual act between a captive woman

²⁷ For a concise summary of this legend, its treatment in gaonic responsa, and a short bibliography, see *EJIW*, s.v. "Bustanay." See also Arnold E. Franklin, *This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 58 and passim; Wacholder, "Halakhah," 99–101; Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 58–81. Gil here discusses the basis for describing the materials related to Bustanay as "folklore or popular traditions." The most pertinent details of this case come from a gaonic responsum: *Sha'are Sedeq* (Salonika, 1792): 2b, 3a (part I, par. 17); 25a (part 6, par. 15). The manuscript upon which the edition is based is (as Gil puts it) "not available to us." The Genizah has preserved two copies of a responsum that discuss the same case. Document 1 is T-S 13G1. Schechter indicates that T-S 13G1 is more complete than the edition in *Sha'are Sedeq*. See Solomon Schechter, "Saadyana," *The Jewish Quarterly Review (Old Series)* 14 (1902): 242–246. Schechter also publishes here T-S 8G1, another copy of the same responsum as T-S 13G1. Document 2 is T-S NS 298.6 + ENA 4012.1 + BL Or. 5552.4. Gil believes these three fragments are in the hand of Sahlān b. Abraham, the head of the Iraqi congregation in Fustat (ca. 1034-1049/50). See Gil, *Ishmael*, I: 1–10; *EJIW*, s.v. "Sahlān ben Abraham." The last fragment contains the date 1352 of the Seleucid era corresponding to 1040-1041. George Margoliouth notes that BL Or. 5552.4 presents a different narrative of the story in which Bustanay only has one wife, the slave woman granted him by Caliph 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb. A salient detail remains the same: Bustanay did not emancipate her before she gave birth to his children. This version of events omits the later conflict between Bustanay's children over who are rightful heirs. See "Some British Museum Genizah Texts," *The Jewish Quarterly Review Old Series* 14 (1902): 303.

²⁸ Wacholder, "Halakhah," 100. There is disagreement over the exact dates for Naṭronay's gaonate. See Ackerman-Lieberman's entry: *EJIW*, s.v. "Naṭronay bar Hilai Ga'on." Robert Broday has edited Naṭronay's responsa. See *Teshuvot Rav Natronai bar Hilai Ga'on*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Ofef Institute, 1994).

²⁹ Wacholder, "Halakhah," 100. See Brody, *Teshuvot Rav Natronai*, II: 397–398. Responsum # 261 and especially p. 398, n. 6.

³⁰ See *BT Giṭṭin* 81B. Translation from Wacholder, "Halakhah," 100. Brody, *Teshuvot Rav Natronai*, II: 397–398, n. 6.

and her master proved that he had emancipated her.³¹ While later geonim did not adopt Aharon's opinion, his reasoning illustrates the extreme of a legal debate about social practices that bedeviled Jewish legal scholars.

Another query to Natronay b. Hilay raises the issue of concubinage among the wider population and indicates that men would lie about their slaves' status in order to exploit them as concubines without taking on the responsibilities that manumission and marriage would entail. The author of this letter inquires:

Many people in our places buy attractive slave women, claiming that they buy them for household service, but we suspect that they buy them for another purpose. Is it proper to leave them under suspicion? And if someone says, "I have manumitted my slave and she is like my concubine," should we accept what he says? Or should we investigate the case and oblige him to show the bill of manumission and to bring evidence that he has married her properly? Should the court investigate all that, or should it leave the case and presume that all men are trustworthy, so that whoever is suspect will remain suspect and whoever is trustworthy will remain so?³²

In this responsum, we can also see that, in practice, there was uncertainty about how far Jewish communities should go in regulating master-slave relationships in which there was doubt about its legality. A related query appears again in eleventh-century Iraq, this time concerning a man who made his wife's Christian slave-girl pregnant and attempted to have

³¹ Wacholder, "Halakhah," 100. Wacholder identifies Aaron as "[a]nother Sura Gaon." There is no Sura Gaon with the name Aaron listed in Brody's "Chronology of the Geonim" in Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 344–345. There is a Pumbedita Gaon, Aaron b. Joseph (943–960). See also Brody, *Teshuvot Rav Natronai*, II: 397–398 and n. 8. On Aaron Gaon see Arnold Franklin's entry *EJW*, s.v. "Ibn Sarjado, Aaron (Khalaf) ben Joseph ha-Kohen."

³² Brody, *Teshuvot Rav Natronai*, II: 399, no. 262. Also found in Nissim b. Ḥayyim Moda'i, *Teshuvot Ha-Geonim: Sha'are Sedeq*, in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Kelal u-ferat, 1966), 62, no. 38. See the discussion in Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 255.

the newborn child circumcised in the synagogue without having admitted his crime.³³ Despite legal prescription, social practices persisted in which men attempted to circumvent the law.

Judaeo-Arabic folktales from the period also convey anxiety about sexual relations between masters and their slave women. The eleventh-century collection of Judaeo-Arabic folktales *Relief after Adversity* (*al-Faraj ba'd al-shiddah*) contains a story in which the wife of a gardener offers herself to be sold as a slave so that her husband can use the proceeds for pious purposes.³⁴ Her husband, Yosef, objects, however, because he fears that her new master may rape her. Nevertheless Yosef's wife is sold several times, and must repeatedly refuse the sexual advances of her masters. In retaliation, her various masters either sell her to a new owner or mistreat her. This folktale, like the responsa analyzed above, suggests that the sexual exploitation of female slaves was not uncommon.

But Egyptian legal authorities like Maimonides and his son Abraham showed no indication of the permissiveness that Aharon's ruling would have encouraged. Egyptian Jews even seemed to lack the legal vocabulary to discuss the concubinage that pervaded the wider Islamicate setting in which they lived. Or perhaps they were loath to broach the subject in direct terms even when the situation described seemed blatantly clear. The term *pilegish* is

³³ Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 256. While the practice of illicit master-slave sex is amply documented in the twelfth and thirteenth-century Genizah sources, there are no surviving documentary records that indicate such instances in Genizah documents from the tenth and eleventh centuries. See Friedman, "Monogamy Clause."

³⁴ This collection of folktales is known to have circulated among the Jewish community in Egypt. The title is mentioned in documentary sources in which individuals offer to copy it for an associate, or encourage acquaintances to read the work. For example, see T-S AS 149.10 and TS AS 147.32. See also Goitein's discussion of these documents in Nissim ben Jacob ibn Shāhīn, *An Elegant Composition Concerning Relief After Adversity*, trans. William M. Brinner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), xxxii–xxxiii. They are also discussed in Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 255. For analysis of how folktales reflect social anxieties about sexual relationships between masters and slaves, see Keith Hopkins, "Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery," *Past and Present* 138 (1993): 3–27.

used in legal writings, but only to indicate an ancient practice reserved for kings; it was not a relevant contemporary category. Even the permission of royal concubinage was itself a hollow concession, since there was no medieval Jewish state.

Responsa queries and court depositions both use the expression “*jāriyah lil-khidmah*” (“a slave woman for domestic service”) as a means to emphasize that the slave in question was not a concubine.³⁵ Writers also use this phrase in the negative to emphasize the unseemly appearance created by cohabitation between masters and their female slaves. In an isolated use of one of the Arabic words for concubine, one query to Abraham Maimonides in the thirteenth century reads, “[H]e bought a slave woman and she was not a slave woman for domestic service, but rather a concubine (Ar: *surriyyah*).”³⁶ In comparison, Arab Muslim writers employed various terms to describe legal concubinage arrangements that were sanctioned in Egyptian Islamic society. Terms such as *mustawladah* (a child-bearing concubine) and *mawṭū’ah* (a concubine for the express purpose of sex) appear in the fifteenth-century biographical dictionary of Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497) to describe the numerous slave women and mothers of free Muslims whom he encountered during his life in Cairo and the Arabian peninsula.³⁷ While Egyptian Muslims had a varied vocabulary for diverse sexual practices, Egyptian Jews struggled to classify Jewish social practices with precision.

IV. The Responsa of Abraham Maimonides

³⁵ A court record: T-S Misc.27.4.23 + T-S 27.4.29. Discussed below.

³⁶ Emphasis mine. T-S 10K8.13. Edited in Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 319–322.

³⁷ al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*.

Social practice fluctuated over matters of sex, slaves, and the marriage of freedwomen and Jewish men among Jews in Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt. It is clear that during the latter twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, legal prescriptions did not reflect reality; nor were communal officials easily able to compel Jewish men to follow the law.³⁸ The result was improvisation on the part of both “the common people” and jurists.

The existence of domestic female slavery created a basic problem of proximity. Jewish men had access to slave women whose own lives and choices were constrained by the coercive structures of slavery. Male desire, slave vulnerability and the proximity of both created the conditions that made illicit concubinage possible for some Jewish men. Slave women themselves may have also asserted their own interests through these arrangements. Genizah evidence suggests that these relationships were, at the very least, not uncommon in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Whether these phenomena were pervasive, isolated, or somewhere in between, they clearly induced a communal anxiety that had a life of its own.³⁹

The responsum was a common tool that Jewish legal scholars in the medieval period used to adjudicate social practice and bring it more closely into line with prescriptive law. For social historians, responsa fall into a category between documentary and literary sources: the queries frequently testify to real individual and communal concerns that illustrate social practices—in this case, relations between Jewish men and their slave women. Depending on

³⁸ The documentary Genizah record mainly describes the Egyptian environment and will be discussed below. For published Genizah documents related to this topic see, Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 291–339. For the Iraqi context, see Wacholder, “Halakhah.” Another source useful for its bibliography is Urbach, *The Laws Regarding Slavery*.

³⁹ Cf. Hopkins, “Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery.”

how well the responsum has been preserved, it can be possible to date the responsum to the active career of the addressee, but queries copied into larger legal compendia are generally stripped of specific identifiers and precise historical information. Proper names, for example, do not appear in responsa concerning slave matters.⁴⁰ Further, when scribes recopied responsa, they sometimes further generalized the specifics of the original queries in order to broaden their relevance, or they combined several queries into a single case. Despite these characteristics of the genre, responsa are of immense value to historians because they suggest what their authors viewed as plausible scenarios involving slaves and their masters.⁴¹

It is no coincidence that a cluster of surviving responsa deals directly with cases of Jewish men taking slave women in defiance of custom and law. Four such queries were written to Abraham Maimonides in Fustāt, some sixty years after the petitions to Shemu'el b. Ḥananyah.⁴² All illustrate variations on the same theme.⁴³ Men, usually married ones, cohabited with slave women whom they had not emancipated or betrothed despite the requirement in Jewish law that a slave woman be emancipated before a man could marry her. If there were illicit sexual relations before emancipation and marriage, then the law forbade the man from marrying the girl at any point. In some of these cases, men abandoned their

⁴⁰ An exception to this rule is discussed in chapters two and four. A legal query sent to Abraham Maimonides, and answered by him, mentions specific places and individuals. T-S 8J16.4.

⁴¹ On the use of rabbinic responsa for social history, see Soloveitchik, *Use of Responsa*; Melammed, "He Said, She Said." For a discussion of the legal status of responsa, see Lifshitz, "Legal Status." Lifshitz does not address responsa from medieval Egypt in any detail, but his discussion of the authority of responsa and legal codes vis-à-vis each other raises some useful questions. Thanks to Oded Zinger for bringing this latter source to my attention.

⁴² For a discussion of how the responsa of Abraham Maimonides are organized and how they were copied, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 485–487. The cluster is comprised of DK 231.2, T-S 10K8.13, CUL Or. 1080 J281 and BL, Or. 10652.2. See also the discussion in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 134–135; V: 486–487; Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society."

⁴³ Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 319–325. See also a related letter to Abraham Maimonides, *Ibid.*, 326–330.

wives and children entirely without granting their wives a divorce. In such circumstances, the wife would become like “a widow in his lifetime” (*be-almenut ḥayyut*) and unable to remarry.⁴⁴ Collectively, these sources illustrate how relations between Jewish men and their slave women upset family and communal life and even served to denigrate the status and dignity of free Jewish women. These queries also suggest a range of plausible behaviors and social practices that provide a framework for interpreting the family dispute between Abū al-Faraj and his wife over their slave woman.

One query to Abraham Maimonides testifies to a range of concerns relevant to the circumstances of the Abū al-Faraj petitions.⁴⁵ The author of the original question takes issue with the behavior of an anonymous Jewish man who had abandoned his wife and children, bought a slave woman and now resided with her. This document is now part of the Taylor-Schechter collection at Cambridge University Library (a fact I state to distinguish it from the subsequent responsa I will go on to cite). The text follows:

Concerning a Jew who has a wife and children by her in Alexandria (*al-thaghr*):⁴⁶ He discarded her, left, and then bought a slave woman. She was not a domestic servant (*jāriyah khidmah*), but rather a concubine (*surriyyah*), or mistress of the house

⁴⁴ *Almenut ḥayyut* refers to the state (or condition) of being the widow of a living man. For a discussion of the Hebrew *almenut ḥayyut* (and its Judaeo-Arabic equivalent) in Genizah documents, see Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, 143, 150–153. Women whose husbands abandoned them could become stuck in legal limbo. If the husband did not grant the wife a bill of divorce, or if his death could not be confirmed, then the woman was not able to remarry or collect the monetary sum owed her in her wedding contract. Goitein and Cohen also discuss the circumstances that led to such situations and the experiences of women and children thus abandoned. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 591, n. 8; III: 195–205, 264, 469.

⁴⁵ T-S 10K8.13. Edited in Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 319–322. See Friedman’s commentary there.

⁴⁶ *Al-thaghr* = “a frontier seaport.” In this instance, it is a reference to the Egyptian city of Alexandria. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 376. Also used to denote Alexandria below in Budapest: 231.2. Friedman also translates “*al-thaghr*” as Alexandria. See Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 320, 321.

(*ṣāhibat al-manzil*).⁴⁷ He took up with her for a period (and) when he left—traveling to the Fayyūm—he clothed her in fine garments the likes of which his wife had never worn. Thus he departed for the Fayyūm with the slave woman, abandoning his children as orphans and his wife like a widow of a living man.⁴⁸ As it is said: “No one sees, and every man does as he sees fit. No man pays any heed.”⁴⁹ Teach us (the law in this matter): is he allowed to take up with her without a marriage contract and without paying his wife a delayed marriage gift? For he abandoned his wife and children and he is alone with a slave woman at home. She is residing with him. Is this allowed, or not? Is it permissible for an unmarried Jewish man to reside with a slave woman, spending the entire day and night with her in the house? And he does not have a wife, a sister, or his children (with him). Teach us if silence concerning this matter is permissible. If not, teach us according to his holy Law and his expansive wisdom. May his reward be multiplied by Heaven.

The Response

The unchaperoned situation with the slave woman is not permissible. And if it is confirmed that this person did this, (then) pronounce a ban upon his name until he leaves the slave woman, has sent her out, and has distanced himself from her.⁵⁰
Signed— Avraham⁵¹

Other queries sent to Abraham present additional scenarios and concerns. A single document in the David Kaufmann collection in Budapest includes two questions:

(Question A)

... What do you say... in the case of a person who buys a slave woman who is not a slave woman for domestic service? He has a wife and [he] is not with her in one town. He rents a house for the aforementioned slave woman and he lodges her there. This man is not one who is concerned with religion. He travels for work and then he returns to the slave woman. He has a wife and children in Alexandria. Instruct us whether he is allowed to do this or not.

⁴⁷ “[M]istress of the house” = *ṣāhibat al-manzil*. See Friedman, “Monogamy Clause,” 27. For *ṣāhibah* as mistress, see also Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (New York: Fungar Publication Co., 1955), 1653; Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durrīyah*, 381.

⁴⁸ “Like a widow of a living man” comes from the Hebrew used *almenut ḥayyut*, which denotes the condition of being the widow of a living man. Al-Fayyūm is a region in Middle Egypt. See *El* 2, al-Fayyūm.

⁴⁹ Here an allusion to Judges 17:6, 21:25 (*ba-yamim ha-hem ein melekh be-yisrael: ish ha-yashar be-enav ya'aseh*) and possibly Jeremiah 12:11 (*nashamah kol ha-aretz ki ein ish sam 'al lev*).

⁵⁰ For translation of the Judaeo-Arabic term *wa-yaba'aduhā* and discussion of S. Assaf's interpretation of this word, see Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 321, n. 10 and 322.

⁵¹ T-S 10K8.13.

(The writer leaves a small space in line 10 to indicate a new query.)

(Question B)

Instruct us in the case of a person who has never been married. He purchased a Christian slave woman, converted her, and resides with her constantly—and there is no *ketubbah* or betrothal (*qiddushin*). Instruct us. Is [this permitted to him?]...⁵²

A third Genizah document now held in the British Library presents yet another variation on the practice of men taking slave concubines:⁵³

... Concerning a person who does not have a wife, whether his wife died or he was never married in his life: He takes a slave woman. She is not a freed woman and is not betrothed (to him). He resides with her constantly. There is not a single one of his relatives with him in the house—just he and the slave woman, who (has not been) manumitted. Instruct us if he is permitted to reside with her before he frees her and marries her with a *ketubbah* and *qiddushin*. And if they have a son (*walad*), what will (his status) be?⁵⁴ What is the solution for this?⁵⁵

There are three layers of concern in these queries, presented in varying order. The main concern centers on the cohabitation of men with slave women. The writers describe the appearance of concubinage, though this is broached directly only in the first example, in which the author states that the slave woman is a *surriyyah*, using an Arabic term. But even

⁵² Budapest: 231.2 (alt: XXV). I have omitted the lengthy encomium to Abraham Maimonides with which this query writer begins (ll. 1-5). My translation includes, “*mā taqūlu*” (“what do you say”) in line 2 and then continues from the end of line 5 with “*fi shakhṣ*” (“concerning a person”). Since this document contains two queries, I refer below to the first query as “Budapest (A)” and the second query as “Budapest (B).” The last line of this translation (l. 12) follows Friedman’s transcription in Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 323. The image available in FGP supports Friedman’s reconstruction.

⁵³ Or. 10652.2 (alt: Gaster 1638.2).

⁵⁴ Friedman translates: “*ve-im yihiye la-hem yeled, mah yihiye din-hu?*” See Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 325.

⁵⁵ Or. 10652.2, ll. 8-9: “*wa-mā [a]l-hilah fi dhalak.*” See Friedman’s Hebrew translations of “*al-hilah fi dhalak*” in T-S G1.75, l. 7 and Or. 10652.2, l. 8-9. Ibid., 224–225; 325. The writer may ask this question rhetorically. The answer would seem to be clear – the children will be illegitimate. Thus the question should be understood as a means to underscore the illegality and threatening implications of concubinage from the point of view of the writer. On responsa queries that contain such “simple and clear-cut” issues, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 339. Yet the ruling of Maimonides in *MT Naḥalot* 4:6 above injects some ambiguity about the status of such children. As Maimonides writes, “If the man is a scholar or a trustworthy man that is exacting in strict observance of the commandments, then the son shall inherit (from) him. Nevertheless, the son is not allowed to marry a Jewish woman until he produces proof that his mother was emancipated and (only) afterwards gave birth – since she was previously presumed to be a slave woman.”

here, he equivocates, as if he is searching for the appropriate terminology: “she is not a slave woman for domestic service” and “or she is a mistress of the house.” This oblique phrasing illustrates the inability of Egyptians Jews to classify social practice with precise and appropriate vocabulary drawn from Jewish law. The choice of words may also reflect prevailing societal mores of modesty. Budapest (A and B) and the British Library documents are also indirect in their allegations that the men they discuss are keeping concubines. They indicate this arrangement by stressing that the men and their slave women are alone, unchaperoned, or by invoking the “not for domestic service” caveat.

In two of the questions, the second topic is the impact of the men’s behavior on their families. The Cambridge document stands out on account of the details it furnishes concerning the fate of the man’s wife—possibly marginalized as a “widow in his lifetime.” The first question in the Budapest query also implies the abandonment of the wife, though in less stark terms. In the queries that discuss neglected wives, the writers include statements meant to cast moral aspersions upon the men. The allusion to the biblical book of Judges (“Every man does as he sees fit”) implies a disregard for communal authority. Budapest (A) author’s choice of words that “this man is not one who concerns himself with religion” could have a double meaning. It serves to underscore the man’s transgressions *vis-à-vis* his wife. It is also reminiscent of Maimonides’ stance in the laws of *Mishneh Torah* discussed above: Maimonides rules that men who are circumspect in their observance of religious law should be believed when they say that their sons are free men because they were born of manumitted

slave women. By contrast, commoners who are lax in their observance should not be given the same benefit of the doubt.⁵⁶

The third layer of concern focuses on the question of what should be done according to the law and in practical terms. Of the three documents, only the Cambridge responsum includes a written reply by Abraham Maimonides. His instructions are concise and unambiguous, not unlike other responsa attributed to him concerning concubinage.⁵⁷ The Cambridge query writer is concerned with the welfare of the abandoned wife as evidenced by his question about the husband's obligation to pay her according to the terms of their *ketubbah*.⁵⁸ The tone of the Cambridge and the Budapest (A) questions leave little room for doubt about the legality of the situation given the description of the abandoned family. It is possible that this was a deliberate strategy. The query writer may have intended to use Abraham's response to pressure the husband to pay his wife according to their marriage contract, if not also to compel him to sell his slave concubine.⁵⁹

Yet the situations in Budapest (B) and the British Library documents are more ambiguous. In Budapest (B) the owner converts his slave woman to Judaism, an act that places her in the category of the *amah ivriyah* (Hebrew maidservant) that Maimonides discusses in *Melakhim* 4:4: "But a concubine is forbidden to a commoner. He may, however, acquire his Hebrew slave woman after he has designated her to himself." It could be that the Budapest (B) author wants clarification about whether or not this form of concubinage with a

⁵⁶ *MT Nahalot* 4:6.

⁵⁷ See Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 33, no. 21.

⁵⁸ T-S 10K8.13, l. 9.

⁵⁹ On the practical and strategic use of responsa, see Lifshitz, "Legal Status"; Zinger, "Women, Gender and Law."

Jewish slave woman is permitted at all. Furthermore, if it is permitted, what is required to legalize the relationship?⁶⁰ Alternatively, he could be soliciting a response from Abraham that would support him, or another party, in an attempt to compel the man in question to emancipate and marry the slave woman outright.⁶¹

The final example, from the British Library, is unique among these responsa in that it asks what the status of a child would be who was born from a Jewish man and his slave woman prior to her manumission and their marriage. According to the *Mishneh Torah*, the status of the child would turn on a number of factors. It matters whether or not the slave woman is Jewish, and the query does not specify or indicate her religion. If she is a non-Jewish slave, then the relevant law is clear in its formulation: “(Concerning) a Jew who cohabitates with a foreign slave (*yisra’el she-ba’ al shifḥah kena’anit*), even if she is his slave, the resulting offspring is a foreign slave in all respects.”⁶² If the slave woman is Jewish, then the child’s status would be determined according to the law stipulated in *Naḥalot* 4:6. If the child’s father was a considered trustworthy and circumspect in religious matters, then the presumption is that the father first emancipated the slave. Thus the child would be free. If the child’s father was a more reckless commoner, then the child should be considered a slave.

⁶⁰ See for example, Maimonides’ discussion in *MT ‘Avadim* 4:7-9 where Maimonides explains the laws by which a man may designate a Hebrew slave woman to himself or to his son. The detail concerning *ketubbah* and *qiddushin* may also point to the different stances of the Babylonian and Palestinian legal schools towards concubinage. In the Babylonian tradition, concubines had neither *ketubbah* nor *qiddushin*. In the Palestinian tradition, concubines had *qiddushin* (betrothal), but not *ketubbah*. In *‘Avadim* 4:9, Maimonides formulates the issue using the language of *erusin* and *nisu’in*: “Espousal (of a Hebrew slave woman to a Jewish man) is like betrothal (*erusin*) and not like marriage (*nisu’in*).”

⁶¹ On the use of responsa in legal disputes, see Lifshitz, “Legal Status”; Zinger, “Women, Gender and Law.”

⁶² *MT ‘Avadim* 9:1.

These responsa, and others like them, illustrate a diversity of social practices in which men took slave women as concubines. Concubinage arrangements were not all of the same kind. They were made more or less complex by the marital status of the male slave owner, and by the personal status of the slave women. Despite these complexities, legal precedents and codes provided relatively clear instruction for how to deal with these various situations.⁶³

V. Jewish Men, Mastery, and Desire

A question then arises: What is the meaning of the many responsa of Moses and Abraham Maimonides that deal with master-slave cohabitation? These queries reflect that Jewish law and social practice regarding slave concubinage were at odds and that Jewish communal authorities struggled to curb the practice. What motivated the men discussed above not only to abandon their dependents, but also to risk social and legal condemnation in order to take their slaves as concubines? Illicit concubinage needs to be understood within a broader field of diverse unlawful male sexual practices that also included extra-marital affairs and prostitution.⁶⁴ What unites all these practices is that men sought to gratify their own sexual desire. They even acknowledged such desires, albeit in oblique terms. One husband writes to his estranged wife, who had gone to live with her relatives, that he would treat her in the future as if she were a queen and he her slave. The initial cause of the marital dispute seems to have been the husband's insistence that his wife minimize her appearances outside of the home. At three different places in his letter, he alludes to the difficulties of being a

⁶³ The Jewish population of Fatimid and Ayybuid Cairo was cosmopolitan. It was, in many respects, a community comprised of migrants and transplants from the west and the east. As the Iberian context illustrates, there was regional variation in Jewish law on the subject of concubinage. It is possible that the diversity of sex practices around the Mediterranean contributed to a mixed sexual culture in Egypt.

⁶⁴ On one Jewish man's affair with a Muslim woman, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V:322.

bachelor. At one point, he stresses that being single in Cairo is very difficult for chaste people. He also bluntly adds that, if his wife does not return, he will go to the countryside and find a “girl or a widow” to marry.⁶⁵ While this man states his desire to be married, his conflation of the challenges of bachelorhood with chastity is telling.

Male desire for extramarital sexual gratification is also explicitly recognized in Genizah marriage records. In particular, the formulae used in marriage documents demonstrate the assumption that some men were expected to seek out concubinage and sexual opportunity with slave women. Among the many documents studied by Friedman and Amir Ashur are examples that include a clause stipulating that the groom will not purchase a slave woman who is unacceptable to his bride.⁶⁶ The clause is stated somewhat differently across the total corpus of Genizah marriage contracts. The standard form of the clause is “He (the groom) will not retain a slave woman whom she (the bride) dislikes.” In light of how free women used female slavery for their own self-interests, this version of the clause may reflect a shared understanding of slavery’s importance to a Jewish bride. A second variant is written, “(H)e may not take a slave woman as a concubine” (or simply “he shall not take a concubine”). This second variation confirms another intention behind the more common variant: the

⁶⁵ Mosseri II,195v, ll. 14-16, 18. (previously Mosseri L 197). See *Ibid.*, III: 53, 180, 438, 465; IV: 30, 47, 237, 356, 360, 436; V: 219, 312, 567; Ashur, “Engagement and Betrothal Documents,” 117, n. 124. Goitein surmises that the letter was written in the early twelfth century due to its mention of Abū Munajjā, a Jew in the service of the Fatimid official al-Malik al-Afḍal. See S. D. Goitein, “A Maghrebi Living in Cairo Implores His Karaite Wife to Return to Him,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 73 (1982): 138.

⁶⁶ The numbers of documents that include this clause are too numerous to list here. Representative examples are discussed here below. For an overview of this clause, its origins and usage, see Friedman, “Monogamy Clause”; Friedman, “Pre-Nuptial Agreements”; Friedman, *JMP*; Mordechai A. Friedman, “Polygyny in Jewish Tradition and Practice New Sources from the Cairo Geniza,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 49 (1982): 33–68; Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*; Ashur, “Engagement and Betrothal Documents.”

groom's purchase of a slave woman represented the opportunity for concubinage or other illicit sexual relations with household slaves.⁶⁷

Friedman has also studied prenuptial agreements from the Genizah that provide some insight into the sexual behavior of Jewish bachelors in eleventh-century Egypt.⁶⁸ In Fustat, the groom Ṭuviyyah b. 'Elī b. Khalaf testified before witnesses that he would treat his fiancée, Fā'iza, "as the best law-abiding Jews do with law-abiding Jewish women."⁶⁹ Ṭuviyyah's declarations indicate, however, that he was not always known to be among the "best law-abiding Jews" whom he aspired to emulate. His testimony continues:

(I will abandon) iniquity and perversion. I will associate with law-abiding men and not associate with degenerate men. I will not admit into my house licentious men, buffoons, frivolous jesters, and good-for-nothings. I will not enter the house of anyone who clings to licentiousness, degeneracy, or abhorrent deeds. I will not associate with them for food, drink, or anything else. I will not buy a slave woman for myself, as long as this Fā'iza is with me in marriage, except with her explicit consent.⁷⁰

Ṭuviyyah's deed of testimony is exceptional in its admission of licentious behavior. The description of his actions suggests that he may have previously engaged in prostitution.⁷¹ The

⁶⁷ First variant: "*wa-lā yubqī jāriyah takariha-hā.*" For examples, see CAHJP 2588, ll. 14-15 and RNL Yevr.-Arab. I (Firkovitch II) 1700, f. 17b, l. 6. Second variant: "*wa-lā yatasarra bi-jāriyah.*" For example, see T-S 13J6.33, l. 9. See also T-S 13J8.24, ll. 8-9. On these and other variant slave woman clauses, see Friedman, "Monogamy Clause," 26-27. In some ketubbot, two clauses are used: that a groom will not take a concubine, nor buy a slave woman hated by his bride. See T-S 13J8.24 (mentioned above) and T-S 8J5.21, ll. 11-12. Friedman discusses these documents in *Ibid.*, 27, n. 32. In the twelfth century, a second clause was often added to marriage contracts that stated a man would also not take a second wife. See the works by Friedman cited above, n. 64.

⁶⁸ Friedman, "Pre-Nuptial Agreements."

⁶⁹ T-S 20.160, ll. 9-10. Here I translate *kasherim* and *kasherot* as "law-abiding." One might also read "honest" or "trustworthy."

⁷⁰ T-S 20.160, ll. 10-16. My translation differs from Friedman's only in some matters of word choice. As Friedman notes, it seems that Ṭuviyyah's conduct aligns with his nickname, Ibn Ṣaffān, "son of a buffoon." Friedman, "Pre-Nuptial Agreements."

⁷¹ The terms "licentious men" and "anyone who clings to licentiousness" come from the Hebrew "*perōšim*" and "*kol mi she-hu maḥziq be-perišut.*" The precise nature of the licentious behavior in question is not specified. The root PRŞ can connote sexual licentiousness, however, in reference to both men and women. "Degeneracy" (*qilqul*) may also have a sexual connotation. See Marcus Jastrow, ed., *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud*

juxtaposition of this behavior with his pledge not to purchase a slave woman without the explicit consent of his fiancée underscores the rationale behind the various similar clauses found in marriage contracts.

Given the general reticence about sexual matters in Genizah documents, it is not surprising that direct references to prostitution in these sources are rare.⁷² But Jewish men clearly had access to prostitutes, as documentary and literary sources tell us.⁷³ But sex with slave women left a more conspicuous documentary record. An episode from the first half of the eleventh century underscores that communal officials faced challenges in attempting to regulate sexual practices in this earlier period as well. Such a concern is mentioned in a letter to a Jewish communal authority, the *nagid* Ya‘aqov b. ‘Amram, in the North African city of Qayrawān.⁷⁴ One piece of news that the author conveys to Ya‘aqov concerns the visit to Egypt of the Iraqi communal leader (*nasi*) Dani‘el b. ‘Azarya (d. 1062).⁷⁵ The writer heralds Dani‘el’s visit and describes a litany of reforms (*taqqanot*) that the *nasi* had imposed during his visit to

Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1237, 1382. In this deed of testimony, the licentiousness may well refer to illicit sex or its semblance. See Friedman’s comment on this document in *Jewish Polygyny*, 33. “This groom was a man suspected of engaging in prostitution.”

⁷² In matters of sex, medieval Egyptian Jews rarely if ever referred to such matters at all and, when they do, it is only obliquely and through euphemisms. See Goitein, “Sexual Mores.”

⁷³ Goitein observes the lack of documentation on this subject, but notes exceptions. For example, *funduqs* (hostels) were known to be places where a man could find a prostitute. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 350; V: 322. The contemporary collection of Judaeo-Arabic folk tales *Faraj ba‘d al-Shiddah* contains two separate stories of Jewish men visiting prostitutes. See Shāhīn, *Elegant Composition*, 41, 140. The subject of prostitution in the Genizah bears further investigation. Perhaps the relative price of a prostitute, compared to the high cost of a slave woman, meant that concubinage was a practice afforded only to wealthier individuals. See also Goitein, “Portrait of a Medieval India Trader”; Friedman, “Women and the India Trade,” 172–175.

⁷⁴ ENA 3765.10, verso. The author of the letter is unknown, but the circumstances surrounding this missive and its contents are well documented. Mark R. Cohen found a continuation of ENA 3765.10 in T-S 18J4.16. See Mark R. Cohen, “New Light on the Conflict over the Palestinian Gaonate, 1038-1042, and on Daniel B. ‘Azarya: A Pair of Letters to the Nagid of Qayrawan,” *AJS Review* 1 (January 1, 1976): 1–39. Cohen and Gil date the letter to 1039. Jacob b. ‘Amram was alive as late as 1060. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 24–25; Gil, *Palestine*, II: 332–334.

⁷⁵ Death date according to Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*, 858.

Egypt. One, the author states, was that “(h)e removed the slave women from the houses.”⁷⁶ In this letter, the very term “slave women” (here the Hebrew *shifhot*) is conflated with illicit sexual opportunity for free Jewish men.

Women and their families also recognized how men’s sexual behavior could humiliate potential brides as they sought marriages for their daughters. A second prenuptial agreement edited by Friedman is the twelfth-century marital match deed (*shiddukh*) for a woman named Sitt al-Banāt (called Sa‘īdah). The terms of this deed suggest that a husband’s extramarital sexual activity—with a slave woman or otherwise—was considered a humiliation to the wife.⁷⁷ Several stipulations in the marriage contract are clearly meant to protect the bride:

He (the groom) will not marry a wife (besides her). He will not possess a slave girl whom she dislikes. If he ever does one of these things, then he is responsible for her full delayed marriage payment.... He also took it upon himself to follow commendable ways and not associate with anyone with whom it is not fitting to associate. If at any time it is verified that he has committed [a humiliating act], he will owe ten dinars as a gift to [Sa‘īdah]...⁷⁸

Here again, we have a groom whose character is suspect. Like the suspected oaf Ṭuviyyah b. ‘Elī, this unnamed man is suspected of previous immoral behavior. Per the modest habits of medieval scribes, the precise nature of this behavior is not specified. We see in both prenuptial agreements, however, the juxtaposition of the slave-girl clause with indicators of

⁷⁶ *Ve-shifhot hoši’a l-huṣ-ha*. ENA 3765.10, verso, ll. 22-23. Cohen and Goitein read this decree as a crackdown on the practice of concubinage. See Cohen, “New Light,” 12–13; Goitein, *Palestinian Jewry*, 133–135.

⁷⁷ ENA 2806.11. Ashur has discovered a join for this document (ENA 2727.18b) and is now able to date it to 1133. See Ashur, “Engagement and Betrothal Documents,” 365.

⁷⁸ ENA 2806.11, ll 9-10, 12-14. This is Friedman’s translation with some modifications in word choice. Friedman, “Pre-Nuptial Agreements,” CXX–CXXI. As Friedman notes, the phrase including “any humiliating act” is a translation of *‘amr yashub min-hu* which is more literally rendered “that from which one would be tarnished.” *Ibid.*, CXXI, n. 39. See ENA 2806.11, l. 14. Friedman adds that the reading is thus uncertain.

prior immoral behavior. In Ṭuviyyah's case, the behavior was clearly deemed licentious. In the case of Saʿīdah's groom, we learn only that his prior behavior was likely to humiliate his wife.

Concubinage, and even its semblance, must be understood as a practice that represented a threat of humiliation to Jewish brides. Sometimes this threat was obvious and destructive, as we see in the case of the woman *be-almenut ḥayyut* whose husband lodged his concubine in rural Egypt. At other times, the threat was a latent one, as demonstrated by the use of the slave woman and concubine clauses in marriage contracts.

As these examples illustrate, the sexual behavior of Jewish men in Egypt was of persistent concern to women, their families, and communal officials between the eleventh and the early thirteenth centuries. Concubinage was but one social practice that authorities tried to control and discourage. Illicit Jewish concubinage cannot, then, be understood as an outcome of Egyptian Muslim influence. The regulation of sex was a concern shared across groups in Egyptian society. The avenues that Jewish men chose for sex were shaped, however, by the positions that the jurists took and by the politics of the domestic sphere. What best explains the picture that emerges from the sources of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is a rabbinic and communal inability to regulate sexual practices effectively with clarity and consistency.

Men who took concubines did not, of course, explain why they did so. In other kinds of marital disputes, family letters and legal records do give us some sense of how and why

husbands, wives and their extended families clashed.⁷⁹ But medieval subjects were not apt to write about the personal motivations for illicit concubinage in any detail.

The study of slavery in other medieval contexts suggests questions that we can ask of the evidence that survives from the Genizah. Ruth Karras argues that slavery in medieval England and Scandinavia was profoundly gendered and that men exploited female slaves for both their labor and their sexual services. She adds that three factors motivated men to have sex with their slave women: desire for sex, desire for dominance and the prospect of descendants.⁸⁰

While Egyptian Muslims could and did use concubines to produce descendants, it is doubtful that desire for descendants motivated Jewish men to take slave concubines. Even the suspicion of such master-slave reproduction drew the attention of communal authorities, as in the case of ‘Eli b. Yefet in a court record from December 1093.⁸¹ ‘Eli had previously bought a slave woman and her daughter, though the daughter later died. ‘Eli subsequently emancipated the mother and married her. The couple then had a daughter whom they named Milāḥ. After some time, the family appeared before a local Jewish judge (*muqaddam*) in Egypt in order to dispel any suspicion that Milāḥ had been born before ‘Eli emancipated her mother. Witnesses testified on ‘Eli’s behalf that, indeed, Milāḥ was born some time after the emancipation. The

⁷⁹ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 171–205, 212–223.

⁸⁰ Karras, “Desire, Descendants, and Dominance.” Frenkel was the first to apply a gendered approach to the study of Genizah sources and this dissertation owes much to the issues she raises. See Frenkel, “Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society.” Compare also to work on the slave society of eighteenth-century Jamaica in Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁸¹ T-S Misc. 27.4.23 + T-S Misc.29.6. A later legal query to Abraham Maimonides also raises the obvious question of what the status of the children would be from a union between a man and his slave concubine (who has not yet been freed). See, above, BL Or. 10652.2 and the discussion there.

issue at stake was both the legality of ‘Eli’s marriage and Milāḥ’s Jewishness. If Milāḥ had been conceived while her mother was still a slave, she would be considered illegitimate and not legally Jewish. The marriage would also be considered void since it was illegal to marry one’s slave woman if the master had had sexual relations with her before emancipation.⁸²

Concubinage was thus a risky strategy for producing offspring. Jewish men could gain prestige and social recognition from their children, particularly sons. Slave owners could also use slave ownership to project their own status and financial well-being and, via slave names, their own social values. Slaves were practical kin who further served myriad roles in the household as described in chapter two. But in the Jewish communal context, slaves could not produce Jewish descendants. Such offspring had to result from a legal marriage between free Jews.

So, if Jewish men did not view their slave women as vessels for procreation, what motivated them to risk excommunication and social opprobrium in their exploitation of slave concubines? The most proximate explanations are male sexual desire and the exercise of mastery.

When we try to gauge the extent of male sexual desire in the exploitation of slave women, a host of questions emerge. Is sexual desire culturally and historically conditioned?

⁸² Friedman, “Master and Slave Girl,” 56–61. As Miriam Frenkel also notes, medieval jurists such as Maimonides made exceptions to accommodate marriages between masters and former slaves in instances when sexual relations had already taken place. She explains, “On more than one occasion, Maimonides himself instructed owners of slave concubines to emancipate and marry them, although this was strictly forbidden by Jewish law, since anyone who had lived illicitly with a woman was forever forbidden to marry her. Other religious leaders, who lived prior to Maimonides, acted in the same way in accepting as legal the marriage of master and slave woman, performed before she was manumitted and converted”. See Frenkel, “Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society,” 256.

Were medieval subjects able to separate sexual desire entirely from its procreative function? Did concubinage really provide an escape from a loveless marriage? Did men pursue illicit sexual relations primarily to fulfill their carnal desire, or was sex also a way to exert mastery over less powerful women and vis-à-vis other males with whom they competed for sexual partners? And did men gain masculine prestige by engaging with multiple sexual partners? We must also ask whether men exploited slave women and used sex against their wives as a witting strategy of dominance and humiliation. These questions remain open, but they suggest the range of ways that men may have used slaves to assert their own mastery.⁸³

Whether such tactics of male dominance were witting or unwitting does not, however, undo their impact on the gendered politics of the household. While women were known to be involved in the procurement and disposal of household slaves, male family members could challenge women's rights of ownership and mastery directly, and even covertly, as the Abū al-Faraj episode demonstrates.

For example, while women such as Sitt al-Ḥusn were known to emancipate their own slaves, it seems that some men believed that they should have the last say over whether a family slave should be emancipated—even if the slave legally belonged to the wife.⁸⁴ A legal formulary edited by Friedman indicates that a man went to court to overturn a manumission that his wife had ordered. The record in question is stripped of identifying details, in a manner consistent with other documents that were produced as formulae for future legal cases. In the

⁸³ Many of these questions are raised in Karras, "Desire, Descendants, and Dominance." See also Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 307–323; Goitein, "Sexual Mores."

⁸⁴ T-S 13J22.2. Sitt al-Ḥusn frees her slaves Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr. See the discussion in chapter two.

document, a man argues to the court that he had manumitted a young slave girl (a daughter of his wife's slave woman) under duress and that the manumission was therefore invalid:⁸⁵

Now when she pressed me with her words, I had to mislead her and to act according to her wishes and to mislead the daughter of her slave woman, whose name is X, (to think) that I am making her a free woman. But it is my will and my desire neither to free her nor to emancipate her. The deed of emancipation that I have written for her is void and is like a potsherd thrown in the street (which is worthless) and is not to be relied upon at all.⁸⁶

The facts outlined in this formula parallel the conflict between Abū al-Faraj and his own wife. In their case, the slave woman whom Abū al-Faraj retained also lawfully belonged to his wife. Yet he sequestered her in his sister's home and spent time with her there. Thus while women did generally control the slave women under their supervision, men could at times assert their own mastery by overruling the female slave holders in their households or undermining them. Such assertions of male privilege in the legal arena were paralleled by the exercise of mastery in the extralegal realm via the purchase and use of slave concubines. In this light, domestic slavery appears as an economic and social resource contested by men and women within the same household. The competition for control over the person and use of the slave further demonstrates the ultimate social value of slavery within the Jewish community of medieval Egypt.

⁸⁵ Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl," 61–63. As Friedman notes, the slaves may have been part of the wife's dowry and thus she was their owner. However, in Jewish law the husband controlled this property for the duration of their marriage (i.e. manumission of the slave girl was also his prerogative). Frenkel discusses T-S K27.45 as evidence of how women were prevented by men from exercising their rights as slave owners. She writes, "It shows that women, being illiterate and unable to read or understand court documents, were constantly manipulated by their husbands and other male members of their family and for these reasons they faced serious problems in implementing their legal ownership over their slaves." While this is true in some cases, and certainly in this one, the evidence presented in chapter two demonstrates that women still exercised wide discretion in matters of domestic slavery. See Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 254–255.

⁸⁶ T-S K27.45, verso, ll. 7–12.

VI. The Unintended Consequences of Outlawing Slave Concubinage

Master-slave sex persisted in medieval Egypt despite the adoption of legal clauses in marriage contracts that prohibited husbands from buying concubines and slave women whom their wives hated. Analysis of the Abū al-Faraj case and the responsa of Abraham Maimonides indicate that such an incongruity between legal prescription and social practice could have dire consequences.

In the Abū al-Faraj petitions and the Cambridge responsum, the wives and children are clearly and repeatedly described as “discarded” by the husbands. In lieu of providing for their dependents, both men are alleged to have taken to residing continually with their slave women. Further, the husbands both have outstanding monetary debts to their wives based on the terms of their marriage contracts. The query to Abraham Maimonides indicates further that there is even communal indifference toward the unlawful cohabitation between the Jewish man and his slave. As the responsum plainly states, “No one sees, and every man does as he sees fit. No man pays any heed.”

The brash behavior of these two men stands in contrast to the position of local Jewish legal authorities. For his part, Shemu’el b. Ḥananyah attempted to intervene on behalf of Abū al-Faraj’s wife to no avail. In his response to the Cambridge query, Abraham Maimonides succinctly rules that the situation with the slave woman is not permissible and that the offending man should be excommunicated if he does not get rid of her. The excommunication is certainly an attempt to regulate slave concubinage, but Abraham’s need to result to such an

extreme measure may well signal the difficulty he perceived in combating the practice.⁸⁷ Such a divergence between legal opinion and action and social practice is not an uncommon phenomenon in the documents of the Cairo Genizah—or in the wider medieval Near Eastern social milieu.

One additional similarity between the two cases deserves mention. In both situations men use clothing as a weapon against their wives. The responsum remarks that a Jewish man in fact bought his concubine “fine clothing the likes of which his wife had never worn.” The inclusion of this detail seems gratuitous until we consider the social context of this conspicuous phrase. Fine female clothing was both a marker of status and a valuable asset. By withholding clothing (as in the case of Abū al-Faraj), or by lavishing it upon a slave concubine, men could mount a kind of attack on the status and honor of their free wives. The exact phrasing of this statement emphasizes the plight of the wife: “*aksā-hā kiswah ḥasanah mā labisat-hā zawjatu-hu min ‘umri-hā*” (He bought [the concubine] fine clothing the likes of which his wife had never worn in her life). The words “*min ‘umri-hā*” serve an emphatic function here. Why does the query author include this detail? The information and phrasing recognize the humiliation that the wife suffers because of her husband’s actions. He lavishes his concubine with fine clothing and abandons his wife in *almenut ḥayyut*.⁸⁸

The condition of *almenut ḥayyut* (widowhood in his lifetime) was a serious predicament precipitated by the husband’s refusal or inability to grant his wife the bill of divorce (a *geṭ*) necessary to permit her marriage to another. In some cases, husbands abandoned their wives

⁸⁷ On the efficacy of excommunication among the Jewish communities of Egypt and Syria, see Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, chap. 8.

⁸⁸ T-S 10K8.13. Discussed above. *Min ‘umri-hā*, l. 5.

and moved away. Husbands could also go missing with their deaths or whereabouts unconfirmed. Women in this position could suffer in poverty with their children since they could neither remarry nor receive her due remuneration as in divorce.⁸⁹

In the second petition concerning Abū al-Faraj, the author mentions clothing in two separate parts of the document.⁹⁰ The physical condition of this document makes it difficult to identify the precise meaning of these parts of the petition. Clothing is mentioned in the context of the various outstanding debts that Abū al-Faraj owes and also the various intermediaries who have attempted to intervene in the case. It appears that one official, listed as “the *shaykh* Abū al-Faḍl, the one known as Ibn Kallām, obliged [Abū al-Faraj] regarding the clothing. He said to (Abū al-Faraj): ‘remember, she is not your daughter.’”⁹¹ In the margin of the petition there is damaged line that refers to a related point: “I said to him [...] her clothing to her”.⁹² Given the context of these lines, it seems likely that Abū al-Faraj possesses clothing that rightfully belongs to his wife and/or his daughter. In the first petition, the wife does not mention clothing specifically, but she does write that Abū al-Faraj owes her “things” and that

⁸⁹ Absent and runaway husbands are a real and persistent problem documented in the Genizah. On this phenomenon and cases of *almenut ḥayyut*, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 195–205; Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, 143–146. The cases of abandoned women discussed by Goitein and Cohen reveal the harrowing economic stress that runaway husbands created for their families. It seems that men ran away more commonly due to family conflicts and financial difficulties. A woman abandoned by her husband for a concubine is called an *almenut ḥayyut* in a responsum of Abraham Maimonides. T-S 10K8.13, l. 6. Other responsa to Abraham note that families have been abandoned, but it is not clear if the husband has runaway permanently. See the cases cited above. Goitein claims sometimes a man abandoned his family “simply, ‘because he found someone’ – usually a slave woman – ‘more beautiful than [his wife]’”. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 195.

⁹⁰ T-S 10J17.22

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 16–18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, right margin.

she sent her brother to retrieve them. Might clothing be amongst the “things” she is referring to? And what is a plausible motive behind the husband’s retention of the garments?

The second petition also indicates that Abū al-Faraj eventually purchased his wife’s slave. As the author reports to Shemu’el b. Ḥananyah, “I inform our lord, in the matter of the slave woman, that (Abū al-Faraj) did not pay her the broker’s fee. He lodged her at his sister’s house and he spends more and more of his time with her.”⁹³ In this context, “that Abū al-Faraj did not pay her the broker’s fee” means that he purchased the slave woman. Broker’s fees were incumbent upon the buyer and such legal formulae are often included in slave bills of sale.⁹⁴

While neither petition accuses Abū al-Faraj directly of using his wife’s slave as a concubine, the details of the case certainly suggest that this is what he did. He retains a slave woman and lodges her away from the family he has abandoned. Later he buys the slave outright and seems to take clothing from his wife and daughter and keeps them for his slave woman and her daughter. There is a clear sense in the documents that Abū al-Faraj’s actions are inappropriate and troubling for reasons beyond the fact that the slave had belonged initially to his wife. The ambiguity of these two sources leaves room for speculation that the authors of the petitions were concerned with the fact, threat or appearance of a master-slave relationship resembling concubinage. One of the last words we read of the matter is that he “spends more and more of his time” with the *jāriyah*. It appears that Abū al-Faraj’s slave was

⁹³ Ibid., ll. 20-22. “*An-hu lam yukhriju-hā al-dilālah.*” On *dilālah*, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 160–161, 185; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 677, n. 3.

⁹⁴ Bills of sale that include forms of broker’s commission (*ju’l al-dilālah* etc.): Washington, DC: F 1908.44SS, T-S Ar.29.49v, T-S 13J3.7, T-S 13J37.12, T-S 8J8.4, and T-S 13J3.16. These bills of sale all date to the twelfth century.

“not for domestic service, but rather a concubine,” as one author put it in his query to Abraham Maimonides.⁹⁵

For Abū al-Faraj’s wife, her husband’s actions must have been particularly painful considering her probable financial insecurity. She expressed her distress primarily in material terms, saying that she and her daughter “are cast to the floor.”⁹⁶ Because slave women could raise the status, and enhance the quality of life, of their mistresses and their children, illicit concubinage could represent a double betrayal—by the husband and by a slave woman who was considered family for many intents and purposes.⁹⁷

So what opportunities did concubinage provide that were not available in other arrangements with prostitutes and affairs with other free women? One answer is found in the vulnerable and marginal status of the concubines. Since the slave concubine was not an explicitly recognized legal category in Jewish law, despite the acknowledged social practice of concubinage, slave women lacked the protection of law and kinship networks that could help shield free women from the worst abuses of their husbands and offer them certain rights in marriage and divorce.

The fragility of the illegal concubine’s status is brutally displayed in a twelfth-century court deposition recorded in the Sudani/Red Sea port of ‘Aydhāb. This document preserves a disturbing accusation against the Jewish merchant Abū Sa‘īd ibn Maḥfūz (known as Ibn Jamāhir). His accuser was a slave himself, named Ṣāfi. Ṣāfi was summoned before the local

⁹⁵ T-S 10K8.13. See the discussion above.

⁹⁶ DK 232.1V, l. 1-2.

⁹⁷ As I discuss in chapter four, nearly all documented instances of slave resistance involve slave women rebelling against their mistresses, and not their masters. This evidence further illustrates how slavery could both enhance and threaten the status of free women.

governor (*wālī*) because he had accused Ibn Jamāhir of a crime. The slave testified: “You had a slave woman, made her pregnant, and when she bore you a boy, you abandoned her together with her son in Berbera (in Somaliland).”⁹⁸ Ibn Jamāhir vigorously protested the allegations and summoned several of his Muslim associates to testify against Ṣāfi’s accusation. At the persistent behest of the accused, the governor ordered Ṣāfi to be flogged as punishment for his words. Other Jewish merchants in the ‘Aydhāb community attempted to intervene on Ṣāfi’s behalf, but they were thwarted, and seemingly intimidated, by Ibn Jamāhir’s heavy-handed tactics. Ṣāfi was ultimately jailed and later released after paying a fine. We learn nothing more about the abandoned concubine and her child.

Ibn Jamāhir’s concubine had no protector against her owner’s caprice. Her lone advocate was a fellow slave. Despite Ṣāfi’s righteous indignation on behalf of the slave woman, she became but a footnote in the court deposition. Her fate is mentioned only to cast suspicion upon the character of Ibn Jamāhir and to explain the fate of the slave, Ṣāfi, who was in fact the business agent of a communal authority and member of the Jewish elite in Egypt. Since concubinage was technically illegal, the practice fell outside of the normal jurisdiction of courts and the regular controls of the community. Furthermore, if a man could afford to buy a slave woman as a concubine, he had fewer legal responsibilities toward her as compared to his duties as a husband. The concubine could be sold and her price recouped. To the contrary, a divorce could entail financial loss and burden upon the husband.⁹⁹ The female

⁹⁸ T-S 12.582, ll. 6-7. As Goitein notes, *wālī* can also mean “chief of police.” See also Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 132–133.

⁹⁹ See Friedman, “Polygny in Jewish Tradition,” 24; Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 32–34. While Jewish law did not protect the concubines, there is limited evidence that their mistreatment still drew communal condemnation

slave and her child were ultimately beyond the law and control of the Jewish community.¹⁰⁰ In short, Ibn Jamāhir exploited his concubine because he could do so with relative impunity.¹⁰¹

The plight of concubines does not mean, however, that these women were passive victims who had no hand in shaping their own experience. Because the points of view of slave concubines are largely absent from medieval documentary sources, we have to read the sources closely in order to sense how concubinage impacted them.

In fact, Genizah evidence suggests that some female slaves could have benefited from concubinage arrangements with Jewish men.¹⁰² Consider the descriptions of concubinage from the responsa of Abraham Maimonides. One query alleges that a Jewish man has lodged his slave in rural Egypt where she was “the mistress of the house.” This same man lavished his concubine with clothing. A second query reports that a man has rented for his slave woman her own residence in a town separate from Alexandria, where his wife and children live. He travels for work and then returns to his concubine at her lodgings.¹⁰³

These residential arrangements suggest that slave concubines were sometimes given their own quarters away from larger family residences. Of course, the slave women were not the owners of these properties. But at least one slave is referred to as “the mistress of the

(and the ire of other slaves). See T-S 12.582 and Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 322. Men had fewer obligations towards concubines than to their wives: *Ibid.*, III: 147. Goitein and Friedman argue that, for this reason, concubinage was a greater threat to wives than was polygyny.

¹⁰⁰ Compare Ibn Jamāhir’s concubine’s lack of rights to the rights given to an *umm al-walad*. *EI* 2, s.v. “*umm al-walad*”; Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law*, 155–156, 276–283.

¹⁰¹ My interpretation of this document qualifies Goitein’s argument that slave women had recognized rights. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 141. I address the issue of the slave’s rights and protections further in chapter four.

¹⁰² For the legal concubines of elite Muslim men, this observation can be amply documented. For example, see Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls”; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 150–151.

¹⁰³ T-S 10K8.13 and Budapest 231.2.

house.” Might this imply that the space was effectively under her authority when her master was away? In the second case, the concubine is left seemingly unattended while her master travels on business. Why would a slave woman consent to such an arrangement? And why would she not run away at the first opportunity? These questions are not purely theoretical. We know that slave women ran away from masters. Another slave woman converted to Islam in order to compel her mistress to sell her since Jews could not lawfully own Muslim slaves. In a third instance, a female slave fled her mistress and took refuge in the home of her owner’s maternal uncle.¹⁰⁴

That some slave women consented to concubinage agreements, and did not use the tactics of resistance available to them, suggests that concubines may have gained augmented status and a degree of independence from the arrangement. In contrast to the status of the maidservant (*waṣīfah*) and the domestic slave (*jāriyah lil-khidmah*), concubinage offered slave women a means to improve their material condition by gaining their own, semi-private residence.¹⁰⁵

Concubines may also have benefited materially from their masters’ attentions. We have already seen that one concubine received clothing “the likes of which his wife had never worn in her life.” Abū al-Faraj was also accused of taking clothing from his wife and daughter.

¹⁰⁴ Slave women run away: T-S 12.585 and CUL Or. 1080J71. See Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 16; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 144, n. 90. A slave converts to Islam and, thus, “leaves the community”: Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 149–153, #98. On the slave woman’s conversion to Islam, see *Ibid.*, 152, n. 15. Another instance of slave conversion to Islam as a tactic of resistance is discussed in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 142, n. 77. Goitein’s reference in n. 77 is incorrect. The reference there points to Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, #98. A slave goes between family members: Halper 400. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 142, n. 80. For more on slave resistance, see chapter four of this dissertation where these phenomena and issues are analyzed in detail.

¹⁰⁵ Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls.”

Two petitions to Shemu'el b. Ḥananyah complain that Abū al-Faraj spent more and more of his time with his wife's slave woman and that "he maintains her as needed" (implying material support) while he left his abandoned wife as a "desolate woman."¹⁰⁶ The slave woman whom Abū al-Faraj retained is lodged at Abū al-Faraj's sister's house, where she is kept in what appears to be her own chamber (*al-ḥujrah*).¹⁰⁷ As Krakowski demonstrates, free women gained status from having their own private rooms within the household.¹⁰⁸ In the Abū al-Faraj case, the slave woman appears to have her own private quarter at the sister's domicile in addition to the maintenance and attention that her master provided her. Any such gains in status or material condition were of course relative and precarious, as the fate of Ibn Jamāhir's concubine underscores.

Thus the communal efforts to make slave concubinage illegal resulted in mixed consequences. The Jewish community's lack of effective coercive power meant that it that could impose its will only imperfectly and with limited effects.¹⁰⁹ One result of this was the erosion of women's status in instances when their husbands chose to take concubines and abandon their families. Another was that some Jewish men who took slave concubines were compelled to divorce or to abandon their families.

¹⁰⁶ "He maintains her as needed": *Wa-huwa yaqum bi-hā kamā yajib*. Budapest 232.1, verso, ll. 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ The case of Abū al-Faraj, his wife and the wife's slave woman are discussed above. Budapest 232.1, l. 21. The *ḥujrah* where the slave is housed may be either a separate building, or chamber. It is reasonable to assume that such an arrangement would provide the slave with a semi-independent living space from the rest of the household. On the meaning of *ḥujrah* in Genizah documents, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 479, n. 145; IV: 363, n. 43; 370, n. 163.

¹⁰⁸ Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 220–227.

¹⁰⁹ Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, chap. 8.

By contrast, the legal status of concubinage in Islamic law meant that the household structure could accommodate men, wives, slave women, and the children born within it. The regulation of concubinage also afforded certain protections for a slave woman and her children. Islamic law and practice provides an alternative approach to the regulation of concubinage that underscores how the failure to regulate the practice could subject slave women and their children to greater caprice. In Islamic law, because a child-bearing slave gained status as an *umm al-walad* (“mother of the child”)—a legal condition that protected her from being sold after the birth of her master’s child— the offspring of slave women and male Muslims were legitimate and considered full members of society. Both the mother and her children were also emancipated upon the death of the master. In exceptional circumstances, slave children rose to high positions within Islamic empires and even became caliphs.¹¹⁰

Concubines of Jewish men may have enjoyed material benefits as seen in the Cambridge responsum and the case of Abū al-Faraj. Yet such benefits and protections were not guaranteed as the fate of Ibn Jamāhir’s concubine attests.

VII. Conclusions

How prevalent was concubinage among the Jewish community of Fustat? At the present moment, this question cannot be answered with any quantitative precision. The

¹¹⁰ For an explanation and history of Islamic practice and law related to *umm al-walad*, see *EI* 2, s.v. “*umm al-walad*”; Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law*, 155–156, 276–283. During the Fatimid Caliphate, the slave woman Rasad gave birth to the future caliph al-Mustanşir (r. 1046-1094). Rasad was the Sudanese concubine (and later *umm walad*) of the caliph al-Zāhir (r. 1021-1036). See Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 55–56. Rasad was in fact sold to al-Zāhir by the Jewish Qaraite courtier Abū Sa’d al-Tustari. See Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Mediaeval Islam*, 75, n.3; 78–85; *EJIW*, s.v. “Tustari Family.” For ‘Abbāsīd caliphs descended from slave women, see Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*.

evidence above does demonstrate, however, that concubinage and master-slave sexual relations were common enough to warrant the inclusion of the slave woman clause into marriage contracts. Over time these clauses became one of the standard formulae that were regularly included into engagement and marriage contracts. Furthermore, the practice surfaces repeatedly in responsa literature, letters, and folk tales. These sources suggest a common perception that master-slave sexual relations occurred persistently, flaunted established Jewish law, and threatened the stability of the household. At the very least, Goitein's surmise that "slave girl concubinage was a phenomenon of limited dimensions and importance in Genizah society" needs to be modified.¹³¹

The practice and threat of concubinage specifically, and the presence of female slaves in the household more generally, widely impacted gender relations. Jewish men used slave women as a means to assert their own mastery, but the manner in which they exercised control over slave women contrasts starkly to how free women used slavery. While slavery appears more frequently as an asset to women, male control of female slaves could marginalize and humiliate free women in particular instances.

The illegality of concubinage did little, apparently, to stop the practice. Since slavery was legal, female slaves abounded in the households of the merchants and other elite classes of the Egyptian Jewish community. In the absence of legal definitions of concubinage, the line between legal slave ownership and illicit sexual relations was a blurry one. Furthermore, the continued practice of concubinage outside the boundaries of Jewish law meant that both

¹³¹ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 322.

concubines and free women had fewer protections than they had in systems where concubinage was legal, as in Islamic law for example.

In some instances, such concubinage arrangements were paralleled by the abandonment of the master's wife and children. In marital disputes, slave women became contested property. Male control of slave women in these instances represented one means for the exercise of dominance over the household, and over wives in particular.

The perspectives of slave women themselves are largely absent from surviving documentary sources. A close reading of these sources, however, suggests that slaves were not passive observers in the household. Slave women who became concubines benefited from the arrangements by gaining a modicum of independence and increased material benefits.

In the next chapter, I expand upon this analysis of slave agency by narrating the collective biography of the female domestic slave population present in Genizah documents. The collective biography of this group illustrates the limited range of social opportunity available to enslaved women. Their agency is further illuminated through the analysis of slave resistance, religious conversion and manumission.

Chapter Four

The Life Course of Female Slaves in Medieval Egypt

I. Introduction

While the responsa of Abraham Maimonides contain numerous queries asking about concubinage between Jewish men and their slave women, some of his responsa on other questions provide a great deal of information about the lives of slaves and their masters, even when slavery is not the central concern of the query writer. One responsum provides an unusually rich description of a woman's experience of slavery.¹

The query begins:

What does our glorious, majestic, magnificent, and sovereign lord and teacher Abraham, the great Rabbi of Israel, say on the matter of Leah?² She had a male slave and a female slave. She sold the male slave to someone who then emancipated him. Later, the freedman returned to the aforementioned Leah during "those days" (a period of famine), may God protect us from the likes of such.³ Leah was in need and asked him to provide her with money. He provided her living expenses until the sum reached four dinars.

(The freedman) then demanded the money back from her. Leah tried to sell the slave woman in order to pay him. But she could not find a Jew to purchase the slave woman during those difficult days, so Leah sold her to a Christian.⁴ Someone else purchased the slave woman from the Christians and returned her to Leah's ownership. Leah became sick and died. She left behind two daughters and they inherited the slave woman.

The freedman demanded his debt from them because they were present (when) he provided the living expenses for their mother. They said to him, "Our mother did not bequeath (anything) except your sister (the slave woman); take her as your

¹ Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 149–153, no. 98; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 141–142, 435 n. 77. The lawsuit is between a man and one of the sisters mentioned in the query and not between the two sisters as Goitein indicates.

² The names Leah and Reuben are commonly used as pseudonyms in responsa in place of specific personal names.

³ Freimann and Goitein speculate that this is a reference to a famine of 1201–1202. See Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 149 n. 2.

⁴ *lil-'aralim*, "the uncircumcised."

payment.”⁵ They handed the slave woman over to him as payment. The right to possession (of the slave-girl) was legally and appropriately transferred from the two sisters so that they did not possess (any) right or entitlement to the aforementioned slave-girl. He received the slave woman and she remained in (his) possession. For almost a full year, they lived in the vicinity of the two sisters. And the freedman acted as her master.

Afterwards, the freedman wanted to travel. Reuben (a standard pseudonym in responsa) asked to buy this slave-girl from him. (Reuben) bought her from him and handed over her price. The freedman then went on his journey. Reuben married one of the two sisters and the slave-girl remained in Reuben’s possession for close to three years. Reuben acted as the slave woman’s master. (The other) daughter went away since her husband had a tax farm in Lower Egypt (*al-Rif*).⁶ She remained there for a time. (Meanwhile) the freedman died in in Lower Egypt.

The aforementioned sister came back from Lower Egypt and summoned Reuben to the court located in Alexandria.⁷ She claimed the rent of a portion (of a house) that he owned as her own. Further, she demanded a half share (in the ownership) of the slave woman.

As the query continues, the sister argues that she gave the freedman only one-half a share in the slave woman as payment for his debt. Reuben presented witnesses to support his claim that he owned the slave woman outright because he bought her himself from the freedman. But the court rejected these witnesses since they were not present when the sister originally transferred the slave woman to the freedman. The local court presiding over the case ruled in favor of the sister and ordered that the slave woman serve both Reuben and Leah on a month-to-month basis. When witnesses did materialize who testified that the sister had indeed relinquished the slave woman to the freedman entirely, the local court refused to reconsider the matter.

⁵ It is unlikely that biological sister is meant here, but rather a “sister” in slavery. See Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 150 n. 4 for the Hebrew translation.

⁶ In fact, it is not clear which of the sisters is being referred to. The text says “*fa-sāfarat al-ibnah al-wāḥidah...*” Whereas the daughter who Reuben marries is referred to in context as: “*wa-Reuven zawaja aḥdā al-ibnatayn...*”

⁷ In the text “*be-No Ammon.*” A Hebrew term for Alexandria. See Golb, “Topography,” 117.

Just before the query ends, and the author asks Abraham whether the local judge's ruling is correct, we learn of one more development in the case:

The slave-girl remained with (the sister) for three days. The slave said that (the sister) beat her in the presence of non-Jews. The slave woman converted to Islam and was put up for sale.⁸ The court enjoined that (the sister) receive half of the sum and Reuben half of the sum and this was done. Instruct us, rabbi: What is the law in this matter?

The legal questions in this lengthy responsum ultimately focus on the legality of the evidence and witnesses in the case. The author of the query relates the slave woman's beating and her conversion only incidentally,⁹ just as Ibn Jamāhir's abandoned concubine from the court deposition in 'Aydhāb that we read about in chapter three is incidental to the case there. Nevertheless the query's rich background information paints one picture of a slave woman's life as she is transferred to various masters and mistresses. The *jāriyah* had at least seven different owners during her lifetime: Leah, the Christian, the "someone else" who purchased her from the Christian, Leah's daughters (the two sisters), the freedman, Reuben and (assuming the final sale went through) a seventh owner after her conversion to Islam. The query reveals little else about the life of this slave woman except for one telling detail: when she has had enough physical abuse from one of the sisters, she makes use of a legal ruse to escape her and converts to Islam, since Jews could not own Muslim slaves. The *jāriyah's* conversion points to one of the most decisive acts of resistance that a slave could perform

⁸ The writer switches abruptly from Judaeo-Arabic to Hebrew: "*Yetse'ha min ha-Kelal.*" The literal meaning of this phrase is, "She left the community." The context indicates that the slave converted to Islam. This explains why she was put up for sale. It was illegal for Jews to own Muslim slaves. See Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, 152 n. 15 in the Hebrew translation. That *dhimmi* can not own Muslim slaves, see Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 132.

⁹ In his response, Abraham rules in favor of Reuben and states that his witnesses' testimonies were valid. Abraham further declares that the sister has no right to the slave woman.

against her Jewish master in the Islamic empire, tantamount to coercing her master to sell her to another party. While such a conversion did not make her free, it did bring about the desired result of ending the abusive situation.¹⁰

The responsum also indicates how external societal factors could impinge upon master-slave relationships. The famine of 1201-1202 created a material stress that compelled the former owner, Leah, to take a loan of four dinars from her former slave. Four dinars is a substantial amount of money and it is not clear from this responsum how this freedman earned or otherwise acquired such a sum.

Genizah documents also illustrate how both specific personal circumstances and periods of broader social turmoil created opportunities for slave women to shape their own futures by making decisive choices.¹¹ This chapter attempts to capture such moments and use them to narrate the life history of the slave women, even if her life flickers in and out of view in the record of the documentary Genizah. Detailed testimony about the lives, thoughts, actions, and perspectives of slaves are rare in medieval sources, since slaves generally did not create or commission records themselves, and writers were not as concerned with the experiences of the unfree and other marginal groups as we are in the twenty-first century. The task, then, is to read medieval sources sometimes against their intentions; collectively, the Genizah records that slave owners commissioned and produced sketch a coherent picture of

¹⁰ Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 132. *EI* 2, s.v. “‘abd,” sec. 3a.

¹¹ Goitein speculates that the famine of 1201-1202 was so dire that it “wiped out” nearly one-half of the Jewish population of Fustat. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 141. “Wiped out” may also indicate emigration and not just death. Lane-Poole’s description of this disastrous period is rendered in vivid detail not for the faint of heart. See Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 4th ed. 2008 reprint (London: Routledge, 1925), 215–216.

how the life-course of a female slave could be shaped, and of what choices slaves made and why when they were confronted with opportunities to assert themselves.¹²

If sources that directly describe slaves are relatively rare, it is even less common to find an individual slave across multiple documents or to be able to trace her through her lifetime.¹³ The question then arises of what can be said about medieval slave women beyond the mere identification of their sex, *jins*, and master-given slave names. Is it possible to forge a coherent narrative of slaves' lives from fragments?

Our prospects improve greatly if we consider female slaves as a group. There are well over one hundred documents that mention individual slave women and hundreds more that attest to the practice of slavery and the slave trade in some manner.¹⁴ The lives of domestic slaves in medieval Egypt can be told as prosopography, the collective biography of a group whose individual biographies are largely unrecoverable due to the scarcity or fragmentary nature of surviving evidence.¹⁵ With prosopography, discrete and often fragmentary references

¹² Dina Stein's study of late antique and early medieval rabbinic discourse and its treatment of the maidservant as the "other within" is an excellent example of how the subjectivity of slave women can be recovered despite the seeming reticence of premodern sources on the subject. See "A Maidservant and Her Master's Voice: Discourse, Identity, and Eros in Rabbinic Texts," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 375–97.

¹³ Amitav Ghosh's demonstrates the possibility of this work, however, and illustrates its potential contributions. See Ghosh, "The Slave of MS. H.6.," Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*.

¹⁴ See appendix. Note that the appendix indicates with an asterisk when a given slave may be the same person mentioned in another source. The number of identified individual slave women continues to grow as I work through the photographs of original Genizah documents available in *FGP*. I have omitted from the appendix references that refer to slavery as an abstract concept, or discuss the future (hypothetical) acquisition of slave. For example, I have not catalogued the 5-6 year-old black slave girl that Eli b. Hillel's niece requests he purchase. See T-S 13J21.18. I do, however, record the six-year old slave girl that an India trader sends home to his wife with the Karim fleet. See T-S NS J23.

¹⁵ Prosopography has been used to great effect in scholarship on the late antique and medieval periods. Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; George Beech and James Powell, "Prosopography," in *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 185–226; McCormick, *Origins*; Averil Cameron, ed., *Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alan V. Murray, "Prosopography," in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (New York: Palgrave

to individual slave women can be contextualized within the larger trends evident at the group level. When applied to the Genizah sub-corpus of individual female slaves, prosopography provides insights into three areas of the social history of domestic slavery that have been neglected due to the fragmentary nature of surviving evidence.

First, we find that slave children were a significant percentage of the overall slave population. By analyzing the sources that document child slaves, it is possible to detect the presence of slave families and to analyze the continuities and disruptions of domestic slave family life in medieval Egypt.

A second theme that emerges from the sources is the agency and personhood of the slave. Most often when slaves are documented, they are muted subjects to be sold, bought, transferred, and so forth. In some instances, however, the actions and decisions of slave women are clearly recorded because of the impact they created. And even when a slave appears only obliquely, it is sometimes possible to make sense of these silences, omissions, and gaps in order to imagine the larger meaning of her presence. Slaves exerted agency along a spectrum of resistance. We see above one extreme end of the spectrum, when a slave woman converted to Islam in order to escape her abusive mistress. At the other end of the end of the spectrum we find slave women who choose to cooperate with their masters and even take risks to integrate themselves further into their master's household. The decision to

Macmillan, 2005), 109–29; K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook* (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2007); Michael Lecker, “Research Report: The Prosopography of Early Islamic Administration,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008): 529–33.

convert and the decision to integrate are both expressions of slave agency.¹⁶ These disparate modes of action underscore the specific constraints within which slaves lived in the medieval Islamicate world. While slaves had limited rights, they also required the protection of their free counterparts. There are hints of wary conservatism on the part of slaves who had to calculate the risk of remaining in their current situation against the risks and vicissitudes inherent in the slave market.

The third theme apparent in the sub-corpus of Genizah documents is a trend toward manumission and the integration of freed slaves into the Egyptian Jewish community. Nearly one-third of the individual slave women documented in the Genizah are freedwomen. Freedwomen appear at the moment of their manumission, in wedding contracts as Jewish brides, and even as heirs leaving small bequests of property to their communities. As I argued in chapter two, the Egyptian Jewish community treated slave women in ways that resemble the treatment of unmarried Jewish orphans. Slave owners and communal leaders express concern over the futures of emancipated women.

Yet manumission was not a guarantee; nor was ongoing material support. The death or impoverishment of an owner could leave a slave in the lurch. The legality of specific manumissions were also challenged by family members who wished to retain the freedwoman as a slave, or who wished to marginalize the freedwoman's offspring. All of these scenarios constitute the experience of slavery and the uneven transition to freedom.

¹⁶ I agree with Walter Johnson that there is a danger in limiting the discussion of slave agency, and a slave's humanity, only to acts of resistance. The danger is that the agency paradigm of the researcher can flatten the humanity of the slave by acknowledging only his or her opposition to slavery. Slaves exerted self-determination in diverse ways including accommodation. See Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 113–24.

The exploration of these three themes will illustrate the broad contours of the domestic female slave's life-course in medieval Egypt. From birth to maturity and through death, the Genizah corpus provides an uncommon window onto the quotidian lives of slaves. This vantage point also allows us to understand how the lives of slaves and their owners were also influenced by larger legal, economic, and political factors.

II. Birth, Childhood, and Slave Families

For many individuals attested in the Genizah, slavery was a fact of their birth. Slaves who were born into slavery are often identified in bills of sale from the Genizah as *muwalladah* (masc. *muwallad*)—"born a slave."¹⁷ The ownership of *muwallad* slaves was not unique to Jewish households; it is also found among Egyptian Muslims.¹⁸ In medieval Arabic literary sources, the term *muwalladah* does not invariably designate a slave; nor does it necessarily designate that a slave was born in the house of the master, as some scholars have suggested;¹⁹ it may also indicate that a person has one non-Arab parent, or that a child was born in a "foreign land," but raised among the Arabs. Yet when the term appears in the Genizah it is invariably in reference to a slave.²⁰

¹⁷ Slaves called *muwalladah* in Genizah documents: Ḍīyā in Or.1080 J273 and T-S 13J4.2 + T-S 6J1.7. These two documents all attest to the same sale of Ḍīyā for 25 dinars in 1226. Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman was the first to see that T-S 13J4.2 and T-S 6J1.7 are part of the same document and a different version of the same transaction found in Or.1080 J273. See his editions and analysis in Ackerman-Lieberman, "Legal Writing." 'Ilm in T-S 10J11.31. Janān in Freer 1908.44SS (Gottheil-Worrell XLV) discussed below. A male slave, Fayrūz, is described as *muwallad* in the bill of sale Bodl. MS Heb. b. 13.39.

¹⁸ See P. Cam. Michaélidès inv. B 335, l. 3, a ninth-century bill of sale for the "white slave-girl *muwalladah* known as Bunān[ah]". This document is edited in Rāḡib, *Actes de vente*, 6–9. The slave is mentioned in line 3.

¹⁹ See n. 20.

²⁰ I cannot make the same claim for Egyptian Arabic papyri from the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Nevertheless, in the bills of sale edited by Rāḡib, the term *muwalladah* is used as it appears in the Genizah. For a medieval discussion of the term *muwalladah*, see Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Branches of Erudition (Nihāyat Al-Arab Fī Funūn Al-Adab)* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wal-wathāiq al-qūmīyah, 2010), 5: 225. See also

Yet the existence of the *muwalladah* presents a puzzling question. Who were the parents of the slave men and women described as *muwallad(ah)* in Genizah records? The most plausible explanation is that the *muwallad*'s slave mother had been coerced into sexual relations with her master. While medieval Jewish law prohibited sex between a master and his slave, the Genizah demonstrates the existence of ongoing illicit concubinage between masters and slave women in Egypt.

One pregnant slave woman named 'Ushshāq was sold for fifteen dinars by the woman Sitt al-Ḥusn to a Sitt al-Fakhr, as attested in a bill of sale probably dating to the second half of the twelfth century.²¹ Like the majority of documents that mention the offspring of slaves, this one does not mention the biological father.²² Rather, it mentions 'Ushshāq's pregnancy in the context of the formulae used to certify that the buyer is aware of all the slave's defects: the

Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2967; Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durrīyah*, 885. For a discussion of the role of *muwalladahs* in Islamic history, see Khalil 'Athamina, "How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the Jawārī, or the Female Slaves," *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 28, no. 2 (2007): 391. Both Goitein and Rāḡib translate the term *muwallad(ah)* as "born in the house" (or "*née à la maison*"). In my reading of the related documents, this meaning is not corroborated by other internal evidence. In comparison, there is evidence that *muwalladah* is used to denote an ethnic or genealogical origin (*al-jins*). For example, in the bills of sale edited by Rāḡib, the term *muwalladah* is used by scribes to describe the *jins* of the slave (e. g. Berber, Nubian, etc.). For example, "*jāriyah tud'ā Narḥish wa-jinsu-hā nubīyah*" ("a slave woman called Narḥish, a Nubian"), in P. D. Gril, l. 4. See Rāḡib, *Actes de vente*, 18. Scribes use the term *muwalladah* in place of *jins* descriptions such as Nubia as in "*muwalladat al-jins*." ("A mixed breed in terms of her origin.") See P. Berol. Inv. 15282 and P. Berol. Inv. 15252 in *Ibid.*, 34, 39. The construction *muwalladat al-jins* also parallels how other Arabic bills of sale use the term "*ajamīyah*", meaning "non-Arab." See P. Cam. Michélidès Charta B 48, l. 7-8 and P. Lond. inv. Or. 4684, l. 3 in *Ibid.*, 16, 24. In P. Cam. Michélidès inv. B 335, l. 3 (cf. n. 18 above), the *jāriyah* is described as "*jāriyah ṣafran muwalladah*." Rāḡib understands this as "une esclave 'jaune' (*entendre: blanche*)."*Ṣafran* here indicates the slave woman's phenotype, but the root does not invariably mean "yellow" as Rāḡib translates it. The word "*ṣufrān*" can also denote a dark gold, bronze, or copper color. I suggest the translation, "a mixed breed slave woman of copper color." See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1697; Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durrīyah*, 391.

²¹ T-S 13J6.7. The document is torn at the top and bottom where the date and signatures would be. While the date is missing, one of the parties, Abū al-Futūḥ al-Ṣayrafī, is mentioned in a document dated by Moshe Gil to ca. 1165. See T-S Ar.18(1)155. Goitein observes that the name *Ushshāq* is in the plural form and was thus short for *Sitt al-Ushshāq*, which would translate as "Queen of Lovers." See Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 11 n. 2; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 141.

²² See for example, Budapest 232.1, T-S 13J3.3, and T-S Misc.27.4.23 +29. The biological fathers of children born by freedwomen are commonly known, however. See BL Or. 10588.3.

scribe records that “(Sitt al-Fakhr) inspected (the slave woman) and she was thoroughly familiar with her. She knew of all ‘Ushshāq’s defects, deficiencies, and maladies—(those) hidden and apparent. She knew that ‘Ushshāq was pregnant and she consented to this.”²³ The document also states that ‘Ushshāq had lived with Sitt al-Fakhr (the buyer) for an unspecified period of time before the actual sale. The bill does not record the specifics of this arrangement, nor does it reveal further details about ‘Ushshāq. Thus the paternity of ‘Ushshāq’s child remains uncertain. While the evidence is too thin in ‘Ushshāq’s case to suggest how and by whom she became pregnant, some informed speculation about the possibilities can help conjure the social world of female slaves.²⁴

It is unlikely that ‘Ushshāq would have been married as a slave, and whether she was married prior to her enslavement is unknown. Social practice generally followed the stipulation of Jewish law that a man could marry a freedwoman only after her formal manumission. Furthermore, in contrast to Muslim households, there is no evidence that slave women of Jewish masters married anyone (free or slave) before their manumission.²⁵

²³ T-S 13J6.7, ll. 8-10: “*wa-anna-hā qallabat-hā wa-khabart-hā wa-‘alimat bi-sā’ir ‘uyūbi-hā, wa-‘ilali-hā, wa-amrāḍi-hā al-bāṭanah fi-hā wal-zāhirah wa-‘alimat anna-hā ḥāmīl wa-irtaḍḍat bi-hā.*” In the medieval Middle East, potential buyers routinely inspected slaves in order to assess their health and disposition. The eleventh-century Baghdādī Christian physician Ibn Buṭlān compiled a guide that instructs slave buyers what to look for and how to inspect slaves. He devotes considerable attention to methods designed to detect early stage pregnancies. For commentary and a partial translation of this work, see Simon Swain, *Economy, Family, and Society from Rome to Islam: a critical edition, English translation, and study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 270–279.

²⁴ Cf. Moses Maimonides, *Responsa of Maimonides*, no. 106. Thanks to Oded Zinger for bringing this responsum to my attention.

²⁵ I am not aware of any evidence from the Genizah in which the female slaves of Jewish masters married another slave. A tenth-century gaonic responsum discusses the marriage of two slaves in a Jewish wedding ceremony, but who lack formal deeds of manumission proving their emancipation. In his response, Sheriria Gaon rules that the Jewish wedding for slaves was a reprehensible act on the part of the owner. See the discussion below. For evidence of slave-slave marriages in a fourteenth-century Muslim context, see Ahmed Abd ar-Raziq, “Un Document Concernant Le Mariage Des Esclaves Au Temps Des Mamlūks,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 309–14. Rāḡib documents the sale of slave families in Arabic papyri from the ninth

Additionally, a slave woman's marriage to someone else would subvert the mastery of her owner. For similar reasons, a sexual relationship with another household servant would have threatened the social order of the household. Male domestic servants are also less common in the Genizah corpus, a fact that suggests their scarcity in Egyptian Jewish families of the time. It's conceivable, but unlikely, that the father of 'Ushshāq's child was another household slave.

'Ushshāq's pregnancy might, then, have followed on sexual relations with her master or his relatives, dependents, or associates—anyone who had access to the house, and therefore to the vulnerable slave woman. Slaves also ventured into mixed public spaces on errands. Arabic chronicles recount instances when women who ventured out alone in Cairo were kidnapped and assaulted by Sudanese slave soldiers.²⁶ In a court record from the Genizah, a young woman explains to the *qāḍī* that she had been kidnapped at a well outside 'Aydhāb and sold into slavery.²⁷ These scenarios all involve some degree opportunism, though; the only individuals who had regular, unfettered access to their slave women were slave owners and their family members.

Thus, another possible scenario is that the father was the husband of Sitt al-Ḥusn or Sitt al-Fakhr, named in the document Yakhīn and Abū al-Futūḥ al-Ṣayrāfi.²⁸ Both men would have had access to 'Ushshāq in their own households before the sale, since she resided in Abū al-

and tenth centuries. The families do not, however, include any adult male, only mothers and young children. There is also no indication in these bills of sale that the slave mothers are married. See Rāḡib, *Actes de vente*. On the permissibility of slave marriages in Islamic law, see also Jacob Neusner and Tamara Sonn, eds., *Comparing Religions Through Law: Judaism and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1999), 58–166.

²⁶ See Kīrah, *Slave Girls and Slave Soldiers*, 141–142.

²⁷ Kidnapped at a well: CUL Or. 1080J30. Kidnapping reported during a time of famine: CUL Or. 1080J71.

²⁸ The first time that Yakhīn is mentioned is after a large lacuna in the text. It is likely that additional identifying information was written at the end of line 14, which is now lost. The honorific used repeatedly after Yakhīn's name, *ha-Zaqen ha-Yaqar*, is commonly used in Genizah documents and does not help identify this Yakhīn.

Futūḥ's household after she served in Yakhīn's. If the father of 'Ushshāq's child was known to be Yakhīn, then her sale would in fact be required, because Jewish law dictated that when a man had sexual relations with a slave woman, he was compelled to sell her. Even if the man decided later to manumit his slave, he was forbidden to marry or have a sexual relationship with her.²⁹

The fact that 'Ushshāq was already residing with Sitt al-Fakhr suggests the additional possibility that she had become a bone of contention between Sitt al-Ḥusn and her husband Yakhīn. Even if Yakhīn was not the father, or did not admit to paternity, there are ample precedents that illustrate how a wife might compel the sale of a "slave woman who is hateful to her."³⁰ Slave women are known to have changed residences during times of family strife or conflict with their masters.³¹

Finally, it is also worth asking whether or not 'Ushshāq would herself have desired a child. Even when we assume that she was coerced to have sex with her owner, could she or her master have demanded the practice of a form of birth control? Jewish and Islamic law are both equivocal on the subject of contraception, though medieval authorities, including al-Ghazzālī and Maimonides, both permitted the use of contraception under certain conditions.³² And did 'Ushshāq expect that the birth of a child would affect her status or quality of life as a household slave either negatively or positively, or wonder whether it would?

²⁹ Cf. chapter 3.

³⁰ Cf. the case of Ghazāl, her mistress, and Abū al-Makārim. See the discussion in chapter two and four.

³¹ Halper 400. Discussed below.

³² Donna Lee Bowen, "Muslim Juridical Opinions Concerning the Status of Women as Demonstrated by the Case of 'Azl," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1981): 323–28; David Michael Feldman, *Birth Control in Jewish Law: Marital Relations, Contraception, and Abortion as Set Forth in the Classic Texts of Jewish Law* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1998).

There is some indication that slave mothers in Egyptian Jewish households may have enjoyed increased status and protections as a result of bearing a child.³³

Whatever the circumstances behind ‘Ushshāq’s pregnancy and sale, the child would be born as a *muwallad(ah)* on account of his or her mother’s slave status at the time of birth. ‘Ushshāq’s status would also remain the same after her child’s birth. The transfer of slave status from mother to child, and the continuity of the mother’s enslaved status, distinguish the experiences of slaves in Egyptian Jewish households from those in Muslim ones. For the sake of highlighting this distinction, let us assume for the sake of argument that the father of a slave woman’s child is the slave’s master in both the Jewish and Muslim context. In the Jewish household, the end result of the birth would be the addition of a child slave to the household. In the Muslim context, the child would be free and the slave mother would gain the status of *umm al-walad*, which conveyed additional status upon her within the household and also meant that she would become free upon her master’s death. These legal distinctions meant that children born to slaves in Jewish households in Egypt were more likely to inherit their mother’s slave status and to be raised as slaves.³⁴

It is likely, then, that ‘Ushshāq would have been able to keep her young child. In most instances, Genizah documents indicate that mothers and their children were kept together

³³ For the impact of child bearing on the status of slaves in Baghdād during the early ‘Abbāsīd period, see Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls.” The Muslim and Jewish contexts were different, however. In Islam, the child of a female slave and her master was free. In Judaism, the child would be a slave unless the master could prove that he had manumitted the slave woman previously. See the discussion of Maimonides’ rulings in *MT Naḥalot* 4:6 and *MT ‘Avadim* 9:1. Outside of Egypt, other Jewish jurists differed on this point. See chapter 3.

³⁴ About slavery law in Islam generally, and the law of *umm al-walad* in particular, see above p. 92 n. 13 and the sources cited there. For a comparison of Islamic slave law to the treatment of slavery in Jewish law (in this case, in the Mishnah), see Neusner and Sonn, *Comparing Religions*, 58–68. Note that rabbinic authorities in Iberia differed with Maimonides on the permissibility of concubinage and the status of offspring from masters and their slaves. See chapter 3.

during their sale.³⁵ Most of the evidence illustrating this practice is found in bills of sale; court documents and wills of inheritance also provide relevant documentation. In a late eleventh-century deed of sale, the Nubian slave Ḥidhq is sold along with her unnamed daughter.³⁶

Another bill of sale from the mid-thirteenth century records the purchase of the ten-year old slave Mubārak along with his mother Ṭāwūs by Shelomo b. Şedaqah in Fuṣṭāṭ for forty dinars.³⁷ At least two additional, undated documents also demonstrate that slave children were sold alongside their mothers.³⁸

Inheritance documents also indicate that slave families were generally preserved when their owners bequeath them to living relatives. In chapter two we read, for example, about the dying mother who wrote to her sister and insisted that her Sudanese slave Sa‘ādah and

³⁵ In Islamic law, it was illegal to separate minors from their parents by sale. See Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 127, 152. Goitein also notes that the separation of mothers and minor children was illegal. It is not clear whether he is referring to the Jewish or Muslim context (or to both legal systems). See Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 10 n. 5. The example that Goitein cites to document his point is an odd choice. In F 1908.44SS, the two-year old slave Wafā’ is kept by the seller when her mother Janān is sold to another party. Goitein speculates that the buyer must have lived close by, but this is not clear. See below.

³⁶ T-S 20.93b, ll.10-11. The date is 1094. Goitein speculates that the Ḥidhq sold here may be the same woman sold in the year 1105 in T-S 16.188. The Ḥidhq in 1105 is sold without a daughter. The buyer in 1094 is also different than the seller in 1105. If the 1105 Ḥidhq is the same as the 1094 Ḥidhq, then she must have been sold at least once in between these years as Goitein points out. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 137. Another Ḥidhq is sold in T-S 8J5.5 (2v), but she is described as North African (*al-maghribiyah*) and not as a Nubian. A Nubian woman and her daughter were bought together in Ashkelon. T-S Misc.27.4.23 + T-S Misc.27.4.9

³⁷ T-S 16.20, l. 15. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 434 n. 53. The specific year is 1241 and the seller is Eli‘ezer b. Japheth.

³⁸ BL OR 10653.5, l. 10. An undated marriage contract written on parchment. As part of the bride’s dowry, she brings a slave woman and the slave woman’s son Sa‘d. The two slaves are valued at forty dinars. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 434 n. 54. Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 10 n. 2. T-S 16.15, ll. 19-20: a bill of sale. The original document is badly damaged, smudged, and faded. The *shifḥah* Ṣarf is sold along with her son Muwaffaq. Simḥa Assaf edited an edition of T-S 16.15 in Assaf, “Slaves and the Slave Trade,” 274–275. Ṣarf and Muwaffaq are mentioned in ll. 10-11 in Assaf’s transcription. It appears that Assaf’s edition was done before conservators reattached the upper left-hand corner of this document. His transcription begins ten lines into the reconstructed original whose photograph is now available in *FGP*. A third *shifḥah* named Rīḍā is also mentioned in this document (l. 16). Assaf’s edition reads “the *shifḥah* Rīḍā.” I am unable to read her name at the end of the line. There is no familial connection between Rīḍā and the other two slaves. Ṣarf and Muwaffaq are mentioned in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 134, 434 n. 54. Rīḍā in *Ibid.*, I: 434 n. 64.

Sa‘adah’s son be willed to her youngest daughter.³⁹ The testator’s demand has the effect of tying Sa‘adah and her son together for the purpose of the inheritance.

A second will and testament from the mid-twelfth century suggests that a slave mother and child could have different owners while both still living in the same house. In this deathbed will, the woman Sitt al-Ahl asserts that her slave woman, Fūq, does not belong to her second and current husband. Sitt al-Ahl explains that her mother had given her the money to purchase Fūq in the first place. She then adds that Fūq has a daughter who is the property of her own mother. Based on Sitt al-Ahl’s other testimony, it seems that Fūq’s daughter lived just upstairs. She explains how she came into the possession of her current house: “When my father gave me this large house in the Ḥabs Bunān a year and a half ago ... he imposed on me the condition that he, my mother, and my brother, the elder Abū al-Surūr, should never be forced to leave the upper floor, as long as they lived in this world. My father should stay in that apartment as long as he lives.”⁴⁰ From this description, it seems the slave mother and child were not separated, even though they had different owners.

There are, however, instances in which minor slave children appear alone in bills of sale. Even though it was illegal in Islamic law to separate minor slave children from their mothers, many slaves originated in territories outside of the Islamicate imperium, where such laws are unlikely to have been enforced. In the regions that served as slave reservoirs for large markets like Cairo, there was a greater chance that children would be separated from their

³⁹ ENA NS 48.6, ll. 11-12.

⁴⁰ T-S 13J3.3.

families in the violence or distress that precipitated their enslavement. Their parents might be killed, or might sell him to a slave trader in the first place.⁴¹

Some but not all bills of sale contain formulaic language that indicates when a purchased slave is imported. Those clauses include *bay' al-jalb* (the sale of an imported slave) or *shirā' al-jalb*⁴² (the purchase of an imported slave), and they indicate that the slave purchased had been newly imported to the Egyptian market rather than purchased from another party locally.⁴³ These formulae are different from other phrases used to designate customs duties and brokers commissions paid by buyers.⁴⁴

Three cases in which minor children had been sold by themselves include the phrase “the sale of imported slaves.” One bill of sale is for the Abyssinian slave Muqbil, who was purchased in 1152 when he was still a minor. The wording of the bill of sale reflects that Muqbil had been imported via the slave trade.⁴⁵ The slave woman Tawfiq is described as a minor in a note recorded by the prolific scribe Ḥalfon b. Menashshe (active 1100-1138). Ḥalfon indicates in

⁴¹ On the mechanisms of enslavement known to operate in medieval Egypt, see chapter 1. One slave who does not belong in this group is the male slave Fayrūz found in the bill of sale Bodl. MS Heb. b. 13.19. Goitein assumed that the *waṣif al-muwallad* Fayrūz sold in 1175 for twelve dinars was a child based on his price. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 435n50. Yet there are other male and female slaves sold for twelve dinars or less who are also not described in any manner as sons, daughters, or minors. See T-S 13J8.3, T-S8J8.4, and ENA 2727.37. Slaves described as *muwallad(ah)* are also not necessarily children. The designation refers to the circumstances of the slave's birth and upbringing. See above.

⁴² The *hamza* is not represented, but would be written in standard Arabic. See also “*Wafā*” below.

⁴³ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 140, 435n72. Goitein does not specifically mention *shirā' al-jalb*, but this phrase is used similarly to *bay' al-jalb*. See T-S 18J1.19, l. 16. The use of the phrase does not indicate that the buyer is buying the slave directly from a wholesale slave importer. Rather these formulae must refer to how the slave initially entered Egypt despite the number of owners he or she has had since entry into Islamic territory. Thus the use of “like the sale of imported slaves” may serve to explain the sale of a minor in a legal context in which this would otherwise be illegal.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 140, 435n71, 444n6. *Rasm*, *ḥaqq*, or *wājib al-sūq* refer to customs duties. *Ju'l al-dalālah* is a broker's commission. These fees are usually paid by the buyer. See also Blau, *Dictionary*, s.vv. “*wājib, ju'l*.”

⁴⁵ Muqbil: T-S 13J8.3, l. 10-11. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 434n55.

his records that the buyer paid 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ dinars and indicates in the same line that the transaction was done “like the sale of imported slaves.”⁴⁶

The final example is also recorded in a scribe’s personal notes rather than in a formal bill of sale, those another productive scribe of the twelfth century, Natan b. Shemu’el (active 1140-1147). According to his account, the seller owned two slaves, the two-year old Wafā’ and her mother, Janān. This bill indicates that Janān was sold for 32 dinars to another party “like the sale of imported slaves.” Her daughter Wafā’ was, however, to remain in the seller’s possession.⁴⁷ Muqbil, Tawfiq, and Wafā’ were separated from their slave mothers either during enslavement or during a sale between different owners.

In chapter one, I presented two twelfth-century family letters pertaining to the acquisition of child slaves. In one, a Jewish merchant traveling for business in the Indian Ocean reports that he is sending his wife a six-year old slave girl along with some other luxury items to be brought by some one returning home with the Kārim merchant convoy. In the other example, a niece in Cairo writes her uncle in the city of al-Bahnasā to the south asking that he purchase her a black slave girl “five to six years of age.”⁴⁸ In both cases, the children

⁴⁶ T-S NS 320.29, l. 5. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 331, 501 n.81.

⁴⁷ F 1908.44SSv, column b (formerly Gottheil-Worrell XLV). See also *Ibid.*, I: 139, 434n57. Goitein’s observation is correct that the Gottheil-Worrell translation is faulty. The Gottheil-Worrell edition misunderstands the identity of the parties involved in the transaction. Namely, the Janān mentioned in line 2 is the *muwalladah* slave mentioned as such throughout the document. She is the mother of Wafā’. Gottheil-Worrell transliterates the lines at the bottom of the page in an incorrect order. Natan stacks the lines at the bottom, probably because he either added the information about her age after he noted her name or vice versa. Note the lighter weight of his pen compared to the adjacent words. The payment for Janān was arranged in such a way that the buyer paid a dinar per month to the seller. Goitein speculates that such an arrangement might indicate that the seller and buyer lived in close proximity with one another. A fourth case in which a minor Nubian slave girl is sold *bay’ al-jalb*: Vienna: H 23, ll. 4-5. Top right half of the document is missing. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III: 331, 501n81.

⁴⁸ T-S NS J23 and T-S 13J21.18.

would have been purchased and transported over great distances to their destination in Cairo. A six-year-old girl from India would have been taken from India to Egypt by sea up the Red Sea and then overland to a town along the Upper Nile, from whence she would be transported to Lower Egypt. The maritime journey from India to Egypt could easily last two months or longer depending upon the season of travel, the point of departure from India, and the ports of call on the route. In southern Egypt, the trade convoy would disembark and trek inland to a town such as Qūṣ, from where the group would travel north along the Nile for many weeks. Seaborne, riverine, and overland travels were all fraught with physical dangers posed by nature, disease, and opportunistic human predators. Such man-made obstacles included governmental extortion (excess customs dues), capture and ransom by pirates, robberies at the hand of the Bedouin, and rape. Goitein observes that, due to these threats and the sheer physical toll that traveling imposed, men rarely brought their wives and children with them on journeys of any length.⁴⁹ Imported young slaves, however, would have faced these risks as a matter of course.

Indirect evidence suggests that even medieval states recognized that slavery and the slave trade were a cruel fate for children. The traffic in child slaves from Nubia and its surrounding environs became severe enough that political agreements with early Islamic Egypt prohibited it. The *baqt* agreement stipulated that children who had not yet reached

⁴⁹ On the times and distances of travel through the Indian Ocean trading circuits, see K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 126; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 8–11. Goitein writes primarily about the organization and nature of travel in Lower Egypt, *al-Shām*, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. His observations still provide a glimpse into the rigors inherent in the India trade leg from Red Sea ports north to Cairo and Alexandria. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 211–217, 273–352. It took one letter from Fustāṭ fifty days to reach the city of Qūṣ in Upper Egypt. See *Ibid.*, I: 290, 298.

puberty were not be included in the tribute payments due to Egypt on an annual basis.⁵⁰ For some young slaves, however, such a journey was a ritual of their childhood. Their future owners indicate little compunction in transporting their human cargo across great distances, for long periods of time, and at risk of physical exploitation.

As a phase in the life course of female domestic slaves, young girls could experience childhood in starkly different ways. The more fortunate children grew up alongside their birth mothers and were even sold along with them. Imported slave girls were much more likely to experience the trauma of the slave trade and alienation of domestic slavery on their own.

III. The Social Experience of Medieval Domestic Slavery and the Personhood of the Slave

If free women in Cairo sought out five- and six-year old children, then it is safe to assume that they put them to productive use in the household. In chapter two, I discussed the range of work that they likely expected their slave girls and women to do. Their labor and that of their free counterparts was not sharply differentiated in either Jewish law or medieval practice—the difference being that a slave relieved a free woman of a large portion of her work. Medieval sources provide us glimpses of what the quotidian flow of life would have been like for female slaves. It included cooking, cleaning, fetching water, retrieving baked bread from communal ovens, spinning flax and wool, and perhaps embroidery. All of these activities ultimately contributed to the household economy. The slaves of women wealthy

⁵⁰ Robert O. Collins, "Slavery in the Sudan in History," *Slavery & Abolition* 20 (1999): 69–95; Spaulding, "Medieval Christian Nubia"; J. Alexander, "Islam, Archaeology and Slavery in Africa," *World Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (2001): 44–60. For more on the *baqt*, see chapter 1.

enough to own more than one might serve as personal attendants responsible for combing their mistress's hair or assisting in the removal of unwanted body hair.⁵¹

Some Genizah records allow us to gain a view of how daily life unfolded on the ground. Bills of sale and writs of manumission are the most common type of Genizah documents related. They provide a wealth of information for certain questions about slavery and the slave trade, but not for others. They speak to the origins of slaves and who their owners were, but they are not generally helpful for understanding how female slaves experienced daily life.

It is the reality of medieval documentary sources that historians must constantly view the slave through eyes other than her own. Certainly we should not expect medieval petitions, letters, and legal queries to be anything other than what they are. Genizah writers in general, and these particular documents in particular, were not primarily concerned with slaves' point of view or whether or not slaves had a hand in the familial and communal matters in question. To expect otherwise is anachronism. But it does not follow that we should understand such omissions to mean that slaves were not actors in domestic affairs. On the contrary, sources that do illustrate slave agency can be read against documents that present slaves as silent and inert household members. Such sources include court records, family letters, and rabbinic responsa. These documents discuss the presence and actions of slaves in the household, thus providing some of the richest documentation we have concerning slaves' lives. The cases I present

⁵¹ For discussion and analysis of slave labor and its social meaning, see chapter two.

and analyze below illustrate how slave women navigated the opportunities and choices available to them in order to shape their own experiences of slavery.

Yet slaves did not create these documents themselves and thus the person of the slave surfaces in a limited number of contexts. The people who created the documents (often slave owners themselves) generally mention slaves in their writing only when there is some wrinkle in the everyday order of things. In Genizah records, these disruptions usually came in the form of crises. In moments of crisis, we find slaves acting willfully to assert their own interests.

A slave woman herself could precipitate a crisis internal to the household. In chapter two, we read about how the slave women Ghazāl and Tawfīq created strife for their owners. Ghazāl's resistance to her mistress's wishes threatened the status of this daughter of an elite Jewish communal official, also identified as the wife of Abū al-Makārim.⁵² This conflict between Ghazāl and Abū al-Makārim's wife is described in a partially preserved legal agreement reporting that that slave woman is being "restored" to the wife's service. The lower half of the document contains a series of conditional statements: "If the slave woman's behavior is evil towards the Lady [...], Abū al-Makārim must sell this slave woman." The wife can sell Ghazāl if she refuses her orders in "small affairs and great ones."⁵³

In one respect, this document is not about Ghazāl. The legal agreement is meant to protect the wife's dignity and honor. It serves to assert her rights and affirm her prerogatives *vis-à-vis* her husband's slave. But in another light, this legal record provides an indirect means for recovering Ghazāl's actions. The fact that Abū al-Makārim "restores" Ghazāl to the service

⁵² BL Or. 5566C6. See the discussion chapter two and the sources cited there.

⁵³ Ibid., ll. 3-8, 11.

of his wife indicates that this legal deed is not a pre-emptive action—it came *after* Ghazāl's behavior had already been “evil towards the Lady,” and after she had defied her mistress in “small affairs and great ones.” Though this legal agreement is meant to provide a coercive tool for muting Ghazāl's truculence, it serves in the present as the very testimony to Ghazāl's willful acts of disobedience.⁵⁴

Tawfiq's owner mentions her in a letter to her son Abū al-'Izz in which she relates various items of family business and asks him to complete some errands for her, including the purchase of red and yellow silk. In the middle of her letter, the mother switches the subject to news about the family. She addresses two on-going disputes for which we have no other context than the information in this letter: “I am deferring the litigation until you relay to me the legal opinion of the chief judge (*al-ra'īs*) concerning what is to be done.... Furthermore, the slave woman Tawfiq left for the wife of your maternal uncle. Your aunt turned (Tawfiq) against me until she went to her. I am so distressed about you and your brother....”⁵⁵ This letter's style is not unusual among Genizah correspondence in its terseness, oblique references, and abrupt transitions. Nevertheless, Tawfiq's brief appearance betrays what was undoubtedly a more complex dynamic between the slave and her mistress.⁵⁶ Indeed, the

⁵⁴ There is no further record that can be tied directly to Abū al-Makārim's slave, Ghazāl. There are two additional Genizah documents that mention a *jāriyah* named Ghazāl. Both records are bills of sale. The first from 1149/1150: T-S NS 311.23. The second from 1154/55 identifies Ghazāl as an Indian: ENA 4011.62v. Abū al-Makārim's deed BL Or. 5566C6 is dated 1134. Neither an Abū al-Makārim or a free woman are mentioned as parties in either sale. Thus there is no way of knowing whether the attempted reconciliation between Abū al-Makārim's household and their slave Ghazāl was successful, or whether Ghazāl was eventually sold due to her continued subordination. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 433 n. 48.

⁵⁵ Halper 400, ll. 9-13. See the translation in Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 14.

⁵⁶ Slave women named Tawfiq appear in four different Genizah records - three bills of sale and this family letter. Bodl. MS Heb. b. 12.20, ENA 4020.11, Halper 400, and T-S NS 320.29. In Bodl MS Heb. b. 12.20, a Tawfiq is described as Nubian. Three of these documents can be dated to the twelfth century, but there is no strong evidence in any

mother casts Tawfiq's decision to leave the house as the slave's own choice. Such a portrayal of slave initiative is relatively unusual within the larger Genizah corpus related to female slaves. The aunt plays some role in Tawfiq's decision, or is at least blamed for it. Perhaps the sisters both own some share of Tawfiq.⁵⁷ This would explain the aunt's interest in convincing the slave to abandon Abū al-'Izz's mother. But the phrasing indicates that Tawfiq is the ultimately the one who left and went over to the aunt.

The actions of Ghazāl and Tawfiq are the best surviving illustrations of forms of quotidian female slave resistance. Disobedience and temporary flight reflect actions that fall on the more conservative end of a spectrum of slave resistance. They are active, willful assertions of defiance that occur within the framework of slavery. Slaves could resort to more decisive measures in order to resist their masters, but such strategies were fraught with risk and would not necessarily result in freedom or improved material circumstances.

One family letter observes that "many slave women" had run away during a time of civil strife in the year 1070.⁵⁸ The level of the Nile had been insufficient to support the necessary agricultural yields for a number of years; this resulted in severe drought, shortage and famine. The price of wheat skyrocketed until the available supply appears to have run out

of the documents to suggest whether or not the same Tawfiq is mentioned, or whether there are two, three, or four individual women all with the name Tawfiq.

⁵⁷ Such an arrangement would not be unusual. See the responsum of Abraham Maimonides discussed in this chapter. Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, no. 98. See also a case of two brothers selling their shares of the slave Ḥidhq to their sister: T-S 16.188. A case in which a share of the slave Musk is passed down through inheritance to different heirs: T-S NS J32.

⁵⁸ CUL: Or.1080 J71. See Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 16; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 143–144; III: 162, 462; IV: 369, 439; V: 220–221; Gil, *Ishmael*, IV: 48–51, no. 619; Moshe Gil, "Institutions and Events of the Eleventh Century Mirrored in Genizah Letters (Part I)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 67 (2004): 163. Goitein writes that this letter is from the 1060s. Gil dates the letter to September 26, 1070. See Or.1080 J71v, l.10.

entirely. The government, unable to raise tax revenue, could not pay the army, which rioted. The leader of the Turkish army faction, Ibn Ḥamdān, enlisted the help of Bedouin fighters from the Egyptian delta to crush the Sudanese military contingent. Much of Cairo and Fustat were in ruin. The chronicles refer to this period as “the crisis of al-Mustanṣir’s caliphate” (*al-shiddah al-mustanṣiriyyah*).⁵⁹

In the midst of this protracted civil disorder, some slaves were taking advantage of the chaos to bolt for their freedom. The author of the letter is the wife of Yehudah b. Mosheh Ibn Sighmār. While Ibn Sighmār was away on business in Alexandria, his wife remained behind at the family’s home in Fustat. She writes, “I am angry and afraid.” In a modest understatement, she suggests that her husband had chosen a most inopportune time to travel: “I cannot comprehend that I am in (one) place and you are in another.” She then reports that the family’s home had been broken into and its wheat reserves plundered, before going on to express fear that the family’s slaves will run away.⁶⁰ She expresses distrust toward their *ghulām* (male slave factotum): “The deceit of the [*ghulām*] is now clear to me. I regret that you left him with me and I am anxious that he not run away,”⁶¹ a fear apparently well-founded since, she continues, “Many slave women have run away with the Bedouins.”⁶² Yet, in this same letter, she sends her husband the greetings of various family members, including a slave

⁵⁹ Gil, “Institutions and Events of the Eleventh Century Mirrored in Genizah Letters (Part I),” 163. On the *shiddah al-mustanṣiriyyah*, see Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 145–150; Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, 43–46; Paul Ernest Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 62–64; Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, 328.

⁶⁰ Or.1080 J71, ll. 7-8, 12-13.

⁶¹ Ibid., l. 13. The document reads “*gh-ā-l-m*” as Gil transcribes. This is a scribal error. The word intended is probably “*ghulām*.” My reading here departs from Gil’s edition and supports Goitein’s reading as it appears in his unpublished transcription. See the PGB, “Or 1080 J 71.” In line 14, I read “*wa-anā faz’ānah lā yaharab.*”

⁶² Ibid., 14. Gil translates “*j-wa-ra-i*” as “neighbors.” “*Juwāri*,” a plural for *jāriyah*, is almost certainly the intended meaning.

woman named Walaʿ, who “kisses your hand.”⁶³ The name Walaʿ (Passion) indicates that she is a slave.⁶⁴ And while other slave women were apparently running away with the Bedouin, Walaʿ chose to remain with her master and mistress—perhaps another instance of the risk-benefit calculus that enticed some slaves with their owners rather than risk thrusting themselves into a less secure situation.

There is only one documented instance when a slave woman seems to have fled her owner outright with no apparent explanation.⁶⁵ The document in question is a legal document written in Fustat in the second half of the twelfth century concerning Abū Saʿd Mosheh b. Yefet ha-Parnas and his wife, Sitt al-Fakhr bat Ṭuviyyah. One purpose of the document is to spell out the allowance that the husband is leaving his wife, daughter, and their slave woman while he is absent on a journey, in dinars and rations of wheat. On the reverse side is a testimony stating that Abū Saʿd also owes Sitt al-Fakhr fifteen dinars for her slave woman, “who has vanished from her house.” Abū Saʿd must owe his wife this sum because the slave woman was included as the wife’s property in the couple’s *ketubbah*.⁶⁶ In the event of loss or damage to such property, it was the husband’s duty to compensate his wife. Goitein interpreted this letter to mean that the family’s maidservant had runaway and this is certainly likely. The phrasing used is, however, slightly ambiguous. Abū Saʿd writes that the slave

⁶³ *wa-Walaʿ tuqabbil aydika*. Or. 1080 J71, ll. 19-20. Goitein was the first to suggest that Walaʿ is the name of the family’s slave. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 144, 435 n. 83.

⁶⁴ On slave names, see the discussion in chapter one. The name Passion fits into the well-documented category of slave names that emphasized sensuality and luxuriousness.

⁶⁵ T-S 12.585. Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls”; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 143, 435, III: 192, 369; Friedman, “Women and the India Trade,” 165 n. 16.

⁶⁶ T-S 12.585v, ll. 6-7: *al-ibrāʾ al-kāmil al-tām mā khallā al-jāriyah al-muktatabah li-Sitt al-Fakhr ʿalayhi fa-innahā dāʾat min baytihā*. Thanks to Oded Zinger for bringing to my attention an additional document that relates to this couple, a conditional bill of divorce for Sitt al-Fakhr and Abū Saʿd: T-S 8J5.23. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 192, 467 n. 150.

“vanished from her (mistress’s) house” (*ḍā‘at min baytihā*) and not specifically that she ran away. The verb used here, “*ḍā‘at*” (lost), appears frequently in merchant letters and commercial records noting when capital or goods have been lost in extenuating circumstances.⁶⁷

The strategy of running away needs to be understood as standing at the more extreme end of a spectrum of slave resistance. Such a choice entailed risk for a slave. Where could a runaway slave go? Wives who left their husband could find protection in the homes of their parents or other relatives.⁶⁸ Yet slaves were highly unlikely to have any kin, let alone relatives who could take them in and provide for them. Running away did not mean freedom. In the medieval Islamicate context, freedom from dependence and bonds of obligation also meant a lack of protection and support, whether one was a domestic slave or an army general.⁶⁹ Such freedom spelled alienation from the social order and would have made the slave only more vulnerable and susceptible to the caprice of others. For female slaves, running away would have been fraught with risk and uncertainty. Female slaves did not choose to run away with any apparent frequency except under extraordinary circumstances.

If we assume that Sitt al-Fakhr’s slave fled the household, then we are left with two instances in which slave women are reported to have fled their masters, the other case being when “many slave women” fled “with the Bedouins.” Yet in the same letter in which Yehudah ibn Sighmār’s wife conveys this news, we learn that the family’s own slave, *Wala‘*, chose to stay

⁶⁷ Cf. ENA 2727.37b, l. 5, a bill of sale for a male slave named *Ṣandal*. The deed explains that *Ṣandal* has run away many times and also stolen. But the verb used in this instance is *haraba*—“he ran away,” “he fled”—and not *ḍā‘a*, “he vanished.”

⁶⁸ Krakowski, “Female Adolescence.”

⁶⁹ See the discussion of slavery and clientage in chapter 2.

even when Yehudah's wife suspected that their *ghulām* might choose to flee. Wala's rationale escapes us, as do the motivations of any one of the "many slave women" who ran away with the Bedouins sacking Fustāṭ. Slaves did not necessarily run away even when an opportunity presented itself. Those who joined the Bedouin must have determined that their opportunities were greater with a semi-nomadic tribe in which they could find the protection of a large group. My point is not to argue that slaves lacked a sense of solidarity—or even that they were a self-conscious class. The more important ties were the vertical ones between themselves and their potential protectors. Security was found in the protector, or patron, who offered predictable and comparatively beneficial treatment. Slaves were not motivated by an ideological notion of freedom or an abstract notion that the fates of domestic slaves were bound together.⁷⁰ The point is that slaves reacted differently in a shared historical moment based on their own *Sitz im Leben* and self-interest.

Another decisive strategy of resistance available to the slaves of Jewish masters in medieval Egypt was conversion to Islam. As we read in a responsum of Abraham Maimonides in the introduction to this chapter, one slave woman used this option after her mistress beat her publicly.⁷¹ Her decision to convert to Islam compelled her sale to a Muslim. Perhaps her story would never have been summarized at all had it not been for the dispute between her two co-owners over how the proceeds from her sale should be divided.

⁷⁰ The situation is different among slave-soldiers who served in regiments based on their geographic origins (or *jins*) and related to their military classification (infantry, cavalry, etc.) that were also based on *jins*. These groups fought each other during periods of civil war and turmoil. See Lev, "Army, Regime and Society"; Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*.

⁷¹ Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, no. 98.

This conversion to Islam is the only report I know of that pertains to Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt.⁷² The conversions themselves would have taken place before a Muslim judge, as well as the resultant sale. Thus any documentary records generated by the conversion and sale of slaves would have been less likely to end up in the Genizah.⁷³ Nevertheless, the very option to convert to Islam could have been itself a structural constraint that shaped Jewish slave owning practices.⁷⁴ The mere threat that a slave might convert to Islam might have been enough to influence a master's treatment of his slave. As Goldberg notes in her study of Jewish mercantile activity, Jews did not want to attract the attention of the state in their business dealings. Such attention could open the door to further unwelcome caprice. It would stand to reason that slave owners also had no interest in having their affairs brought before a Muslim judge in the context of an illegal and socially taboo infraction—the ownership of a Muslim slave.⁷⁵

⁷² The strategy is attested for other times and places. In the aftermath of the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, rabbinic authorities confronted the problem whereby slaves would deliberately put themselves in the paths of Roman troops so that they would be confiscated and removed from their masters' possession. See Urbach, *The Laws Regarding Slavery*, 81–83. A geonic responsum reports the threat of a slave to his master: "Either liberate my son, or I will become a (Muslim) convert." The conversion would force the Jewish owner to sell the slave. See Jacob Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as a Source of Jewish History, Part II: The Political Status of the Jews," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 10 (1919): 147.

⁷³ Arabic records, especially petitions, did find their way to the Genizah. See Khan, *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents*. Rustow demonstrates that Jews also acquired decommissioned chancery materials in order to learn the language and forms for petitioning the Muslim state. See Rustow, "A Petition" and her book (in process) on the subject. There is one bill of sale written in Arabic script that records a sale between a Christian, who was also a clerk for the Fatimid state, and a Jew: T-S Ar. 42.174. Note the discrepancy between the Khan and Aodeh two editions over whether or not the Christian slave woman sold has a son or not.

⁷⁴ An interesting comparison can be found in seventh-century Iraq after the Muslim conquest. At this time, Jewish (Talmudic) law dictated that a woman deemed a "rebellious wife" wait one year before her request for a divorce was granted. After the Muslim conquest, the waiting period was abolished. Brody explains that the apparent reason was that Jewish women could use Muslim courts, and even convert to Islam, in order to expedite divorces from their Jewish husbands. See Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 62–63.

⁷⁵ Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*, 98, 177. Here Goldberg refers to the potential danger of wholesale trading in certain items vis-à-vis unwanted state interference. I suggest that such hesitation would also have been felt by

Conversion to Islam was not the only means by which slaves used religious identification to further their own interests. It is evident that slave women also converted to Judaism and married into the local Egyptian community. Documentation of these marriages is found primarily in wedding contracts and responsa that identify one of the parties as a freed woman.⁷⁶ It is unusual when these documents provide insight into what may have motivated a slave woman, or freedwoman, to convert to Judaism. Was she coerced? Or was this a common opportunity of which slave women took advantage for their own reasons?

A responsum of Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) reports a revealing episode involving a slave woman and her master.⁷⁷ The author of the query asks Maimonides how he would rule in a case where a “young man” purchases a “beautiful slave woman” and brings her into his home, where they live with his father’s wife and her three young daughters. The young man gets into an unspecified argument with his brother, who in revenge, informs upon the young man and tells a Muslim judge that he (the young man) has purchased a Christian slave woman and converted her to Judaism.⁷⁸ When the slave woman appears before the Muslim judge, however, she denies that she was ever a Christian: “I am a Jew,” she declares; “I am the

individual slave owners and that they would have feared being construed as transgressing the legal and social rules as they pertained to *dhimmī* slave owning.

⁷⁶ Wedding contract of a freedwoman: T-S AS 145.1. For responsa that discuss the status of freedwomen, see Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, chap. 10.

⁷⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Responsa of Maimonides*, II: 373–375, no. 211. The Muslim judge is identified using the term “*ha-Shofet*.” A *shofet* could be a Jewish judge, but the verb chosen (*hilshin*– to inform upon some one) suggests that one brother reported the other to a Muslim authority: “*Akhu-hu hilshin ’oto il ha-shofet*.” Earlier another judge (*al-Shofet*) is mentioned. It’s not clear that the judges are the same individual. Goitein discusses this responsum in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 136–137, 433 n. 36. Here he describes the judge as a Muslim (a *qādī*).

⁷⁸ There are numerous examples of Jews owning Christian slave women. In at least two cases, the slaves are black Christians. See T-S Ar.42.174 and n. 74 above. See also Bodl. MS Heb. b. 12.20. Goitein notes that the Nubian slave woman Tawfiq mentioned here is described as a Christian using the Persian term *tersāwīyyah*. See *Ibid.*, l. 13 and Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 136. Another Christian slave woman is mentioned in Or.1080 J281, ll.26–27.

daughter of a Jewish woman.” The Muslim judge then returns the slave woman to the young man, and they continue to reside together despite becoming the subject of much local gossip.⁷⁹

This author of the query asks whether it was legal for the young man to live with his beautiful slave woman or whether he must be compelled to sell her. According to Jewish law, concubinage with a non-Jewish slave woman was illegal.⁸⁰ In this instance, however, Maimonides ruled that the young man should emancipate the slave woman and marry her. This solution was, in essence, an accommodation aimed at providing the young man with an opportunity to change his ways and correct the situation himself.⁸¹

The responsum is also fascinating because it shows the slave woman presenting a Jewish identity and genealogy in order to further her own interests. Her double assertion, that she is Jewish and that she has a Jewish mother, strategically undercut the allegation that her master had converted her to Judaism. She claims instead that she was a Jew by birth. It seems unlikely here that she would have been coerced to testify as she did. If her master had coerced her, the audience with the judge would have been a prime opportunity for her to plead her case and thrust her Jewish master into legal trouble with Muslim authorities.

Slaves could use religious identification to advance their own goals and interests in very different ways. In the medieval Islamicate context, *dhimmīs* could own and dispose of slaves

⁷⁹ A gaonic responsum attributed to R. Šemaḥ Gaon (late 10th c. CE) discusses a problem in which a slave pretended to be Jewish in order that he not be sold to non-Jews. For R. Šemaḥ, see Modā'i, *Sha'are Šedeq*, 27a, no. 3; Mann, “The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim II.”

⁸⁰ Cf. the responsa of Abraham Maimonides concerning concubinage discussed in chapter three.

⁸¹ Moses Maimonides, *Responsa of Maimonides*, II: 373–375, no. 211. See also Goitein's analysis in *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 136.

within specific parameters meant to underscore the social superiority of its Muslim subjects. A slave's decision to embrace Islam meant that she severed her relationship with her Jewish owner and that she would soon find herself the property of a Muslim master. A woman's choice to convert to Judaism bound her more tightly to her Jewish household, and slaves who converted to Judaism may also have gained greater status within the household. There were precedents in Jewish law that prevented Jews from selling Jewish slaves to non-Jews.⁸² This law further restricted the market for the buying and selling of slaves by Jewish owners and thus potentially provided slaves with additional leverage.⁸³

But conversion was only one tool that slaves could use to protect themselves from the depredations of slavery and to shape their own daily life. Slave women had limited choices within an array of unfavorable legal and social structures. The above examples suggest a spectrum along which the actions of slaves can be plotted. At one end of the spectrum are actions and choices slaves make that integrate themselves into their Jewish households and milieu, such as conversion to Judaism. At the other end are decisive acts of resistance like running away and conversion to Islam. In between are everyday acts of disobedience, or

⁸² There is longstanding discussion of this issue in the *halakhah*. The issue originated due to the practice of converting slaves to Judaism in antiquity. Thus, if a master sold his Jewish slave to a non-Jew, the master potentially impinged upon the slave's ability to fulfill his religious obligations as Jew. Over time, religious authorities interpreted this injunction differently depending upon specific social and economic circumstances. See Urbach, *The Laws Regarding Slavery*; Wacholder, "Halakhah." This tension may be alluded to in the responsum of Abraham Maimonides in which the slave converts to Islam. When Leah must sell her, she can only find a Christian buyer. Subsequently, another unnamed (and presumably Jewish) party buys the slave back and returns her to Leah. See Freimann and Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni*, no. 98.

⁸³ In T-S 13J14.4 a man creates a will in which he specifies that his maidservant should not be sold unless she herself wishes. A man describes in T-S 13J36.11 how his slave refuses to be sold. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 140–142.

temporary flight to the home of a relative, that indicate how slave women acted to shape their immediate environments and relationships with their masters and mistresses.

While the rationales behind slave women's choices largely evade the historian, their collective ambiguity and unevenness point the way to a subject just as elusive: the personhood of the slave. The personhood of slaves passes in and out of view at such moments of decision, whether it is Ghazāl's "evil behavior" toward her mistress, Tawfīq's decision to "go over" to her mistress's sister-in-law's house, Wala's decision to remain at the home of Ibn Sighmār, or a slave's decision to profess Judaism to protect herself and her master. An appreciation of what slave women chose and how may be the closest historians can come to apprehending the personhood of the slave.

IV. Lives in Slavery: Profiles of Individual Slave Women

When individual slave women do appear in the Genizah record, it is usually only once. Even when the same personal name surfaces again and again, the lack of other identifying information such as dates and *jins* make it difficult to know if two slaves named Tawfīq, for example, are in fact the same person. A prosopographical approach can help weave together a more coherent narrative from the fragmented record, even if it does not enable us to trace a single slave over her lifetime in order to understand how she experienced different phases of her life.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ I do not mean to imply that it is simple to follow the medieval lives free, elite subjects either. Slaves' lack of articulated genealogies and their legal status does create additional challenges. Amitav Ghosh's history of one India trader's slave, named Bomma, is notable for the amount of relevant material Ghosh was able to assemble. Ghosh's methods also enlarge the story he is able to tell. See Ghosh, "The Slave of MS. H.6.," Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*. Friedman has also investigated the comings and goings of Bomma (whom he identifies as "Bama") and his

In three cases, however, I have found enough evidence to suggest some connections among discrete mentions of slaves with the same personal names. An analysis of these cases allows us to observe how the lives of slave women unfolded differently. In chapter two, I discussed the slave girls Sitt al-Sumr and Dhahab, who were manumitted by their wealthy patron, a woman named Sitt al-Ḥusn, on her death.⁸⁵ Sitt al-Ḥusn's will does not state the ages of the two slaves. They are only described as "virgin slave girls." But there is other evidence that suggests they may have been minors. A three-year old slave girl named Dhahab is mentioned in a deed of testimony dated to the year 1145, five to six years before Sitt al-Ḥusn's death, and the scribe who recorded the deed of testimony was Sitt al-Ḥusn's second husband, Natan b. Shemu'el.⁸⁶ The only other slave woman known from the Genizah with the name Dhahab lived nearly 100 years later and is thus certainly not the same woman.⁸⁷ These details suggest that Dhahab would have been eight or nine years old when she was manumitted. She had her entire mature life ahead of her as a free woman. Not every slave girl was so fortunate as I explain below.

Another legal deed from roughly the same era mentions a slave girl (*jāriyah*) named Sumr.⁸⁸ The scribe for this deed was none other than Natan b. Shemu'el's son, Mevorakh b. Natan (active 1140-1159). The addition of Sitt al- (Lady of) to Sumr can be explained as a device

master Abraham ibn Yijū. See Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*; Goitein and Friedman, *Abraham Ben Yijū*, 2010.

⁸⁵ T-S 13J22.2. See the discussion in chapter two and the sources cited there.

⁸⁶ T-S 12.140. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 135, 138; III: 255, 483; Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 8–9.

⁸⁷ T-S NS J226v, sec. 2. The date 1244 is found on the recto in two different places. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 262, 485 n. 78.

⁸⁸ Goitein notes that the hand-writing is Mevorakh b. Natan's and that this would indicate a date between 1140 and 1159.

meant to lend more dignity and prestige to her name. In this document, two brothers confirm that they have received a sum of 12.5 dinars for Sumr from their uncle Eli'ezer ha-Levi. This sum is low, approximately 7.5 dinars less than the typical price for a slave woman. It is quite possible that Sumr was valued below the usual price for a slave woman because she was young—though her age is not mentioned specifically. Large lacunae in this deed obscure a second reference to Sumr and any further discussion about her fate. Yet the only slave women called Sumr, Sitt al-Sumr or Dhahab appear in documents from the middle of twelfth century and all are traceable to the circle of Natan b. Shemu'el. Further slaves from this scribe's social circle will appear immediately below.

Because Jews often turned to their personal networks for help securing slave women, there is further reason to believe that all these slave women can be connected.⁸⁹ If they are then we can safely say that Dhahab would have been eight to nine years old when she was emancipated. If Sitt al-Sumr was considered a slave child for the purposes of her price, then she probably would have been younger than six, since this is the age when girls seem to have been expected to perform manual labor around the home.⁹⁰ In this case, she would have been considered pre-pubescent and thus not yet of marriageable age.⁹¹ The immaturity of these two slave girls would explain why Sitt al-Ḥusn did not manumit them outright, but provided them with clothing and an apartment in which to live, provided that they professed Judaism.⁹² If the girls had been above marriageable age, then they would have been expected to find marital

⁸⁹ See chapter one.

⁹⁰ See the discussion in chapter two.

⁹¹ On the age of girls at first marriage, see Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," chap. 2.

⁹² See chapter two.

matches within the Jewish community, a possibility that other surviving documents discussed below suggest.

Yet not all young slave girls were freed when they were below the usual age of first marriages. Other slave women may have spent the majority of their lifespan in domestic service. This was the case with another slave from the circle of Natan b. Shemu'el: the two-year old *ṣabiyyah* Wafā', whom Natan b. Shemu'el mentions in notes about the sale of her mother, Janān. Natan's scribal notebook from 1141-42 indicates that Wafā' remained in the possession of the seller despite her mother's sale.⁹³

Slaves named Wafā' appear twice more over the course of the twelfth century. In a marriage contract written again by Natan b. Shemu'el, a *waṣīfah* named Wafā' is one of four slave women who comprise a segment of a large dowry. In 1181, three sisters, the daughters of the *parnas* Zayn b. Abū al-Riḍā' manumit Wafā'. If we presume that these three documents all attest to the same slave, then Wafā' would have been approximately forty years old when she gained her freedom after passing through the hands of at least three different owners—in marked contrast to Dhahab, who would have been only eight or nine years old at manumission.⁹⁴ The difference in age between a nine year-old Dhahab and a forty year-old Wafā' was not only a life in slavery. Immature slave girls, or those at a reasonably marriageable age, drew the attention and support of the Jewish community as is illustrated below.

V. Modes of Manumission

⁹³ Notes on Janān's sale: F 1908.44SSv. Discussed above.

⁹⁴ The dowry: T-S J1.29. Discussed in chapter two. The manumission: T-S 8J12.3.

Dhahab, Sitt al-Sumr, and Wafā' were all freed by their owners, albeit at vastly different stages of their lives. Across the sub-corpus of Genizah sources that document slaves, there is a clear trend toward the emancipation and the integration of these slaves and their children into the Egyptian Jewish community. One-third of the total corpus signals either the emancipation of a slave woman or documents the life of a freedwoman.⁹⁵ This proportion of freed to enslaved women speaks volumes about the nature and logic of slavery within the Jewish community of medieval Egypt. Freedwomen, their spouses, and their children were a constitutive element of Egyptian Jewish society as a whole.

The history of freedwomen further illuminates the subject of slavery by marking the changes and continuities that individuals experienced as they moved from one status to the other. The trend toward manumission also invites reflection on a variety of themes that have been integral to this and previous chapters. Do the patterns evident in the Genizah reflect the real rate of slave emancipation among Jewish households in medieval Egypt, or did the act of emancipation itself produce a disproportionate trail of documentation? What sources have survived for the study of freed slaves compared to the records of the enslaved?

Jewish law admitted of two modes through which slaves gained their freedom. A formal writ effected the legal act of manumission and also served a freed person as proof of his new status. A master could also make an oral declaration of manumission, and Jewish law recognized its validity *ex post facto* in instances when there was not time to execute a writ.

⁹⁵ See appendix.

The law required a formal writ subsequently, but the oral declaration was supposed to be honored.⁹⁶

From the perspective of social history, writs of manumission contain helpful identifying information, including the names of owners and slaves. Further, the nature of their formulaic language suggests how medieval subjects construed the meaning of the transition from slavery to freedom. A deed of emancipation from 1176 illustrates the point. Abraham ha-Kohen bar (son of) Aharon ha-Kohen freed his maidservant Nāshiyah.⁹⁷ The language used in this deed is consistent with the legal formulae in other writs of manumission.⁹⁸ The deed reads:

I am freeing you, Nāshiyah, who were my slave beforehand. Hereby I am freeing you; now you are free; now you belong to yourself; you are permitted to join the community of Israel, to adopt a new name in Israel, and to do what you like, as do all free persons. Neither I, Avraham ha-Kohen, nor my heirs after me, nor any legal representative of mine has any rights over you or the progeny that you will establish in Israel. This document is a bill of manumission for you from me and a deed of freedom according to the law of Moses and Israel.⁹⁹

The formulae set up a striking correlation: Nāshiyah's freedom entitles her to adopt "a new name in Israel" and "to join the community of Israel." The freedwoman's adoption of a new name also demonstrates how manumission reverses the deracination of enslavement.

⁹⁶ See appendix and the discussion below for examples of writs of manumission and deathbed wills in which slaves are freed.

⁹⁷ T-S 8J12.2. Goitein's introduction hints at the experience of freed women after manumission as they are described below: "In Roman and Islamic societies, the freed slave remained in a state of dependence upon his former master. According to Jewish law, the separation was total, although in actual life the situation was occasionally somewhat different, since the slave had been to a large extent a member of the family."

⁹⁸ See for example, T-S 10J28.16 in which Sitt al-Hasab frees her slave-girl Šalaf in 1157. It appears that this Šalaf may have been given to her as part of her marriage contract. See T-S 16.239.

⁹⁹ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, V: 150.

The symbolic importance of adopting a new name upon manumission is also confirmed in a deed of manumission written by the merchant Avraham ibn Yijū for his Indian slave Ashū in 1132.¹⁰⁰ At the beginning of the deed, Ibn Yijū refers to his servant as “Ashū the slave woman, the proselyte.” At the end of the deed, amidst the formulae that declare Ashū emancipated, she is renamed “daughter of Abraham [the Jewish patriarch], Berakha, a name fitting for a Jewish woman.”¹⁰¹ This formulation of the manumission deed goes one step further than Nashiyah’s: it gives Berakha a fictional genealogy as the daughter of Abraham, a standard fiction for converts to Judaism in recognition of the patriarch’s role as “father of a multitude of nations.”¹⁰² According to her writ of manumission (and compared to Berakha’s writ), Nāshiyah did not convert to Judaism upon her emancipation; this is the reason her deed contains neither new Hebrew names nor fictive genealogies.¹⁰³

Slave owners often freed their slaves in their last wills and testaments. As demonstrated in chapter two, last wills and testaments can provide very intimate expressions of the role that slaves played in the lives of their owners. A dying woman orders her sister to ensure that the family’s Sudanese slave and nurse not be separated from the testator’s

¹⁰⁰ SPIOS D55.10. See the discussion in Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 55–57, 632–633. Friedman observes that this is the only known case in the Genizah in which a writ of manumission cites the name of the newly freed woman. The names of other freed women can be gleaned from other documents, but it is not possible to connect the free name to the former slave name. The activities of Avraham ibn Yijū are relatively well-documented in the Genizah. In addition to the sources cited above, see Ghosh, “The Slave of MS. H.6.”; Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*; S. D. Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, “Abraham Ben Yijū, A Jewish Trader in India (in Hebrew),” *Te’uda* 15 (1999): 259–92.

¹⁰¹ Berakha and Mubārah are common names for female converts.

¹⁰² Converts to Judaism were often referred to as “so-and-so son [or daughter] of Abraham” based on the biblical proof-text in which Abraham is referred to as “father of a multitude of nations” (Gen. 17: 4, 8). See Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*, 57, n. 18. Friedman transcribes the name as Berākhā in English, though the spelling in his transcript of the original is Berakhā. I have not yet been able to check the original document against the transcription.

¹⁰³ Cf. T-S NS 321.54. We learn in this document that the freedwoman Mubārah converts to Judaism after her manumission. Discussed below.

youngest daughter. When Sitt al-Ḥusn freed Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr, she provided for them in a manner that suggests they were her living legacy.¹⁰⁴

But not all slaves mentioned in deathbed wills were freed at their master's death. When Sitt al-Dalāl gave her last testament from her deathbed, she used the opportunity to praise her slave woman Munā: "I inform you that she, my slave woman Munā, has attended graciously to me during this and previous illnesses in ways that my mother and sister have not done. Now witness that this slave woman shall not be sold, bought, or harmed."¹⁰⁵

While Sitt al-Dalāl was clearly thankful for her slave's service, and sought to protect her from sale and harm, her precise intentions do not appear in what has survived of her last will and testament. Formal deathbed wills could not always be drawn up and executed in the necessary form due to the constraints created by dealing with a dying testator who was confined to his or her bed and possibly in great pain. A comparison of Sitt al-Dalāl's recorded testimony with formularies for formal deathbed declarations suggests that hers is a draft recorded by a scribe who intended to recopy the details into a proper form later.¹⁰⁶

The practice of recording the wishes of a dying person, sometimes under great pressure of circumstance, poses obvious problems for the historian, and it could be similarly problematic in its own time. There are a series of questions about Sitt al-Dalāl's testimony that underscore the documentary ambiguity created by circumstances of her testimony. Did the

¹⁰⁴ Sa'ādah: ENA NS 48.6. Sitt al-Ḥusn, Dhahab, and Sitt al-Sumr: T-S 13J22.2. In another deathbed will, the man Abū al-Ḥasan frees his two slaves Gharradah and Kashf. He frees the child Kashf with the stipulation that she will remain with his sister Sitt al-Ri'āsah until the freed slave is old enough to make her own decision about whether to leave the family or stay: T-S Misc.4.137.4.

¹⁰⁵ T-S Misc.25.107. See chapter two.

¹⁰⁶ See the formulary for a deathbed declaration edited in Gershon Weiss, "Formularies (Sheṭārot) Reconstructed from the Genizah," *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies* 2 (1973): 37–38.

scribe write down most or all of Sitt al-Dalāl's words? Did he condense or paraphrase her testimony? For Sitt al-Dalāl's part, did she explicitly dictate that Munā be emancipated or only that she not be sold to someone else or mistreated? If she did not wish for Munā to be freed, then was the unspoken corollary that her slave would live and die as a slave in her family's possession? The potential ambiguity of Sitt al-Dalāl's will is not a trivial matter. Though Jewish law recognized the validity of deathbed wills, there are precedents that illustrate how family members could attempt to undermine deathbed manumissions and challenge their legality.

The Genizah has preserved a copy of a gaonic responsum that likely originated in ninth-century Baghdād.¹⁰⁷ The responsum addresses two laws related to the manumission of slaves. First, it clarifies the validity of a master's oral declaration of manumission. If a master states before witnesses that he wishes to free his slave but he dies before the written deed is executed, then his heirs are compelled to give the slave a written bill of manumission. Second, it states that the oral declaration can be given in a language other than Hebrew; oral declarations in any language are valid. The author of the responsum offers an anecdote to demonstrate that a precedent exists for his ruling:

It is related that Natan b. Shahriyār, a member of the family of the Exilarch, had a male and a female slave. He willed and declared (in Arabic): "No one after me shall possess my slave so-and-so and my maidservant so-and-so (*lā yamlīku-hūm aḥad min ba'dī*)."
There was no symbolic purchase performed and there was no writ of manumission

¹⁰⁷ Bodl. MS Heb. c 18.37–38. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 144, 436 n. 95. The query begins on f. 37v, l. 3. This document is a copy of a responsum and is the sixth of eight responsa that form part of a collection that runs from Bodl. MS heb. c. 18.35 to 18.38. There is a partial edition of this responsum and the other responsa in Louis Ginzberg, *Geonica*, vol. II (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1909), 72–84. In addition to the sixth responsum, the fourth and seventh responsa also deal with laws and practices regarding slavery. Ginzberg suggests a ninth-century dating for the sixth responsa based on a reference to the "Rabbi Ṣadoq Gaon" (see l. 10). The seventh responsum in the collection is ascribed to Sherira Ga'on in the compendium *Sha'are Sedeq*, p. 26b, no. 29).

executed. The matter came before our lord, the light of our eyes, our master Rav Şadoq Ga'on, may his soul rest in paradise. He decided according to the law that they must be freed, and he compelled Natan's heir Shem'ayah (the son of Yişhaq the Exilarch) to write them a bill of manumission.¹⁰⁸

This anecdote about Natan b. Shahriyār's slaves provides context for how deathbed manumissions functioned, but it also contains a cautionary tale for slaves and their owners who wished to free them. As the last sentence indicates, Natan's heir Shem'ayah apparently challenged the validity of the declaration. Perhaps this was because the phrase had not been uttered in Hebrew, or perhaps because formal writs of manumission had not been executed. Nevertheless the Iraqi ga'on Şadoq considered Natan's oral declaration that his slaves "shall not be owned by anyone after me" lawful and binding. Further, such a declaration did not have to be uttered according to any particular Hebrew or Aramaic formula.¹⁰⁹

Natan's statement as quoted by the author of the responsum is more precise than what Sitt al-Dalāl's scribe recorded at her deathbed. Natan's declaration that "no one shall possess" his slaves provides a much clearer sense that he meant for his servants to be freed. Sitt al-Dalāl's formulation that her slave Munā shall not be sold or bought (*wa-lā tubā'a wa-lā tushtaray*) technically places the emphasis on the transfer of ownership and not upon the fact of Munā's ownership by another person. Compared to the more direct phrasing above, the scribe's record in Sitt al-Dalāl's case seems almost cruelly ambiguous. On the one hand, she

¹⁰⁸ Bodl. MS Heb. c 18.38, ll. 7-10. The response is written in Hebrew and Aramaic, but the author quotes Natan b. Sharhriār in Arabic. My translation differs from Ginzberg's though the overall meaning is unchanged. See Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II:75. Also note that Ginzberg's transcription differs from the original in some minor aspects. In line 9, Ginzberg corrects the scribe's spelling of the Aramaic verb *ata* ("to come"). The scribe wrote "*ve-atu le-qamey adonenu*" and not "*ve-ata la-qamey adonenu*."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

never says that she frees Munā.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, the fact that her testimony does not specify which heir would take possession of Munā might suggest that she meant for Munā to be freed.¹¹¹

Other deathbed declarations illustrate that owners were very clear when they intended their slaves to be freed: they explicitly use the vocabulary of manumission.¹¹² Nor does this statement imply that Sitt al-Dalāl wishes Munā to be free at a later time. Instead, she uses the opportunity to bind Munā more closely to her family and to protect her from sale. Sitt al-Dalāl's motivations are hidden from us. It seems quite likely that Munā must have been relatively old and would have found it difficult to begin a new life as a freed woman. Unmarried freedwomen were after all "intrinsic dependents," and there is evidence that communal officials and individuals were concerned about protecting such dependents from falling into poverty.¹¹³ Without subsequent documentation, we cannot ascertain what in fact became of Munā. Sitt al-Dalāl's will underscores, however, that the process of manumitting slaves first orally, instead of through an executed written instrument, created ambiguity, and this ambiguity may have had dire consequences for the slaves themselves.

As the responsum above indicates, heirs could and did challenge the validity and legal standing of oral declarations of emancipation. In the case of Natan, his heir Shem'ayah challenged his declaration until Şadoq Ga'on himself ordered that Shem'ayah follow through

¹¹⁰ By saying, for example, "*u'atiqu-ki*" or "*u'atiqu-hā*" ("I emancipate you" or "I emancipate her"). See T-S 13J22.2, l. 20: "*a'taqat-humā*": Sitt al-Ḥusn "freed the two of them."

¹¹¹ When slaves are bequeathed, they are invariably designated for a specific heir. For examples, see ENA NS 48.6, T-S 13J3.3, T-S AS 147.23, and other examples as noted in the appendix below.

¹¹² See T-S Misc.24.137.4 and T-S 13J22.2.

¹¹³ On "intrinsic dependence" see Krakowski's work on unmarried orphaned girls: Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," chap. 1, and the discussion in chapter two.

on Natan's order and write a bill of manumission. There is a second example in the Genizah that demonstrates that it was not unheard of to find family members undermining the emancipation of slaves and even attempting to do this through the Jewish courts, and because it is a formulary, we can assume the situation was not uncommon. The formulary is for voiding the manumission of a slave woman, and it is written on the verso of a standard formulary for the manumission of a slave.¹¹⁴

This formulary was not completely stripped of its particular details, and this allows us a glimpse of the context in which a person approached a court and asked that a prior manumission be overruled. A man comes to the court and testifies before witnesses that his wife owns a minor, non-Jewish slave girl who grew up in his house and was the daughter of another one of the family's female slaves. His wife wishes to free the young girl. "(B)ut I do not desire to free (her)," the man declares. He then explains: "Now when she pressed me with her words, I had to mislead her and to act according to her wishes and to mislead the daughter of her slave woman, whose name is X, (into thinking) that I am making her a free woman. But it is neither my will nor my desire to free her or to emancipate her. The deed of emancipation that I have written for her is void and is like a potsherd thrown in the street (which is worthless) and not to be relied upon at all."¹¹⁵ The husband had legal jurisdiction over the

¹¹⁴ The formulary for canceling a deed of manumission is published in Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl." Here he identifies the document as T-S K27.45. Today the document is labeled T-S NS 246.28. T-S K27.45 is a legal query sent to Abraham Maimonides and has no verso. For a brief discussion of these two formularies, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, II: 341–342. Goitein also identifies this document as T-S K27.45 *Ibid.*, II: 602 n. 42. As Friedman points out, there is also a formula for the revocation of a deed of manumission for a male slave. See Assaf, "Sefer Ha-Sheṭarot (Book of Formularies)," 45–46.

¹¹⁵ Translated and analyzed in Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl," 62. Friedman also suggests that the composition and contents of T-S NS 246.28 (labeled as T-S Box K 27, f. 45 *verso* in his edition) signal that this formulary reflect an actual court case. He adds that the scribe must have thought that the circumstances were unique. As I discuss

emancipation of his wife's minor slave girl likely because the slave's mother was part of the wife's dowry, and therefore under his control for the duration of their marriage. The man completes his deposition by requesting a deed of evidence, which the court gives him to hold "as evidence and proof" that the prior emancipation of the young slave girl is invalid.¹¹⁶ This husband's actions demonstrate an intentional effort to reverse the manumission, which he viewed as insincere and performed under duress.¹¹⁷ These examples suggest how ambiguity and uncertainty could surround the manumissions of slaves.¹¹⁸

A late eleventh century court deposition reveals how Jewish communal leaders also scrutinized the validity and timing of manumission, likely for precisely these reasons.¹¹⁹ The purpose of the deposition was to confirm the identity of an emancipated Nubian slave woman who had married her former master, a man named 'Eli b. Yefet. 'Eli originally purchased this woman along with her daughter in the city of Ascalon as domestic servants (*lil-khidmah*).¹²⁰

below, there is reason to believe that the act of undermining a slave's manumission was not exceptional in the medieval Middle East.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Such an action also fits into broader patterns evident in legal materials from the Genizah that document how women were continually pressured to relinquish their legal rights and property through social pressure. See Zinger, "Women, Gender and Law." Cf. the suggested expropriation of the freedwoman's estate in Minyat Ghamr discussed below from T-S 8J16.4.

¹¹⁸ Another responsum attributed to Sherira Gaon of Baghdad (969-1004) illustrates another instance in which the freed status of slaves came under scrutiny. See Bodl MS Heb. c. 18.38, ll.1ff. See also *Sha'are Sedeq*, vol. III, part 6, p. 60 #29. The edition of the responsum edited in *Sha'are Sedeq* is an abbreviated version of what is found in the Bodleian manuscript.

¹¹⁹ T-S Misc.27.4.23 + T-S Misc.27.4.29. This document dates to December 1093. Note that this deposition was given in the presence of the *nasi* David b. Daniel. David is the *nasi* about whom we read in chapter three. During a visit to Fustāṭ he commanded that "the slave women be removed from the houses" as a declaration that seemingly aimed to curb prostitution and/or concubinage arrangements within the Jewish community. T-S Misc.27.4.23 is also discussed in chapter three. The slave woman was named in the document, but the original is torn such that her name is illegible. Friedman reads אכתר. See Friedman, *Jewish Polygyny*, 317. I believe the reading is uncertain.

¹²⁰ Cf. chapter three. Men used the designation *jāriyah lil-khidmah* to underscore that the slave was for domestic service and not purchased as a concubine. Its use here is used to counter any impression that 'Eli had sexual relations with his Nubian wife while she was a slave.

This daughter died before her mother's manumission. The crux of the issue was whether 'Eli had emancipated his slave woman before their marriage according to Jewish law. 'Eli and the Nubian woman then had a child together, a daughter named Milāḥ. As Friedman notes, the court is also worried that Milāḥ is the daughter who was purchased alongside her mother, and not a freeborn Jew. As Milāḥ was possibly approaching marriageable age at this time, Egyptian Jewish communal leaders were concerned about her legal status.

The court therefore wanted to know about the timing of the Nubian woman's manumission and Milāḥ's birth. Witnesses appear and testify that they did not know exactly how much time had passed between the emancipation and the birth, but that they were certain that the manumission occurred before the birth.¹²¹ The deposition then indicates that the court ordered a document to be written and given to 'Eli that certified his marriage as legal and thus provided proof of Milāḥ's freeborn Jewish status. In this particular case, even though the Nubian woman's freedom was not questioned, its timing was.

This legal controversy suggests why writs of manumission, and other documents such as marriage contracts, have survived in relatively great numbers in the Genizah. The deeds of manumission and deathbed wills that attest directly to the emancipation of female slaves comprise approximately forty percent of the total mentions of freedwomen.¹²² Wills, inventories of estates, and other documents related to inheritance are common in the

¹²¹ Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl," 56–58.

¹²² Deeds of manumission: SPIOS D55.10, T-S 8J12.1, T-S 8J12.2, T-S 8J12.3, T-S 10J28.16, T-S J3.44, T-S NS 320.63, T-S NS J484. Cf. Assaf, "Sefer Ha-Sheṭarot (Book of Formularies)," 43–44; Gershon Weiss, "Formularies (Sheṭarot) Reconstructed from the Genizah (Part II)," *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies* 3 (1974): 63–76. Deathbed wills freeing slave women: ENA NS 16.11, T-S 13J22.2 (two slave women freed), T-S Misc.24.137.4v (two slave women freed), T-S 16.44 + T-S 12.613 (probably the same woman as in ENA NS 16.11). Cf. Weiss, "Formularies I," 38–40.

Genizah. Thus it is not surprising to find slaves mentioned in this context, as they were at the very least valuable pieces of property. Yet the abundance of deeds of manumission requires more explanation.

The Jewish community retained proofs of manumission because they protected the freed woman and also furnished evidence that impacted the legal status of her own descendants. The importance of retaining original, signed writs of manumission is also evident in their physical condition. The condition of many Genizah documents suggests that they were viewed as scrap paper to be reused for other purposes. But writs of manumission are generally preserved in their entirety and not intentionally repurposed.¹²³ Of the many writs of manumission found in the Genizah, only one appears to have been cut up so that its verso could be used for unrelated writing, and this deed was a draft copy. The reverse sides of signed writs of manumission document are often blank, yet people refrained from using them as writing surfaces.¹²⁴

¹²³ The only original (signed) deed of manumission that has been destroyed is T-S NS 320.63. The middle of the document contains a hole in roughly the shape of the state of Nevada that was clearly cut out intentionally, perhaps by a child. The verso of this document is mostly unused, but contains short scribbles in both Hebrew and Arabic characters.

¹²⁴ Well preserved writs of manumission: T-S 8J12.2 and T-S 8J12.3. An exception: T-S NS 320.63. T-S 8J12.4 preserves only the last few lines of a deed of manumission; there are no signatures. Using Hai's formulary as a guide compare the beginning of T-S 8J12.4 with lines 20ff of the formulary's recto. (Assaf, "Sefer Ha-Sheṭarot (Book of Formularies)," 43–44.) T-S 8J12.4 ends with at "*ka-dat yisra'el ve-Mosheh*" ("according to the religion (law) of Israel and Moses"). This is usually the last phrase of a deed of manumission as they are found in the Genizah. In this case, someone cut the document into at least two pieces. It seems that the verso of the smaller section discussed here was used by its author as a space to draft a greeting to two of his associates. This partial deed on the recto, however, is either a draft or a copy of another deed as evidenced by its lack of signatures in the space at the bottom where the witnesses would normally sign their names. Thus, as an unsigned copy, the physical preservation of the document was not of paramount importance as it was for signed versions. T-S 10J28.16 is a deed of emancipation for the slave woman Ṣalaf. It has writing on the verso, but the deed on the front is signed and complete. The writing on the back mentions the name of the signatory of the deed of manumission. It seems that he used the back of the deed to draft a letter to one Sitt al-Ḥasab that in fact references "this bill of release" ("*hadhā al-geṭ*"). See ll. 1-3 on the verso. Unfortunately the verso's left side was haphazardly destroyed as

Surviving records indicate that diverse interests motivated the scrutiny and challenge of manumissions. The former owner's heirs might wish to retain the slave for themselves. As the formulary above suggests, this husband's actions may well reflect his intention to assert mastery over his household. Perhaps he did not want to allow his wife to be able to dispense with what was lawfully his property.¹²⁵ In the case of 'Eli and his Nubian wife, the court sought to affirm its own authority over religious matters by certifying the timing of her birth in relation to her mother's manumission.

VI. The Integration of Freed Women into the Egyptian Jewish Community

Former masters and communal officials continued to express concern about freed women even when they unambiguously accepted their manumissions. As I argued in chapter two, until freed women entered into a relationship of dependence on someone else (such as a husband), they could remain vulnerable to the whim of former masters or dependent upon communal charity.¹²⁶ Unmarried orphans and unmarried freed slaves presented similar

evidenced by the jagged edge that runs down the full length of the document. The contents of verso require follow up and may yield more information about how deeds of manumission were used if its fragmentary contents are reconstructed. T-S NS J484 is in similar condition to T-S 10J28.16. The writing on T-S NS J484's verso is badly faded and damaged and I am unable to decipher it currently. T-S J3.44 is unusual because it contains two separate legal instruments. The first section of the document is a deed that transfers the ownership of the slave Nujūm to a new owner named Yosef. Directly below this deed is a writ of manumission for the slave Nujūm executed by the new owner. The verso seems to be a note to the owner/emancipator's daughter Bahiyyah. The verso also mentions "the *shifḥah* known as Nujūm. She is the *jāriyah* of [...]. It appears that the text on the verso was written after the deed of transfer but before the emancipation. The remaining text on the verso needs further study. My initial impression is that it discusses matters of inheritance between Yosef and his daughter. I have not yet had a chance to obtain a copy of the SPIOs D55.10 and examine its verso. Another writ of manumission, T-S AS 145.62, is fragmentary and may have been torn for reuse or otherwise damaged. T-S 12.872 is largely intact, but it has some significant small lacunae and torn around its edges. Mentioned first in Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl," 61.

¹²⁵ Miriam Frenkel suggests this interpretation. See Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 254.

¹²⁶ In the Jewish communal alms lists edited by Mark R. Cohen, freed women do appear with some frequency in the early twelfth century. "Two freed women": T-S K15.17, l. 4. "Mubārahah," a name generally used by manumitted freed slaves: T-S NS J41, col. I, l. 13. The woman listed only as Na'im is an intriguing case. She appears

challenges to members of the Egyptian Jewish community. The courts and individual guardians viewed both these groups as intrinsic dependents. When slave girls converted to Judaism, the community evinced even more concern that the slave be integrated through marriage. A deed of testimony recorded in 1091 suggests how communal officials cooperated with members of the community to ensure such marital matches.¹²⁷ The testimony focuses on a freed slave and subsequent convert to Judaism named Mubārahah. Mubārahah states that she came originally from *bilād al-Rūm* (Byzantium) and that a man known as Ibn al-Watīd had freed her. Subsequently, and some time before this deposition, she converted to Judaism.¹²⁸ She then sought out the *parnas* (the local welfare officer) ‘Eli ha-Kohen because, as ‘Eli reports, “she desires to marry one of our Jewish coreligionists.”¹²⁹

This document seems to have come into existence because the *parnas* was attempting to enlist the commitment of another woman in finding Mubārahah a Jewish spouse. The witness is named Umm Sa’d, and here she formally pledges to help ‘Eli ha-Kohen secure a marital match for Mubārahah. The deed does not indicate why ‘Eli ha-Kohen had such a sense of urgency about finding a match for Mubārahah and why he was compelled to have Umm

multiple times in October and November 1107 on alms lists. See T-S Misc.8.9, col. IV, l. 7; T-S 10K15.15; T-S K15.50; T-S K15.113. In 1108 a slave woman named Na’īm is sold to the widow of Nahray b. Nissim: T-S 18J1.17. It is not clear that these women are the same person, but the name Na’īm is uncommon in the Genizah. Translations of these alms lists are found in Cohen, *Voice of the Poor*, chap. 8.

¹²⁷ T-S NS 321.54. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 358, 507 n. 214.

¹²⁸ T-S NS 321.54, l. 8. “*Ṣabāgh min muddah*.” Lit: “She immersed herself in the ritual bath some time before.” Part of Mubārahah’s testimony is reconstructed from the transcription that Goitein edited and left in his personal papers, specifically the section where she states that she is from *bilād al-Rūm*. The original document at Cambridge must have since been damaged, and part of it lost. There is a large tear on the right side of the document. In his transcript, Goitein has transcribed the missing text clearly and without brackets indicating that he did not speculate about the content of these lines.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 10. The goal of finding a spouse for Mubārahah is reiterated again later in the document. In the *PGP* transcription, Goitein records that she presented herself at the *dār al-[ni’aman]*. See l. 9, now lost from the original. I am not familiar with this phrase, but it seems to mean that she went to the synagogue, e. g. the house of safety, or the house of the faithful.

Sa'd legally bind herself to the task. A likely explanation is that Mubārahah was impoverished and dependent upon charity. It seems that this welfare official sought a match so that Mubārahah could find a source of permanent, dependable support. Freedwomen did commonly find marital matches within the Jewish community of medieval Egypt, so Mubārahah's expectations were not unreasonable.¹³⁰

Individual and communal efforts to find marital matches for freed women continue the process of reversing the deracination of the slave. The writ of manumission invites the slave to "adopt a new name in Israel." For practical purposes, female freed slaves need more than just a new personal name in order to overcome the natal alienation of slavery. They also required material support, social capital, and a network of supporters in order to participate fully in communal life and to ensure their own livelihood.

In the case of one young woman, Akramiyah, a protector sought to provide the social capital necessary for her to enter the community by erasing her past. "The young girl, whose name is Akramiyah, the fugitive" was part of the household of a man referred to as al-As'ad

¹³⁰ T-S 16.105 is a *ketubbot* of a freed woman from 986. A woman named Mu'tazz is identified as the freedwoman of Moses b. Palṭiel (see l. 3). She must have been jointly owned (as was not uncommon). According to Goitein, Mu'tazz's dowry was "far higher" than other free brides married during the period and this was her second marriage. See Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 17; S. D. Goitein, "The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times: A Preliminary Study of the Relevant Geniza Material," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 3–5; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 145, 368–369; III: 373–398; Mordechai A. Friedman, "The Minimum Mohar Payment as Reflected in the Geniza Documents: Marriage Gift or Endowment Pledge?," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 43 (January 1, 1976): 31. Bodl. MS heb. f. 56.53a is the *ketubbah* of "Munā the freed woman of Ibn Futayḥ" from the year 1184. Bodl. MS heb. c. 28.54: Nearly twenty years later in 1203, Munā was still referred to as a freedwoman. Ibn Futayḥ full name was Abū al-Faraj b. al-Tinnīsī, the *parnas* Yeshū'a ha-Levi. See Goitein, "Slaves and Slave Girls," 17 n. 3; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 145, 436 n. 100; III: 370, 402; IV 145, 149, 392 n. 44, 394 n. 79, 401, 423, 426.

al-Mutaṭabbib (the physician).¹³¹ In deed of testimony from the year 1217, the assembled witnesses testify to Akramiyyah's marriageable status. The document reads: "She does not have a noble lineage, meaning that she is not descended from the congregation of Israel (peace be upon it). She is not attached to any family from this community. She is not a bastard child, not a Temple servant, (nor a bastard or foundling of unknown lineage)."¹³²

As Goitein notes, the phrasing chosen to assert that Akramiyyah was neither an illegitimate child nor a foundling echoes a passage from Mishnah Qiddushin 4:1-2.¹³³ This Mishnah lists ten genealogical categories of immigrants who "returned from Babylon [to the land of Israel]" and states which of these categories are allowed to intermarry and which are prohibited from marrying. For current purposes, it suffices to note that this Mishnah permits converts and freed slaves to marry Jews, unless the Jew is from the priestly class. Certainly the purpose of the deed of testimony is to prove to any future suitor that Akramiyyah is an eligible bride for any Jewish man as evidenced by its use of this Mishnah.

¹³¹ "Akramiyyah *al-Muharrabiyyah*." T-S 13J3.26, l. 4. The usual term for a female fugitive is *hāribah*. There is another version of this deed. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 81–82, 443; Frenkel, "Slavery in Medieval Jewish Society," 252. The deed is dated to 1217. Goitein assumes that Akramiyyah was bought by al-As'ad al-Mutaṭabbib as an infant, freed, and raised in his home as an act of piety. None of these details are found in the document. On the identity of al-As'ad al-Mutaṭabbib, see Zinger, "Women, Gender and Law," chap. 5. Note the mistake in the PGP transcription in line 10. The original reads "*fa-limā al-tamim*" and not "*fa-limā al-tamis*."

¹³² T-S 13J3.26, ll. 6-10. "*Wa-lā hīya lā [sic] mamzer wa-lā nathinah wa-lā shethukit wa-lā asufit wa-lā bedukit*." The last three terms all refer to foundlings with unknown lineage. The document here alludes to Mishnah *Qiddushin* 4: 1-2 which lists the categories of immigrants from Babylon to Israel and explains which categories of immigrants were permitted to marry each other, and which were prohibited from marrying. This testimony takes care to mention categories of illegitimate children, temple servants, and foundlings of unknown lineage: *mamzer*, *nathinah*, *shethukit*, *asufit*, and *bedukit* - and to emphasize that Akramiyyah does not belong to any of them. The categories listed are not permitted to marry Jews of known lineage according to this Mishnah. Converts and emancipated slaves were permitted to marry into the Jewish community, however. The category of *bedukit* (a foundling of unknown paternity) is not listed in *M. Qiddushin* 4:1-2. For *bedukit*, see Jastrow, *Dictionary*, s.v. "בדוקי", where an equivalency with *shethuki* is noted. Cf. *MT 'Issurei Bi'ah* 15:12-13.

¹³³ Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 443 n. 46.

Yet Akramiyyah's personal history and actual legal status remain ambiguous. The documents tell us only that she was a *ṣabiyyah*.¹³⁴ Genizah records use the term *al-ṣabiyyah* without great precision. It means "young girl," but it may also be used to refer to prospective brides and wives. We also know that Akramiyyah was a fugitive but not from what, or in what sense.¹³⁵

Akramiyyah's name is an indicator that she was likely a slave at one time. She lacks a *nasab* that identifies her genealogy. Goitein's suggestion that Akramiyyah is a diminutive of the title of her one-time master, known as *al-shaykh al-akram* ("the most noble elder"), is plausible. Her name, and its diminutive form, is unique among the corpus of slave and freed women names found in the Genizah. If and when she was emancipated, she could have adopted Akramiyyah as her new name as a freed person.¹³⁶

Further confirmation of her prior and current legal status is found in a second document that survived in the Genizah, a prior, draft copy of the same testimony.¹³⁷ It appears to be a prior draft because it bears signs of having been edited: a scribe has crossed through phrases with a thick, dark line, and the text that is struck through does not appear in the later testimony. Two of the phrases that were crossed out and not recopied follow the testimony that Akramiyyah is not an illegitimate child: "she is not a female convert and not a

¹³⁴ See T-S 13J3.26, l. 3 and ENA 2559.13, l.2.

¹³⁵ Jews who fled because they did not pay their poll tax to the Muslim authorities are referred to in Genizah documents as fugitives (*hāribīn*). See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II: 382.

¹³⁶ Goitein on the basis for Akramiyyah's name: *Ibid.*, III: 443 n. 47. Indeed this honorific is documented elsewhere in the Genizah. See T-S 13J4.13a, l.12. On al-As'ad al-Mutaṭābīb's motivations, see *Ibid.*, III: 81–82.

¹³⁷ Goitein was the first to point out that these two documents relate to the same case. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 81–82. The handwriting in both documents appears to belong to the same scribe.

freedwoman.”¹³⁸ Did the scribe mistakenly record this formulaic language in the earlier draft and later learn that Akramiyyah was in fact a freed slave who had converted to Judaism?

Converts and freed slaves are two of the ten categories mentioned in *M. Qiddushin* 4:1-2. While the draft deed formulates them slightly differently, they come from the same verses and context as the provisions concerning illegitimate children and foundlings.¹³⁹ In the draft, the scribe originally wrote that Akramiyyah was neither a convert nor a freed woman. He then crossed through these phrases and recopied the deed to omit any mention of conversion or manumission. It seems that al-As‘ad al-Muta‘abbib intended to have Akramiyyah’s prior life history literally erased in order to secure for her the most promising marital match. Al-As‘ad al-Muta‘abbib’s actions are consistent with the ways in which other individual Jews and communal officials sought to protect intrinsic dependents and to usher them to their first marriages.¹⁴⁰

The marriages of freedwomen are also attested by documents that indicate the dissolution of these unions.¹⁴¹ One divorced freedwoman named Fakhr married her former master. They later divorced and she remained in his home raising their daughter. The mid-twelfth century deed indicates that her former master and husbands, the merchant Abū al-Marjā‘ah b. Natan, also known by the honorific “the scholar and excellent member of the

¹³⁸ ENA 2559.13, l. 5: “*Wa-lā gīyoret wa-lā meshuḥreret.*” It is probable that Goitein noticed this difference between the two drafts.

¹³⁹ The text of the Mishnah reads “*geri*” and “*ḥaruri.*”

¹⁴⁰ Cf. The discussion in chapter two and Krakowski, “Female Adolescence.”

¹⁴¹ T-S NS J226v: Mentions a bill of repudiation (*get*) for the freedwoman Dhahab. Her name is listed in a larger set of legal records probably belonging to a judge. The note states that the *get* was sent to her in Fustat from another Egyptian town. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, III: 124–125, 262, 453; IV: 393; Ashur, “Engagement and Betrothal Documents,” 84, 117. A relatively late date of 1244 means that this is probably not the same Dhahab manumitted by Sitt al-Ḥusn in T-S 13J22.2 in the mid-twelfth century and mentioned in T-S 12.140. This divorcee is certainly not the three year old *waṣṣifah* mentioned in T-S 12.140 (1145).

Academy,” agreed to pay her one “good silver dirhem” per day.¹⁴² This was a relatively paltry sum. Water-carriers were paid higher wages; skilled craftsmen were provided with 1/4 dirhem for their lunch.¹⁴³

Fakhr’s marriage to Abū al-Marjā’ah indicates that the status of ex-slave did not necessarily carry with it a social stigma that would cause an elite man such as he to avoid marriage with a freedwoman. Yet the trajectory of Fakhr’s personal history reflects an ironic twist. In her case, she became free and soon enough afterward found herself as the designated caretaker of her former master’s child—a role in which slave women frequently appear. While Fakhr’s divorce likely secured her some economic security of her own, here her day-to-day socio-economic position appears to have flipped from that of a domestic slave to a low-paid, domestic wage earner. About this turn of events we can only ask questions. From Fakhr’s own perspective, how was her life as a divorcee in the employ of her former husband qualitatively different from her life in slavery and then as a married woman?

There is another detail of these documents that bears noting. Even as women moved from slavery to freedom and into Judaism and Jewish marriages, they continue appear in legal records as “freed woman” and as “the freed woman” of her former master. At her second marriage, a certain Mu’tazz was still known as “the freed woman of Mosheh b. Palti’el. Twenty years after her first marriage, Munā was identified as a beneficiary in a legal document as the

¹⁴² BL Or. 10588.3. See Goitein, “Genizah Papers,” 37–38. The date is 1154.

¹⁴³ For an overview of wage-earning professions and the range of their daily rates, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 94–99.

“freed woman” first and the wife of her husband second.¹⁴⁴ Despite the intent of writs of manumission, freed women often remained in the orbit of their former masters. In one exceptional case, a former master’s son pursued the estate left by his father’s freed woman at her death. A legal query sent to Abraham Maimonides preserves the details of the case:¹⁴⁵

...In the town of Minyat Ghamr a woman died, the freed woman of the elder, the Splendor of the Community (*al-Ḥādār*),¹⁴⁶ She’erith (may he rest in Eden), the father of the elder, *al-Ḥādār*, Abū al-Ṭāhir (may his Rock preserve him). The local people buried her. This was in the summer and your servant¹⁴⁷ was away for business purposes. Since then I was informed that the deceased left a sum of money to (some) women that was specifically for them. The sum amounts to nearly [102] Egyptian dirhems.¹⁴⁸ The women did not want to take it. They informed me and some other people of the town that if they (the townspeople) want to take the money, they should use it for the needs of their city.

On the other hand, the master of the deceased, the elder Abū al-Ṭāhir, the aforementioned *Ḥādār*, is in great distress and poverty; he owes money to Muslims, and has suffered losses through tax farming. Since the death of the aforementioned woman, he has approached me several times asking that I inquire into her estate and pronounce a ban in this matter. He (threatens) to take the case to the Muslim courts and to the office of inheritance, which had held an inquiry, but had not found anything out. The aforementioned, despite his present poverty and dire state, is very popular here; he is a very reasonable person of winning behavior and highly esteemed by everyone because of his munificence; his is well known for many praiseworthy traits. This sum would give him a respite and solve his problems.

¹⁴⁴ Mu’tazz: T-S 16.105, l. 3. Munā: Bodl. MS heb. f. 56.53a in 1184 and Bodl. MS heb. c. 28.54 in 1203. See n. 119 above. The freed woman Sitt al-Rūm is also identified as the former slave of her master in a document recording her appearance before a Jewish court. At court she sought to higher a lawyer to help her collect a loan that she had granted someone. See T-S 12.8 + T-S 10J4.9. Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 9; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 138, 433; III: 432.

¹⁴⁵ T-S 8J16.4. I have made small modifications to Goitein’s translation which can be found in his personal files in the Genizah Laboratory at Princeton University. The author of the letter identifies himself as “Moses” at the end of the verso. It is probable that this Moses is Moses b. Peraḥyā, who is known as a *muqaddam* (judge) from other letters he wrote to Abraham Maimonides. Moses was known to work in both Minyat Ghamr and Minyat Ziftā. Goitein, “Slaves and Slave Girls,” 9; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 146, 436; II: 48–49, 520 n. 2, 607 n. 44, 533 nn. 53–54; V: 486. Thanks to Eve Krakowski and Marina Rustow for bring this file to my attention.

¹⁴⁶ T-S 8J16.4, l. 3. “*Al-ḥadar*,” an honorific title. Goitein transliterates the word as *al-ḥādār* and notes that it is an abbreviation.

¹⁴⁷ The author refers to himself as “the servant (*al-mamlūk*),” intending “your servant” as a sign of respect to Abraham, the recipient of his letter.

¹⁴⁸ T-S 8J16.4, l. 7. Goitein reads 120 dirhems here. I think it is 102. Assuming that these are full silver dirhems, the freed woman’s bequest amounts to just over 7½ dinars.

Therefore, my lord, I ask for your guidance in this matter, namely, whether I should either hand over that sum to the aforementioned *Hādār*—this could be done only upon an express ruling of yours—or give it to the congregation for the benefit of the community. This alternative, however, could lead to trouble with him, for three things deprive a man of his senses, etc.¹⁴⁹ For he is capable of doing what he says, and public opinion would justify him. Or shall I leave it with the women that now have it in their hands and take no action; but this, too, could not remain a secret to either of the interested parties, namely, her master and the elders of the congregation. Your servant is expecting your ruling and will act accordingly....

[The answer of Abraham Maimonides follows in his own hand.]

The law provides that the estate of a proselyte¹⁵⁰ who dies without heirs is derelict, and whosoever seizes it first is its legal proprietor. As the women who have that money in their possession do not want it, you are permitted to give it to the aforementioned *Hādār* with their consent. Its use for the benefit of the community has nothing to do with it.

The query illustrates how the modest estate of a freedwoman caused a minor headache for a local *muqaddam* (judge) in the rural town of Minyat Ghamr north of Cairo in the Nile delta.

The bequest likely amounted to approximately 7½ dinars.¹⁵¹ This was not an enormous sum, but it was certainly enough for a substantive charitable contribution.¹⁵²

The *muqaddam*'s query tells us precious little about the person of the former slave. The primary motivation for the query seems not even to have been to ascertain the deceased's

¹⁴⁹ As Goitein notes in his edition, this is a reference to the Babylonian Talmud 'Eruvīn 41b "that oppressive poverty drives men to irresponsible actions."

¹⁵⁰ Note that Abraham assumes that the freed woman is a convert to Judaism. There is no reason to doubt him on this point. But the fact that this detail was assumed indicates that freed women converts to Judaism were not uncommon.

¹⁵¹ In the thirteenth century, two kinds of dirhems were in circulation. The more valuable coins were "full" or "pure" silver dirhems. 13 1/3 of these coins equaled one gold dinar. "Black" dirhems were also in circulation and were valued at between 36-40 dirhems per gold dinar. When "full" silver dirhems are meant, the *dirhem* amount usually qualified as "*fidḍa*" (silver) or "*nuqra*" (silver ingot). See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 368–392. Here the writer only specifies that the dirhems are Egyptian. Goitein suggests in his notes that full silver dirhems likely meant here.

¹⁵² Goitein estimated that a middling family needed about 2-4 dinars per month for living expenses. See S. D. Goitein, "Urban Housing in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times (as Illustrated by the Cairo Genizah Documents)," *Studia Islamica* 47 (1978): 8–9.

intentions for her lawful property. Rather, the author seems to be seeking a ruling that will allow him to avoid further confrontation with a local notable and head off any potential appeal by Abū al-Ṭāhir to the local Muslim authorities.

The *muqaddam* also leaves a crucial piece of context out of the query, perhaps because he assumed it was known and obvious to Abraham. In Islamic law, a former master has a claim to the estate of an emancipated slave.¹⁵³ This may partly explain the sense of urgency with which the author presses Abraham to make a ruling. “(H)e is capable of doing what he says and public opinion would justify him,” the *muqaddam* reminds him.¹⁵⁴ But Abraham’s ruling approaches the situation from a very different angle. In his judgment, since the freedwoman is a convert without heirs, Jewish law dictates that her property derelict and anyone can claim it. For this reason, Abū al-Ṭāhir may claim the dirhems if the women named in the freed woman’s bequest do not want it. Yet the fact that the *muqaddam* twice refers to Abū al-Ṭāhir as the freedwoman’s “master” indicates that he, or Abū al-Ṭāhir at least, may have viewed the situation somewhat differently.¹⁵⁵ Specifically, Abū al-Ṭāhir seems to believe that, as the heir of her former master, he has a just claim to her estate whether or not the woman of Minyat Ghamr accept the bequest.¹⁵⁶

The heavy-handedness of Abū al-Ṭāhir’s pursuit of his father’s freed woman’s bequest is unusual. But the Genizah does indicate that ties of clientage between former masters and

¹⁵³ Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 40, 130; *EI* 2, s.v. “*mawlā*.” See also Goitein’s observations in the notes to his unpublished edition.

¹⁵⁴ T-S 8J16.4v, ll. 4-5.

¹⁵⁵ “*wa-sayyidu al-mutawafiyah* (master of the deceased)”: T-S 8J16.4, l. 9 and “*sayyida-hā* (her master)”: v., l. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Goitein observes in his personal notes that this case deviates from norms of Jewish law and that the claim of Abū al-Ṭāhir reflects “how deeply the legal conceptions of the environment had influenced the Jews living in an Egyptian provincial town.”

freed slaves were widespread within the Jewish Egyptian community and these ties reflect the wider Islamicate setting. These ties of clientage should not be viewed as a master's continued exploitation of his slave by other means. Rather, the master-patron ties that replaced the master-slave relationship often facilitated a freed slave's entry into the Jewish community. Clientage functioned as a substitute for the natal genealogy that slaves lost through the trauma of enslavement.¹⁵⁷

The community's efforts on behalf of the freed women Mubārah and Akramiyyah aimed to find them marital matches within the community as a means of managing their intrinsic dependence. In both cases, their sponsors sought to amplify the freed women's credentials as marriageable Jewish women. The practice of identifying former slaves as the freed woman of her former master, even years after manumission, demonstrates how the Jewish community understood the bonds of clientage to be an essential feature of the ex-slave's genealogy even after slaves married (and divorced and remarried).

VII. Conclusions

The collective biography of the female slaves documented in the Genizah illustrates the social experience of slavery in three main areas of slaves' lives. Slave children were a significant presence in the Jewish households of medieval Cairo. Masters owned slaves as young as two years old. Five- and six-year old slaves were imported to Egypt from as far afield as India and worked as domestic servants for mistresses in Cairo. Imported children were often separated from their families during the violence of enslavement and the slave trade. These children entered household slavery dependent solely on their masters for sustenance.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. the discussion of clientage in chapter two.

When masters purchased slaves locally, however, children were most often sold with their mothers. Some of these children presumably grew up in households where their mothers served as the caretakers for the family's free children.

At times, masters and mistresses manumitted slaves who were still immature, or ones they considered marriageable because of their age and conversion to Judaism. In these cases, slave owners supported freed slaves similarly to how orphans were treated by Jewish individuals and communal leaders. Freed slaves, like orphans, remained dependents and could fall into chronic poverty unless they found a source of livelihood or protection. After manumission, some owners continued to act as patrons on behalf of their former slaves when they provided material support and tried to help them find marital matches. Even married freed women retained ties to their former masters, if only in name. The master-slave relationship evolved into a patron-client relationship that served to locate freed women in their adopted social universe. The inclusion of freedwomen into Egyptian Jewish society also reveals how the Jewish communities of the Fatimid and Ayyubid empires sought and secured converts in a time and place that was being rapidly transformed by the momentum toward conversion to Islam.

The logic of source survival shapes the histories of slave women in particularly acute ways. There are numerous documents that mention slaves, but they can be oblique and fragmentary. Thus there is more documentation about the lives of freed women who entered the Jewish community, because they entered into the stream of written records that their manumissions, future marriages, and legal appearances created.

It is likely that most acts of resistance never left a mark in the documentary record. Studies of slave resistance from other times and places suggest how such defiance could be exerted on a daily basis, sometimes passively, within the accepted boundaries of slave behavior and master-slave relations. The logic of source survival *vis-à-vis* individual slaves in the Genizah favors the preservation of documents that record acts of unusually extreme resistance—to the extent that their occurrence prompted a slave owner to relay the event to other family members, or to pursue legal action. Yet resistance is not the only measure of slave agency or register of the slave's humanity. Slaves also chose not to resist. They chose to cooperate and submit. Or perhaps what appears to be acquiescence was in fact the slave biding her time until other opportunities presented themselves.

In the end, however, there is far more evidence in the Genizah of slaves converting to Judaism and marrying Jewish men than there is of slaves converting to Islam or running away. Whether or not the former phenomenon is more prevalent because of the logic of source survival, or because of real trends in the life-courses of slaves, remains to be understood fully.

Conclusion

The Jewish merchant Ibn Jamāhir illicitly used his slave woman as a concubine.¹ When she became pregnant, he abandoned her and her son in the town of Berbera on the coast of the Horn of Africa. We know this only because another slave, the *ghulām* Ṣāfi, denounced him to the local governor in the city of ‘Aydhāb; Ibn Jamāhir took advantage of his local standing and personal networks to intimidate Ṣāfi by demanding his punishment before the governor, thus creating the court deposition that preserved the facts of the case. Ibn Jamāhir’s concubine surfaces in this historical record not as a protagonist, but as a foil that a group of Jewish merchants sympathetic to Ṣāfi used to explain his flogging and protest the reprehensible behavior of Ibn Jamāhir. How can the history of this abandoned concubine, and other slave women like her, be told from such fleeting appearances in the documentary record?

The Roman historian William Fitzgerald writes that reading the literature of slavery “will also involve reading its exposure of the gaps and rifts in ideology, its capacity to let the unspeakable be spoken, to assert what it apparently denies.”² In this spirit, one central aim of this dissertation has been to mine the documentary record of the Cairo Genizah in order to narrate the lives of female domestic slaves, even though this group’s experience has long been considered unrecoverable, either due to their marginal status or to the nature of available sources.

¹ T-S 12.582. See above “Introduction,” 1.

² William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

In order to write this history, we have had to read sources against the grain, keeping in mind that slaves' points of view are generally absent from the medieval record. Studying slaves as a group reveals the patterns their lives followed, from birth through adulthood and (for some) manumission. The collective biography of slaves, in turn, makes it possible to contextualize the meaning of historical fragments and make sense of discrete references to individual slaves. Nonetheless, in certain cases we can recover the choices slaves made, as well as the range of possible choices they rejected.

Moreover, the study of slaves' lives through the prism of the Genizah has provided insight into the larger social world of medieval Egyptian Jewry, especially the making of social prestige. The history of domestic slavery brings to the fore themes such as gender, mastery, social prestige, the tensions between legal prescription and social practice, and the eventual integration of some marginal members of the community into the full privileges of community life. To understand the wider Egyptian contexts more fully, it has also been necessary to juxtapose documentary Genizah sources with Arabic literary sources and documentary sources that speak to the broader society of which Jews were a part.

The Genizah's contribution to a better understanding of the wider Islamicate context is most evident in chapter one, which analyzes the geography of slave imports to Egypt and shows why the history of the slave trade in the greater Mediterranean must take into account the impact of the slave trades in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean. It is, I have argued, impossible to understand the problem of slave supply without grasping the geo-political dynamics that shaped the ebb and flow of the trade between the eleventh and thirteenth

centuries. The inter-regional focus of this chapter is another of the dissertation's contributions; medieval Jewish history can also tell a wider, more global story, though it is not often coaxed into doing so.

The history of slavery at the global scale allows us to see how geo-political factors coupled with cultural attitudes to influence who was deemed eligible for slavery and where. The most important slave reservoir for the Egyptian domestic market was Nubia and the region between 'Aydhāb and Aswān. Slave owners and scribes were imprecise in their descriptions of slaves and slave origins and frequently refer to these areas and the people from them generically as "black," or from *bilād al-sūdān* ("the lands of the blacks"). When Jewish individuals turned to their family and social networks for help acquiring slaves, they looked south and away from the Mediterranean.

Most slave women documented in the Genizah are described as Nubian, or simply "black." Women from Latin Europe and Byzantium, by contrast, are very uncommon. On the surface, this finding supports the conclusions of McCormick, Fynn-Paul, and Rotman, who argue that the slave trade from Europe to the Islamic Middle East, which had been robust in the ninth century, shrank due to cultural attitudes in Europe that opposed the enslavement of Christians and their sale to Muslims.³ But should developments in Europe and the Mediterranean be understood, on their own, to explain the lack of European slave women among Egyptian domestic slave imports? In fact, the slave trade from Europe and its hinterlands was not the only potential source of trade imports to Egypt. The region had long-

³ McCormick, *Origins*; McCormick, "New Light"; Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery"; Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery*, chap. two.

standing connections with Nubia and sub-Saharan Africa, and had been importing slaves from there for centuries. Egypt's pivot towards the Indian Ocean trading sphere in the middle of the Fatimid period, too, may explain the dearth of European slave women in the Genizah. Yet all this remains poorly understood, in part because the documentary record for Egypt has been unevenly explored. One important area of future research are the thousands of unpublished Arabic papyri in Berlin, Cairo, and Vienna.⁴ These may contain a wealth of data on the composition of the Egyptian domestic slave population in the eighth through tenth centuries, and, by extension, on the politics and geography of the Egyptian and greater Mediterranean slave trade.

This dissertation has also sought to connect the balance of geo-political power and cultural attitudes towards insiders and outsiders with the lives of the individual slaves enmeshed in such distant politics. While the process of enslavement is rarely clear from documentary evidence and is best reconstructed by drawing on documentary and literary sources together, documents speak volumes about individual slaves.⁵ The person of the slave comes to light most commonly when she is sold, manumitted, or the cause of events that interrupted quotidian life, such that her owner had a written record generated. These records yield a vibrant picture of how domestic slave women were intimately embedded in the social life of Jewish households in medieval Egypt—even if they do so by recording the moments when the normal course of that social life was interrupted.

⁴ Rāgib's work suggests the potential of these collections for the history of Islamicate slavery and of slave imports to Egypt. Rāgib, *Actes de vente*.

⁵ Or.1080 J30: a woman is kidnapped from a well near 'Aydhāb. Nāṣir b. Khusraw, *Book of Travels*; Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*.

The embeddedness of slaves in the household emerges most clearly in the relationship between free and unfree women. Indeed, one unexpected finding to emerge from my research has been the realization that the most significant master-slave relationships in the household are usually between *mistress* and slave. While it is not surprising to find in the documents, responsa, and legal codes that the work of domestic slaves and the work of free women were largely the same, it is surprising how crucial slave labor was to the maintenance and projection of free women's social status and honor. The very ownership of slaves served as a marker of status; slave girls were adornments for their mistresses. But the more important potential of a domestic slave was that she could perform the public labor that was a necessary part of the medieval household economy—fetching water, going to public bread ovens, and transacting business in the market. These were daily tasks that thrust women into public spaces filled with lower class women and men who were not their family members. As Krakowski's work shows, while some Jewish women chose seclusion, husbands and family members coerced other women into it; either way, the reason was the same: seclusion conferred social status.⁶ But women who chose seclusion could not do so without the support of domestic slaves. When it came to domestic labor, slave women had both highly practical and symbolic value.

Labor was, however, only one factor that bound the fortunes of free women to their slaves. Since slaves served as child caretakers not just for children, but for their owners in times of illness, the relationship often metamorphosed into one of mutual loyalty. Such

⁶ Krakowski, "Female Adolescence," 80, 136–145.

loyalties appeared in stark relief at moments of death, when gravely ill owners expressed attachment to their slaves and gratitude for them in the concrete form of wills and deathbed declarations. The testaments of slave owners reveal that their slaves came to their aid when other relatives were unable to do so. One dying woman insisted that her slave and child-nurse continue to care for her youngest daughter after her own death, preferring the slave to her sister and elder daughter.⁷ These ties reflect what Pierre Bourdieu calls “practical kinship.”⁸ The labor that slave women gave their mistresses cemented the ties between them. It could also secure the slaves a guarantee of material maintenance, the potential for future manumission, and the support of a patron.

Domestic slavery, however, was not invariably beneficial to free women. Jewish men bought slaves for the express purpose of using them as concubines. Responsa and communal petitions indicate that some men who bought concubines lodged them in residences removed from their marital homes, splitting their times and loyalties between two places of residences. In extreme cases, men abandoned their wives and children.

In the Egyptian Jewish community, the practice of concubinage was illegal and therefore incompatible with household life. But precisely the illicit nature of slave concubinage put rabbinic and communal authorities in a bind where, by declaring it beyond the pale of rabbinic law, they could no longer effectively regulate it. Jewish communal jurists and officials lacked the coercive controls to stamp it out entirely, but by declaring it illegal, they also lacked the means to regulate how it was practiced. Slave concubinage persisted as a

⁷ ENA NS 48.6

⁸ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 33–38; See also Krakowski’s application of this framework, “Female Adolescence,” 161.

social practice, but it thrust into the shadows. The legal categories of Egyptian Jewish law recognized neither the practice nor the concubine as operative entities. As a result, men were *more* rather than less likely to abandon their families for concubines, since there was no legal way for them to incorporate them into the household. This, in turn, could have devastating economic consequences for wives and children. Second, since the concubine was not a legal category in Egyptian Jewish law, she had no legal rights, and any children she bore her master were considered slaves.⁹ Here a comparison to the Islamicate context is instructive. The Islamic law of the *umm al-walad* held that the offspring of concubines who bore children were free Muslims; that after their birth, the concubine became an *umm al-walad* and could not legally be sold; and that upon her master's death, she became a free woman.¹⁰ Despite a less favorable legal status than in Islamic law, the concubine of a Jewish man also stood to make limited gains due to her status. Men bestowed favor on concubines in the form of their time, attention, and material support in ways they appear not to have done for the slaves they used only for domestic service.

For some slaves, concubinage was a strategy of accommodation and should be considered as a point along a spectrum of resistance. At one end of this spectrum were accommodation and cooperation. In a time of social upheaval, an individual slave woman might choose to remain with her mistress, even though other slaves seized the opportunity to run

⁹ In *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides outlines mitigating factors meant to encourage men to manumit their slave women and marry them despite the appearance that a child was born before emancipation. *MT Nahalot* 4:6. See also *Nahalot* 2:12 which rules that a man's son by a *shifḥah* or non-Jew cannot be considered the first-born son for purposes of inheritance. For an English translation see Maimonides, *Book of Civil Laws*, II:266. See also *MT 'Avadim* 9:1-2.

¹⁰ *EI* 2, s.v. "*umm al-walad*"; Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law*, 155–156, 276–283.

away. Because domestic slaves served largely in crowded urban contexts and because they protected their mistresses from public appearances, they enjoyed some freedom of movement by virtue of their social role. That did not, however, mean that they could leave the master-slave relationship without risking a far more severe option: lack of protection or patronage. At the other end of the spectrum were actions that severed the master-slave relationship. The examples documented in the Genizah and rabbinic responsa include running away and conversion to Islam, thus compelling one's sale to a Muslim owner. At these moments of accommodation and rebellion, we are able to come closest to apprehending the personhood of the slave. In the absence of medieval sources written from the slave's point of view, we must look for moments when slaves made choices and decisions, however limited and imperfect their options may have been.

Along the life courses of slaves as they appears in the Genizah, manumission was not just a pivotal event, but a commonly documented one, a fact that further underscores the continuity between ownership and patronage, or between unfreedom and clientage, in medieval Egyptian society. A focus on manumission thrusts us once again into the realm of master-slave relations. Manumission required the oral declaration of the master or a written deed that recorded the willing emancipation of the slave. Because Jewish law considered oral declarations of manumission to be valid, we frequently find deathbed testaments in which masters free their slaves. While the manumission of slave women might merely emphasize how free women used slavery to further their own interests—Sitt al-Ḥusn's manumission of Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr reflects her deep investment in her two young slave girls as “intrinsic

dependents” who required her support in order to avoid chronic poverty—the orientation of owners toward manumitted slaves also reflects the community’s attitudes towards orphans.¹¹ When Abū al-Ḥasan manumitted the young girl Kashf, he stipulated that she should remain in the care of his older sister, Sitt al-Ri’āsah, until she was old enough to make her own decision about staying or leaving. Slaves could, then, be subject to the same treatment as any other unprotected member of the household or the Jewish community. The difference between the treatment of orphans and slave girls turns, rather, on the question of natal alienation. While orphans are defined by the death of their natal father, they were still considered to possess a genealogy and insider status in the Jewish community. Freed slaves lack both. Thus, when Sitt al-Ḥusn frees Dhahab and Sitt al-Sumr, she bequeaths a living space and clothing to the slave girls on the condition that they profess the Jewish faith. Sitt al-Ḥusn’s actions illustrate the process by which manumission reversed the deracination of slavery and sought to secure for freed slaves a foothold in the Egyptian Jewish community.

While the formulae of the writ of manumission would indicate a complete separation of the slave from the master after manumission, in fact the master-slave tie often evolved into a patron-client relationship that resembled the tie of patronage in Islamic law and practice.¹² Married freedwomen continued to be called “the freedwoman of” their former master in official documents for years after manumission. Legal documents also attest how patrons made efforts to assert the social credentials of their freed slaves in order to enhance their opportunity to find marital matches in the Jewish community. The ties of clientage found in

¹¹ T-S 13J22.2. On “intrinsic dependents,” see Krakowski, “Female Adolescence,” xi and passim.

¹² Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 40, 130; *EI* 2, s.v. “*mawlā*.”

Genizah sources point to a deeply rooted feature of both Islamicate slavery and society more broadly.¹³ The bonds between masters and freed slaves evident in the Genizah provide a compelling example that scholars of slavery in Islamic law and households might use to generate questions about similar relationships that appear in sources such as Arabic papyri and biographical dictionaries.

Indeed, to go by the evidence of the Genizah sources, manumission appears to have been quite common in the Egyptian Jewish community. I want to stress, however, that this trend bears further research and scrutiny. Specifically, we must ask how the logic of source preservation and survival has created a bias in the Genizah when it comes to mentions of slaves. It seems that acts of manumission are overrepresented due to the importance of documents such as writs of manumission that document freed women. As Friedman illustrates, proof of both the fact and timing of manumission was of great concern to communal officials, especially when it came to issues of marriage and the status of children.¹⁴ The physical condition of signed writs of manumission are generally in very good condition compared to other records that document slaves—including bills of sale and court records. It is highly unlikely that this is due to mere happenstance. Deeds of manumission are preserved more carefully because they were potentially useful in court as a means of clarifying the marriageable status of a freedwoman, the status of a freedwoman's children, and the legality of a marriage between a freedwoman and her former master. Oral deathbed manumissions

¹³ Cf. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*; Rustow, "Formal and Informal Patronage among Jews in the Islamic East: Evidence from the Cairo Geniza."

¹⁴ Friedman, "Master and Slave Girl."

were considered valid in cases when a formal writ had not been executed.¹⁵ There is a roughly equal ratio of formal writs to deathbed wills that manumit slave women. The common preservation of deathbed wills that manumit slaves can also be explained by the legal usefulness of such records. And if a freed woman became Jewish, she was also more likely to show up in other kinds of records preserved in the Genizah. Thus we find freed women mentioned as such in marriage contracts, court records, and alms lists. When we analyze the surviving records that document the lives of slaves, who were not freed, we also see the impact of source survival on what kind of history emerges from the documents.

For example, bills of sale are the most common document type that mentions slaves. Bills of sale record (albeit unevenly) prices, slave names, the reported geographic origins of slaves (*jins*), and occasionally a slave's age, phenotype, or other physical characteristics. Wedding dowries in which slaves are included as part of the trousseau are also a good source for slave names and *jins*, though such examples are less common than bills of sale. There are limits to the history that can be written based on this data, however. The origins and prices of slaves, for instance, are useful for analyzing the history of the slave trade. But bills of sale tell us much less about the slave as an individual and that slave's social experience of slavery.

The history of the slave as individual is seen most clearly in responsa, letters, and court records. The responsa of Maimonides and his son Abraham, for example, provide rich details about slaves and their masters, but these responsa can rarely be traced to specific

¹⁵ For example, Bodl. MS Heb. c. 18.38, ll. 7-10. See also Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II:75.

individuals due to the use of pseudonyms and the redaction of other identifying information.¹⁶ The richest details about specific slave individuals and their social history are found in letters, petitions, and court records. But these records are a very small percentage of the Genizah documents that mention slaves. These documents reveal episodes such as Ghazāl's disobedience to her mistress and Tawfiq's decision to temporarily leave her mistress and take refuge with her owner's sister. Abū al-Faraj's decision to seclude a slave woman as a concubine at his own sister's house are also contained in two petitions, a type of document that is uncommon in Genizah documents related to slavery.¹⁷ In short, family letters and petitions provide a viewpoint that we cannot gain from bills of sale, but they are relatively uncommon.

We must acknowledge, then, that patterns of document survival shape what we are able to know about domestic slavery. Certain processes—including manumission and the marriage of freedwomen into the community—are likely amplified in the Genizah records, while other phenomena such as resistance, physical abuse, and the death of slaves in captivity (as opposed to as freed people) are likely muted. Occasionally these events precipitated crises like the confrontation between Ibn Jamāhir and Ṣāfi.¹⁸ But unless the circumstances were extreme, slave owners may have had little cause to take note, and slaves themselves did not leave records or appear in Jewish courts as litigants or defendants.

¹⁶ An exception to this is the responsum of Abraham Maimonides discussed at the end of chapter four. T-S 8J16.4.

¹⁷ Respectively: BL Or.5566C6, Halper 400, Budapest 232.1, and T-S 10J17.22.

¹⁸ T-S 12.582

APPENDIX OF SLAVE INDIVIDUALS DOCUMENTED IN THE GENIZAH

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
ʿAbīr	1150-1181	Persian slave girl sold for 10.5 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 8J8.4
Afāf			Letter	ENA NS 48.6
Akramiyyah	1217	<i>al-ṣabiyyah</i>	Deed of Testimony	T-S 13J3.26, ENA 2559.13
Ashu/Berākhā	1132	Indian	Deed of Manumission	SPIOS D55.10
Balagh al- Munā				T-S NS J409
[Dalāl]	1140		Dowry	T-S J1.29
Dhahab 1	1145	Three year old <i>waṣīfah</i>	Will	T-S 12.140
Dhahab 2	1151	Sitt al-Ḥusn's slave	Will	T-S 13J22.2
Dhahab 3	1244	Freedwoman	Bill of Repudiation	T-S NS J226
Ḍiyā	1226	<i>Muwalladah</i>	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J4.2 + T-S6J1.7, CUL Or.1080 J273
Fakhr		Freedwoman		BL Or. 10588.3
Fūq	1143		Legal Deed	T-S 13J3.3
Gharrada	1160	Freedwoman	Will	T-S Misc.24.137.4v
Ghazāl 1	1134		Legal Deed	BL Or. 5566C16
Ghazāl 2	1149-1150		Bill of Sale	T-S NS 311.23
Ghazāl 3	1154-1155	Indian	Bill of Sale	ENA 4011.62v
Ḥidhq 1	1094	Nubian sold with her daughter	Bill of Sale	T-S 20.93b
Ḥidhq 2	1104	Moroccan slave sold for 14 dinars in Cairo	Bill of Sale	T-S 8J5.5 (2v)
Ḥidhq 3	1105	Nubian, sold for 20 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 16.188
ʿIlm 1		<i>Muwalladah</i> sold for 17 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 10J11.31
ʿI[lm] 2	1137	Nubian sold for 23 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 20.41
ʿIzz	1140		Dowry	T-S J1.29
Janān	1142	<i>Muwalladah</i>	Scribal notes for a bill of sale.	F 1908.44SS
Milḥ	1084	Nubian	Bill of Sale	T-S 8J1.12

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
Milḥ	1100	Nubian	Bill of Sale	ENA 4011.48
Mubārahah 1	1091	Freedwoman		T-S AS 145.1
Mubārahah 2		Freedwoman		T-S NS 321.54
Mubārahah 3		<i>jāriyah al-ger</i>	Alms list	T-S K15.113
Mubārahah 4	1091	Freedwoman from <i>bilād al-Rūm</i>	Court record	T-S NS 321.54
Musk 1		Black slave girl jointly owned by former master's heirs	Legal deed	T-S NSJ32
Musk 2	1164-1165	Sold for 18 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J37.12
Musk 3	1172	Owned property	Inventory of deceased physician	CUL Or. 1080J142
Nadd	1167	Greeted in a family letter	Letter	T-S 13J33.10v
Naʿim	1107	Nubian slave sold to Nahray b. Nissim's widow Sitt al-Mūnā	Deed of Manumission	T-S 8J1.17
Nāshiyah	1176	Manumitted slave woman	Deed of Manumission	T-S 8J12.2
Nashū 1		<i>Waṣīfah</i>	Will and Emancipation	ENA NS 16.11
Nashū 2	1126	Freedwoman	Will	T-S 16.44 + T-S 12.613
Nasrīn 1	1148	Imported <i>jāriyah</i> sold for 20 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J3.7
Nasrīn 2		Part of deeded property	Will	T-S NS J357
Nasrīn 3	1170	Sold for 9 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S NS 309.12
Nezer		<i>Waṣīfah</i> sold by slave trader	Letter	T-S 8J10.9
Nujūm		Manumission		T-S Box J3.44 (bad shelf-mark) see Gil
Nusā	1140	<i>waṣīfah</i>	Dowry	T-S J1.29
Rahj 1				T-S 13J2.20
Rahj 2	1182	Exchanged for another slave		Bodl MS heb. f. 56/46a
Rahj 3	1152	Sold for 20.5 dinars	Bill of Sale	ENA 4011.63

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
Rahj 4			Bill of Sale	T-S 16.15
Şalaf 1		Indian	Dowry	T-S 16.239
Şalaf 2	1157		Deed of Manumission	T-S 10J28.16
Saraf		Possibly the same slave in T-S 12.635.		T-S 16.134
Şayd	1159	Sold for 19.5 dinars	Scribal notes for a Bill of Sale	T-S 10J7.6d, sec 2
Sa'ādah 1	1190	Sudanese <i>jāriyah</i> sold for 22 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 18J1.30
Sa'ādah 2			Dowry	
Sa'ādah 3	0	Sudanese nurse	Letter	ENA NS 48.6
Sa'ādah 4	1198	Sells for 12 <i>mithāqil</i>	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J3.16
Sa'ādah 5	1244	References "Sa'ādah the freedwoman"	Legal	T-S 12.872 (formerly T-S Misc.29.1)
Sha'al	1108	<i>jāriyah</i> sold for 21 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 18J1.16
Sha'ith	1044	Nubian, child caretaker	Legal - Quittance	T-S 16.134
Shrīrīn	12 th century	Sold for 25 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J7.15
Shu'[a]b	1146	Property of Sitt al-Ḥasab	Dowry	CUL Or. 1080J49
Sitt al-Rūm		Freedwoman		T-S 12.8, T-S 10J4.9
Sumr [Sitt al-?] 1	1140-1159	Slave woman bequeathed by uncle to nephews	Legal document	T-S AS 147.23
Sitt al-Sumr 2	1151 (Goitein)	Sitt al-Ḥusn's slave woman	Will	T-S 13J22.2
Sitt al-Ushshāq	ca. 1165	Pregnant	Bill of Sale	T-S 13J6.7
Ta-Wa-[..]	1096	Freedwoman	Deed of Manumission	T-S NS J484
Tawfiq 1	?	Nubian. Sold for 20 dinars.	Bill of Sale	ENA 4020.11
Tawfiq 2	1100-1138	None	Bill of Sale	T-S NS 320.29
Tawfiq 3			Letter	Halper 400
Tawfiq 4	1100	Nubian, Christian	Bill of Sale	Bodl Heb. b. 12.20

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
Ṭāwūs 1	1241	Sold with her ten year old son Mubārak for 40 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 16.20
Ṭāwūs 2	1250	Nubian slave bought	Bill of Sale?	T-S AS 148.15
Ūbnūsah	1230	Nubian, sells for 310 dirhems (23 ¼ dinars)	Bill of sale	Mosseri VII, 58.1
‘Ūd al-Zān	1156	Belonged to Sitt al-Ri’āsah	Dowry	Yevr.-Arab II 1700.25a
Unnamed 1	994-95	<i>jāriyah rūmiyyah</i>	Dowry	T-S 16.70
Unnamed 2 and 3	1040-1060	Two freed women (<i>‘atāqatayn</i>) on alms list	Alms list	T-S K15.17
Unnamed 4	1060	Slave of Yeshu‘a b. Isma‘īl	Letter	ENA 2805.23A
Unnamed 5	1070	“Cushite” slave woman valued at 30 dinars	Dowry	Halper 341
Unnamed 6	1070	Slave of Judah b. Moses Ibn Sighmār	Letter	CUL Or. 1080J71
Unnamed 7	1090	Qiwām, “Carob in color”, Christian	Bill of Sale	T-S Ar.42.174
Unnamed 8	1093	Nubian slave woman of ‘Eli b. Japheth. Later emancipated. Marries ‘Eli.	Legal Deed	T-S Misc.27.4.23/T-S Misc.29.6 (Current: T-S 16.377)
Unnamed 9	1093	Daughter of unnamed 8.	Legal Deed	T-S Misc.27.4.23/T-S Misc.29.6 (Current: T-S 16.377)
Unnamed 10	1094	Daughter of Hidhq 1	Bill of Sale	T-S 20.93b
Unnamed 11	1094	Frankish slave woman	Letter	Budapest 228.3
Unnamed 12	1040-1098	A <i>jāriyah</i> sent to Nahray b. Nissīm by his son Natan	Letter	F 190844.HH
Unnamed 13	1119	Imported <i>jāriyah</i> sold.	Bill of Sale	T-S 18J1.19

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
Unnamed 14	1126	Minor slave girl, a <i>muwalladah</i> .	Bill of Sale	Vienna H 23
Unnamed 15	1129-1130	Slave woman manumitted	Deed of Manumission	T-S NS 20.63
Unnamed 16	1141	Ibn Jamāhir's concubine	Court Deposition	T-S 12.582
Unnamed 17	1143	Daughter of Fūq	Legal Deed	T-S 13J3.3
Unnamed 18	1157	Slave of Sitt al-Fakhr bat Ṭuviyyah	Letter	T-S 12.585
Unnamed 19	1157	Sitt al-Fakhr b. Ṭuviyyah's jāriyah	Letter	T-S 12.585
Unnamed 20	1158	Persian slave sold for 13 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S NS 320.17
Unnamed 21	1141-1159	Abū al-Faraj's slave woman	Petition	Budapest 232.1, T-S 10J17.22
Unnamed 22	1141-1159	Daughter of Unknown 10	Petition	Budapest 232.1, T-S 10J17.22
Unnamed 23	1175	Mother of Sa'd, also a slave.	Ketubbah	BL OR 10653.5
Unnamed 24	12 th	6 year-old slave girl, probably Indian	Letter	T-S NS J23
Unnamed 25	1204-1237	Freedwoman leaves inheritance	Legal Query to Abraham Maimonides	T-S 8J16.4
Unnamed 26	1238-1248	Nubian <i>shifḥah</i>	Will	T-S 10J6.7
Unnamed 27	1260	Abyssinian slave sold for 266.5 <i>nuqra</i> (20 dinar equivalent)	Bill of Sale	T-S 6J1.32
Unnamed 28		<i>Shifḥah</i> sold for 21 dinars	Bill of Sale	Bodl MS Heb. c. 28/1
Unnamed 29		Slave woman sold for 10.5 dinars	Legal	T-S 10J9.32
Unnamed 30		Immature <i>waṣṭifah</i> named in will of a widow.	Will	T-S 13J3.19
Unnamed 31		<i>Jāriyah</i> valued at 19 dinars.	Legal - Settlement of Estate	T-S 13J5.3b
Unnamed 32		Nubian <i>jāriyah</i> sold for 20 dinars	Bill of Sale	T-S 8J8.16

Slave	Date	Description	Document Type	Shelf-marks
Unnamed 33		Slave emancipated	Deed of Manumission	T-S 8J12.1
Unnamed 34			Letter	T-S 8J22.18
Unnamed 35	Undated	Woman claims unlawful enslavement before <i>qāḍī</i> in 'Aydhāb	Letter	CUL Or. 1080J30
Unnamed 36		Freedwoman's <i>ketubbah</i>	Ketubbah	T-S 16.105e
Unnamed 37		Marriage of a freedwoman		T-S 13J30.7
Unnamed 38		Deed of Manumission		T-S NS J614e
Unnamed 39		Slave refuses to be sold		T-S 13J36.11
Unnamed 40				F 1908.44HH
Wafā' 1	1142	Two year old <i>ṣabiyyah</i> of Janān.	Bill of Sale	Freer 1908.44SSv
Wafā' 2	12th	<i>waṣīfah</i>	Dowry	T-S J1.29
Wafā' 3	1181	Three sisters manumit a slave woman	Deed of Manumission	T-S 8J12.3
[Z]arf				T-S 16.15
Zuhr	1146	<i>waṣīfah</i> valued at 20 dinars	Dowry	Bodl MS heb.d. 66/48 + 47

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Old Series: T-S Misc. (including material formerly in boxes, now in binders; documents formerly numbered Loan 1-209 are now divided between Misc. 35 and Misc. 36)

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T-S Misc.28.256

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T-S Misc.29.1

See T-S 12.872

Old Series: T-S number (originally between glass, now in binders)

T-S 12.8 + T-S 10J4.9

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