MANUMITTED MALE SLAVES
AT GALATA AND ISTANBUL AROUND 1700

GÉZA DÁVID

In a previous article, I presented a survey of a group of female slaves emancipated after the Peace of Karlowitz. The material used on that occasion contains data on men as well. This information will be considered here, and an attempt made to establish the possible differences regarding the two sexes as far as price, owners and other characteristics are concerned.

Here it should be stated that not long after the above peace treaty signed in 1699, Wolfgang von Öttingen, Austria’s ambassador to the Sublime Porte, and Adolph von Sinzendorf, the official charged with this particular matter, must have requested – in accordance with the provisions of the treaty – that the Ottoman authorities hand over Christian captives and slaves they were holding, especially those from Habsburg territories.

Although the response to this request is unknown, certain entries in the mühimme defteri for the years H. 1110–1113/1698–1701 are illuminating. Covering the period July 30 – September 23, 1700, these documents are, as far as I know, the first of their kind. They show that partly as a result of the agreement concluded by the Ottoman envoy in Vienna on July 26, 1700,

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4BOA MD 111.

5The material containing certificates of manumission that was published by Jahn begins with 1702 and ends with 1776. Cf. Karl Jahn, Türkische Freilassungserklärungen des 18. Jahrhunderts (1702–1776). Napoli, 1963. – Hammer maintains that Sinzendorf’s “Leichnam wurde mit den Gefangenen, die er befreyt, nach Wien gesandt” (op. cit., 20). I assume that he was referring to another, earlier, group of returning manumitted captives and not those mentioned in the Turkish source.

quite serious attempts were made to find the European captives in various parts of the Ottoman capital, its adjacent settlements and even elsewhere in the Empire. The task of discovering these captives probably fell to the Austrians in the main, and required the goodwill and even the co-operation of the Ottoman authorities. As a result, 13 persons in the prison of the galley-slaves (zindan-i tersane)\(^7\) and 63 males serving in the imperial galleys\(^8\) (kalyonha-i mirî) were identified, plus, after renewed intervention, another 14 prisoners.\(^9\) The nationality of most of these “public captives” was indicated as Nemçe i.e. Austrian, there being just a few Venetians, Dutchmen and Frenchmen among them. Needless to say, all were males. The laconic records give their often distorted or illegible names and trades, which were carpenter, baker, workman, and marinar, as well as other less clear designations.

In addition, a number of slaves could be found in private ownership. These were already “in the hands of the Austrian ambassador” when the sultan ordered that an investigation be performed as to whether any had in the meantime converted to Islam, in which case they should not be given back. The enquiry was conducted, although no paragraph stipulating such a procedure featured in the treaty (one was added only in 1719).\(^10\) Three

\(^7\)For this term, see İdris Bostan, Osmanlı bahriye teşkilatı: XVII. yüzyılda Tersâne-i Âmire. Ankara, 1992, 11–13.

\(^8\)The ships on which they had been employed were also specified individually. Nine men were discovered on the new kalyon of the admiral (kapudane) of the flotilla. Six persons had been on the vessel of Captain Bastardy (? Elhac ..., two on that of Captain ... Hacı Mehmed, three on that of Captain Mustafa, five on that of Captain Seyid Mustafa, five on that of Captain Canum Hoca Mehmed, one on that of ... Ahmed çavuş, three on that of Captain Bayram, one on that of Captain Deli Balta Ahmed, five on that of Captain Balkızade Mehmed, two on that of Captain Rodoslı Mehmed, four on that of Captain Tara...ci Hüseyn, two on that of Ömer Hoca, two on that of Captain Mara.t Hüseyn, eight on that of Captain Mukri (?) zade Hacı Hüseyn, two on that of Captain Futu (?) Ali and two on those of ... Sinan. (In all likelihood this very same list is referred to by Bostan, op. cit., 209: note 197, but with the earlier page numbering of the defter.) – For the composition of oarsmen on warships of the containing powers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see: Maurice Aymard, “Chiourmes et galères dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle,” in Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del ‘500 alla luce di Lepanto. A cura di Gino Benzoni. Firenze, 1974, 85–86.

\(^9\)MD 111, pp. 738–740: Nos. 2528–2529. (Note that the numbering of entries is incorrect.)