



Slavery in the Byzantine Empire

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of Byzantium to the history of global slavery stems from its geographic and historical position. Byzantium boasts a history of more than a millennium, longer than any other Mediterranean empire. As an offspring of the Roman Empire, it inherited the Roman institution of slavery and its legal definition. Yet, both proved to be in constant movement in view of the changes that the medieval world underwent. The Byzantine Empire offers an ideal historical context to examine questions about global slavery, questions that pertain to continuity and change, conditions to entry slavery, the living conditions of the enslaved, conditions of manumission, the destiny of ancient slavery, and thanks to its geopolitical position, also to connectivity between different medieval societies. It offers, in addition, a framework to examine the states of enslavement and questions pertaining to the labor of the enslaved, and its place within the socioeconomic organization.

Nowadays we address and emphasize the contradiction between the humanity of the enslaved and the treatment they receive as a commodity in the labor market. This contradiction stems from the perspective that sees all human beings as having rights, and is a product of the modern age and the human rights movement. To resolve this contradiction, activists today employ two distinct forms of action. The first uses legislative means to enhance the

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human rights of enslaved and bounded persons in order to eliminate the enslavement conditions and exploitation. The second way of action uses the status of the enslaved in the labor market to empower them in order to change their human condition and the violation of their human rights. The present chapter takes the case of Byzantine slavery to examine the relationship between the status of the enslaved as a human being and as a commodity in pre-modern society. In Byzantium this relationship was particularly important.

Contrary to popular belief, slavery did not decline in the transition from the ancient period to the Middle Ages and was as much a part of medieval societies as it was part of the society of the Roman Empire. This current study of slavery in Byzantium will examine the status of the enslaved in the Byzantine labor market and social organization, and will reveal the centrality of the phenomenon of enslavement and the contribution of slavery to the private household in the urban and agricultural economy. This analysis will show the role that the institution of slavery played in social organization. Moreover, examining slavery in view of the evolution of the Byzantine social structures in the central Middle Age, particularly the growing socioeconomic polarization of the Byzantine society starting from the ninth century, will reveal the enslavement of human beings as a means to maintain economic independence through the accumulation of “human property.” The other side of the phenomenon of slavery in Byzantium was the relationship established between this “human property” and the proprietors of humans, i.e., between the enslaved and the enslaver. Based on inequality, force, and asymmetric dependency, in Byzantium this relationship was aimed nevertheless at the integration of the enslaved, integration that carried legal and socioeconomic consequences. A pivotal factor in this integration stemmed from the religious identity of the enslaved persons and their conversion to Christianity. This identity was both enforced on the enslaved persons, and contributed to their integration into Byzantine society by granting them accessibility to legal institutions and open ways for their manumission.

An analysis of the relationship between the enslaved status as a person and as a commodity in Byzantine society may therefore clarify the tension between the two different ways of dealing with slavery today, and will offer a new and fresh perspective. Although there was no human rights discourse in Byzantium in its modern form, the enslaved were perceived as human beings and were attributed with the agency to act as independent persons. These possibilities were not always in line with their exploitation, enslavement, and commodification. In fact, enslavement, conversion, and manumission were three phases in creating dependent agents to enlarge the socioeconomic position of the household. They were therefore also means for the empowerment and liberation of enslaved persons and for their integration into Byzantine society. This chapter analyzes both sides of the phenomenon of slavery: the central role of the enslaved persons in the private economic organization, and their integration into the social organization. In Byzantium these two sides were interdependent.

Byzantium was a direct successor of the Roman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean starting from the fourth century, when Emperor Constantine I built a new capital on the ruins of the ancient Greek city of Byzantium and named it after him, Constantinople (“Constantine’s City,” modern Istanbul). The Byzantines, who continued to refer to themselves as Romans (and as “Byzantines” in referring to the inhabitants of Constantinople), also inherited the legal and social institutions of the Roman Empire. Their language was Greek, and the religion of most of them was Greek Christianity. This became the official religion, “the right faith” (Greek: Orthodoxy), and one of the characteristics of the Byzantine state. Byzantium inherited slavery as a legal institution from the Roman society. Under Roman-Byzantine law both male and female slaves had no juridical persona, in a similar way to children for example. They could not own property, become a party of legal contracts (including marriage), serve as guarantors, give legal testimony, or sue or be sued.

Although there is no record of a decline in the use of slaves in the late Roman period, historians have tended to connect the idea of the “decline of the Roman Empire” in late antiquity (fourth-seventh centuries) to the idea of “decline of slavery.” This idea is not supported by historical sources. Indeed, studies of the last two decades have revealed the existence of various forms and institutions of slavery in medieval societies.¹ In the seventh century, the Mediterranean entered a new stage in its history, with its division into three distinct civilizations: the Islamic Caliphate in the south, Byzantium in the northeast, and Latin Western Europe in the northwest. Each had its own language, culture, and religious identity. Slavery continued to play an important role in the socioeconomic life of Byzantium and the Caliphate. Following the Crusades, a new element was added to this map with the creation of local Latin kingdoms in the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition to the important role it played in local socioeconomic structures, slavery became also a means of connectivity between the different states.

ENTRY INTO SLAVERY

Like the Roman law, Byzantine law determines that the free status of the child came from the mother side. If she had free status during her pregnancy (even if she was later reduced to slavery), the child received the status of free born. In the same way, the children of a slave woman, no matter who was their father were slaves from birth. Cases of self-sale of free persons who sold themselves for debts or other reasons were known since antiquity and were legal provided that the person was *sui iuris*. Children, who did not have a legal persona, could be sold or exposed by their parents. Child exposure could lead to enslavement if the children were abducted by slave traders who then sold or prostituted them illegally. In the fourth through sixth centuries Byzantine emperors promulgated laws to limit such cases, and allowed it only for parents in dire economic circumstances. Reducing a free born person, was

finally prohibited by Leo VI (886–912), and in 1095 by Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). We have nearly no evidence of enslavers who sold the children of their slaves to a third party. In fact, most of the documented cases of enslavement in Byzantium point to manumission of the enslaved as the norm, even the objective of Byzantine slavery. These left two ways as the main means to procure slaves in Byzantium: war and trade. Both cases concerned the enslavement of foreigners.

Slavery became dependent on the enslavement of captives. Wars and conquests filled this demand in particular during the period of extensive wars: the sixth through the eighth centuries. By the end of the eighth century the medieval geopolitical map stabilized. It was no longer a period of large conquests and geopolitical annexations. Piracy, captivity, abduction, and enslavement of people became the dominant forms of enslavement especially in frontier zones. The Byzantine sources often depict the Byzantines as the main victims of raids of pirates coming from the Caliphate. But Arab sources of the ninth and tenth centuries reveal that raids were also practiced by Byzantine forces in both land and sea. And yet, the significant part of the enemy population which was captured was not sold as booty, but was kept for prospective acts of ransoming or exchanges of prisoners of war. This left as the main way to acquire starting from the ninth century the slave trade. In fact, it is impossible to distinguish between the medieval slave trade, piracy, and captivity. Indeed, pirates by land and sea were also slave traders and vice-versa. The medieval slave trade is normally not referred to as trafficking. And yet the evidence of the lives of the enslaved, their abduction, the violent ways they entered slavery, their forced migration, and the scale of the international slave trade all point to a new international dynamic centered on human trafficking.²

Sources and documents from the period reveal wide-ranging itineraries of slave traders that connect Eastern Europe, the Eurasian Steppe, and the African Sahel to the markets and economies of the Mediterranean, where the demand for slaves was high and the financial means for their purchase were available.³ In this commercial dynamic Eastern Europe and the Slavic countries were the main source of slaves for Mediterranean societies, Byzantium, and the Caliphate in particular. This orientation of the slave trade marks demographic and economic differences in the Middle Ages between the richly populated areas in the south and east of the Mediterranean and the undeveloped areas northwest of the basin and the African desert and the Sahel. This economic imbalance was the main engine for the medieval human trafficking.

The term “Slavs” became in the Middle Ages a generic name for slaves both in the Arabic of Muslim Al-Andalus (*ṣakāliba*) and in Greek in Byzantium (*sklavoi*, σκλάβοι).⁴ The term later penetrated most of the Western and Central European languages. The enslaved were mostly victims of slave traders and pirates, including Vikings, who operated along the rivers between the Baltic Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Black Sea, and between Eastern Europe and southwestern Europe. Human trafficking was based on raids by merchants and private and military militias that captured the local population, either

through abduction or for a fee paid to local leaders, and led them far from their country of origin. Slavery in the Middle Ages was therefore dependent on the enslavement of abducted and forced migrants.⁵

The average price of a man in Byzantium was around 20–25 gold coins, and remained fairly constant in Byzantium.⁶ This was the price of a house in a county town; an average price of three shops in the capital, Constantinople; a wage of one year for an employee in the public service, or five to eight years of an employee. It was a serious financial investment, worthwhile only for wealthy households that could afford it.

THE ENSLAVED IN THE LABOR MARKET AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Slaves were employed in Byzantium in every possible economic and social role, in both rural and urban milieu, in the private and public sector, in the service of the emperors, the socioeconomic elite as well as by less wealthy people. The basic economic unit was the private household. Its level determined the number of enslaved persons it included. Enslavement was a means of increasing the economic power and the social position of the family's household in both the rural and urban economic systems. Regulations from the eighth-tenth centuries dealing with the economic-legal organization in the city and in the Byzantine village include references of slaves as part of the economic organization of the private household of peasants and urban enterprises alike.⁷

Although slaves are mentioned alongside waged/hired workers (Greek: *misthioi*, *misthōtoi ergatai*) in both the city and the countryside, their mode of employment was different from the second. Waged workers were employed under a specific labor contract (*misthosis*) concluded between employer and employee. This form of work differed from that of slaves: it was limited to one month and the salary had to be paid in advance.⁸ A household, rural or urban, could not therefore employ a wage worker over time. These regulations of the labor market encouraged the growth of economic organizations that were not dependent on hired labor but on slavery. They were particularly critical for economic enterprises that required trained professionals, such as goldsmiths, money changers, animal traders, shopkeepers, carpenters, builders, painters, and in various types of candle, soap, and silk fabrication.⁹ Slaves could be employed as a long-term, even life labor force. Moreover, unlike wage workers, slaves could become guild members and serve as managers of private enterprises such as shops and workshops. Normally, five guarantors were required to open a private enterprise in Constantinople. But in case of slaves the guarantee of the owner was sufficient. No one would have agreed, presumably, to be a guarantor of another man's slave, and slaves could not stand as guarantors because they had no legal persona.¹⁰ This made slaves the ideal business managers. The economic consequences of this situation were far-reaching. In order to set up a business, a slave could be appointed as responsible for life. The social consequences were also far-reaching: on the one hand, a potential

weakening of financial relations of inter-socioeconomic dependency. On the other hand, the strengthening of independent households that gained their independence by acquisition of enslaved agents. A person who was interested in setting up workshops of various kinds (which was prohibited by law) could use slaves for this purpose, and appoint them at the head of numerous workshops. The socioeconomic dynamics, then, relied on the financial ability to acquire and enslave people in order to employ them as managers and workers for life. The fact that the enslaved were the property of the enterprise's owner, meant that all profit and control was in the hands of the second. Slavery was thus a means of increasing the economic independence of the family household. In this way, the socioeconomic rationale of slavery in Byzantium fits in with anthropological theories that see slavery as a means of expanding the family organization.¹¹

The same rationale also applied in the Byzantine rural organization, which was composed of landowners, slaves, employees, and working animals.¹² In the ninth-century *Life of Philaretos the merciful*, a historical figure who possessed rich lands in Asia Minor and became a saint, Philaretos' household deteriorates from wealth to poverty. He loses his large estate and retains only a modest plot of land around his house which he cultivates himself with his son and daughter. The loss of his slaves indicates his economic decline. This description clarifies what the reverse process was: how a small family household could be developed into a large and rich estate. Indeed, information about this comes from a Byzantine document, dated to the tenth through twelfth centuries, about the tax organization of the Byzantine village.¹³ It shows that the expansion of the rural household from a modest land to a large estate depended on the acquisition of manpower. Slavery served precisely this objective. Moreover, enslavers linked their enslaved persons in couples and profited from their offspring who were enslaved from birth and continued to maintain the family's agricultural enterprise. In this way slavery provided a means of increasing private economic independence, a means that was accumulated and managed by the family unit.

In the central medieval period, Byzantine society experienced a transformation in its economic organization, and saw the creation of a new socioeconomic elite who gained its richness from the control over farmer lands, hitherto independent. Byzantine sources from the ninth through eleventh centuries refer to this new elite as "the powerful" (*hoi dunatoi*, οἱ δυνατοί in Greek). Families close to the imperial government gained authority over large tracts of land by receiving control over the taxes of the land.¹⁴ The farmers, either owners or state tenants, became dependent on by private powers who controlled their land taxes and as a consequence also their farmers' socioeconomic position. A social dependency was created between those who worked the land and those who controlled it, that helped to establish the second as a new elite. Against the background of this new socioeconomic dynamics, slavery gained a new role. Acquiring and enslaving people in order to use them in farming became the main option through which independent farmers could enrich their estates and improve their economic situation in view of the

growing influence of the new elite of “the powerful.” Maintaining economic independence in Byzantium was dependent on the ability to accumulate “human property” to use it in both work and management. Enslavement was therefore a means to acquire and maintain economic independence.

Private testaments from the period show how widespread these dynamics were in the organization of rural family units. This is the case of Gemma’s 1049 testament from Puglia in southern Italy.¹⁵ Gemma, a widow without children, left her land and houses to her four nephews. She bequeathed other houses, plots of land, and cattle to her manumitted slaves: three men and three women, along with three more persons whose juridical status. Her rural household, therefore, consisted of a number of lands and houses inhabited and cultivated by relatives, slaves, and freedmen. This was also the case of larger landowners, for example, Eustathios Boilas who drafted his testament in 1059.¹⁶ His lands in southeast Anatolia included the eleven villages he founded himself. He left most of his property to his two daughters, their husbands, and the churches he founded. Along with them he mentioned three orphans he raised, who received two of his villages. He also mentioned fifteen slaves alongside their families and children, all of whom he had previously manumitted. They all received plots of land. He bequeathed his other slaves, along with the lands and cattle, to his daughters. These were probably the main labor force of the estates and enabled him to build his eleven villages as an independent economic unit.

Another detailed picture of Byzantine household management comes from the testaments of the Pakorianoi couple (Symbatios Pakourianos and his widow Kalē Pakourianē).¹⁷ The couple lived in Constantinople in the eleventh century and belonged to the social elite close to the emperor. They owned the lands of four villages. Thirty-one men and woman are mentioned by name in Symbatios Pakourianos’ testament, eighteen among them are slaves. Upon his death he manumitted all his enslaved men and bequeathed them clothes, bedding, horses, weapons, and modest sums of money. He bequeathed his enslaved women to his wife, who, in her later testament, manumitted all her slaves, women, and men. The couple referred to their entire staff in the testaments by the overall term “my people” (*hoi anthrōpoi mou*; ἄνθρωποι μου in Greek): all those who are in their service. These were not what modern scholarship term “domestics.” Their function was not limited to domestic roles within the house, but they sustained, supported, and maintained the entire economic organization of the household of this aristocratic family.¹⁸ Upon their manumission, the enslaved men and women remained attached to the household and its owners, and continued to sustain and maintain the family unit as a private economic system. The term “my people” indicates that the strength of a household depended on its economic independence, and this meant the number of people who maintained it. This enabled the socioeconomic mobility of the entire unit, which included the socioeconomic mobility of the enslaved themselves. These remained a part of the private household of their enslaver, according to Byzantine customs, also after their manumission.

Manumission of the enslaved acquired a paramount importance in Byzantium as a legal means to integrate the enslaved into Byzantine society. In fact, enslavement and manumission were two sides of the same coin. Together they ensured the dependency and the integration of the enslaved. The new religious identity that the enslaved acquired in Byzantium played a key role in the process of “flipping the coin” toward their integration.

EXIT FROM SLAVERY, ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

As was shown above, human trafficking in the Middle Ages was unprecedented in its geographical scope. Its victims were usually local children, women, and men who were abducted, trafficked, and sold into slavery very far from home and country. In the medieval world this meant that they were different also in their religion. The medieval world was divided between different political blocs with distinct religions: Greek Christianity in Byzantium, Islam in the Caliphate, Latin Christianity in western Europe, Jewish communities throughout these regions, and populations that were still pagan in the Slavic world, northern Europe, and the Sahel. The result was that the women and men who were abducted, enslaved, and trafficked to the Byzantine markets were foreign in origin and faith. The process of enslavement included the conversion of the enslaved to the religion of the enslaver: in Byzantium to Christianity, in the Caliphate to Islam, or to Judaism in the Jewish communities (conversion to a religion other than the state religion was forbidden in both the Caliphate and Byzantium). A series of laws, regulations, and treaties from Byzantium, Venice, Rome, and Francia, from the ninth through the twelfth centuries, restricted and prohibited the trade in Christians, and the sale of slaves to Jewish and Arab slave traders.¹⁹

Foreigners who were enslaved by Byzantines were usually not Christian and were converted to Christianity by their enslavers. This separation between enslaved and enslaver according to faith gave moral justification for enslavement: the act of enslavement itself being regarded as an outgrowth of religious superiority and a sense of religious mission to convert. Indeed, starting from the fourth-century Christian writers developed different justifications for slavery. Some saw it as a product of war, others as a crime, sin, or stupidity. At the basis of all these justifications was a worldview that saw slavery as part of the existing divine order and therefore legitimate and justified.²⁰ At the same time, conversion was also a means of integration. The conversion of slaves made them part of the religious community.²¹ This too was the meaning of the conversion process of the enslaved: a religious and social conversion that made the foreigner “one of us” and therefore trustworthy. This is reflected in the two Byzantine legal customs of slave manumission: manumission in church and manumission by baptism.²² The first was introduced in the fifth century and was performed in the church in front of a bishop who acted as the magistrate, with no reference to the religion of the manumitted slave. The

second, attested from the eighth century, aimed at manumitting non-Christian slaves through their baptism by their enslaver, act that also created legal kinship between the enslaver and the freedman.

The new religious identity of the Byzantine enslaved person also opened up possibilities for personal empowerment and social mobility. In fact, the new religious identity of the enslaved changed their legal status. Although slaves continued to be defined by law as property, the very fact that they were Christians turned them from objects to subjects because they were perceived and considered also as believers. Moreover, their religious identity as Christians conferred a legal personality through which they could realize their status as believers: marry, create a family, become churchmen or monks, and even act independently to be liberated.²³ These fundamental changes were due to the fact that the enslaved Christian was perceived not only as a subject of his enslaver, but also a subject of God. As such the question of his loyalty whether to his material master or to the heavenly master (*ho kurios*, ὁ κύριος in Greek) was open to interpretation. A number of Byzantine writers addressed this question in great detail, especially in light of the sentence from the Gospel according to Matthew 6:24 that it is not possible to worship two masters, God and Mammon. This verse was interpreted as a contradiction between loyalty to God and any material/corporeal master. Thus, for example, Gregory Bishop Nisa explains that the very fact that a person owns other persons is a violation of God's property right over all of humanity.²⁴ Although this view did not lead to anything close to an abolitionist movement, Byzantine Christianity nevertheless dealt with the question of authority: to whom man, whether enslaved or not, owed his primary loyalty: to an earthly or an eternal master.²⁵ This perspective also saw the enslaved as a subject: God's subject. An outgrowth of this approach was a legal development in the status of the enslaved.

One of the most interesting features of slavery in the medieval world concerns the development of access to the law for slaves. The roots of this approach can be traced back to the late Roman period.²⁶ It became more and more common with the recognition of the religious identity of the slave as a believer and a part of the religious community. So it was for example in regards to marriage. By its very definition as a legal contract, the institution of marriage was impossible for slaves, and in fact meaningless. Moreover, the enslavement of a married person immediately entailed the annulment of the marriage. However, the recognition of Christian marriage as a legal institution in Byzantium as an unbreakable legal relationship meant that the enslavement of a married person did not change the marriage, for example in case of prisoners of war. The Byzantine legislator has intervened in such cases by allowing marriage between spouses when one of them was enslaved by a third person.²⁷ Moreover, the Byzantine legislature increasingly interfered with a person's authority over his human property, authority that was traditionally considered private. For example, an eleventh-century law prohibited any possibility of marrying slave couples outside the Christian institution of marriage.²⁸

This law severely restricted enslavers who wanted to unite their slaves in families outside of Christian marriage. The legislative application of the Christian institution of marriage also in the case of slaves made these ties unbreakable. The sale of married slaves became impossible, and the manumission of part of the enslaver's family could become legally problematic.²⁹ The religious status of the enslaved made them therefore part of the religious society, and gave them a legal status that allowed them agency and opened up possibilities in regards to their private life.³⁰

Byzantine slaves therefore were defined by a legal status that we can understand as civil status, that is a category defined by legal status. By civil status I mean a legal definition that constitutes a distinct group of people in terms of duties, privileges, or other criteria. A legal definition indicates which criteria set a group of people as a civil category. The purpose of such a legal delimitation is to give a special status to this group of people. We need to distinguish between legal status and civil status, since the second can apply only to human beings as society members. In this way too, Byzantine law delimited the free-born and the enslaved by determining the criteria by which the enslaved was distinguished from all other members of society. In the same way, for example, the age criterion for minors, or that of sex for women, defined their respective civil status. Moreover, the civil status of Byzantine slaves was in movement because of their religious identity as Christians. This movement was a means of their social integration into the society of believers; sometimes it weakened the enslaver's property rights. This was already manifested, for example, in the asylum law of Justinian (527–565), which gave runaway slaves the possibility to become a monk or a clergyman without the permission of their owner.³¹ The owner could only demand them back for a short period of time and only if they proved that they had caused damage.

These legal changes that started from the sixth century and increased in the tenth century, reflect the development of the civil status of the enslaved. They stem from a new approach regarding the authority of the Byzantine state and law: the expansion of the civil status of the slave was done in parallel with the strengthening of the authority of the public authority at the expense of restricting private authority over human property. This was not a deliberate empowerment of the enslaved, but a result of the Byzantine imperial policy to increase the authority of the state and its legal regulation in a way that restricted private authority over "private subjects," meaning Byzantines who were not under the authority of the state, such as slaves. Slavery continued to exist, but those who were enslaved by private enslavers were not exclusively the private property of the enslaver, but also subjects of the authority and laws of the state and therefore of the emperor.

This legal process did not lead to an abolitionist attitude, but to a new definition of the enslaved: not merely as property, but as men and women who are part of the private household, and as Christians also part of the religious society. Even if the enslaved persons still had inferior legal status, were restricted in their movement and cruelly treated, the dependence of the family

organization on them along with the changes in their definition as members of the religious society, often led to their manumission. Manumission did not make the enslaved independent or free to go their own way. On the contrary, as freedmen the manumitted slaves continued to be part of the household of their enslaver/manumitter. They received economic autonomy, the autonomy that according to Byzantine wills was part of the expansion of the family's economic organization. The manumitted slaves were still very much dependent on their former enslaver, whom they continued to refer as "master" (*kurios*, κύριος in Greek). The option to be "free" and to go wherever one wanted was destructive, both economically and socially. It would have left the manumitted slave without a socioeconomic attachment and any means of subsistence. In fact, the dependency of the manumitted slaves on their enslaver opened up opportunities for their socioeconomic integration.

CONCLUSION

Enslavement entails an ongoing act of violence, and is always accompanied by the exploitation of human beings by other human beings. At the same time, conditions were created in Byzantium for interdependency between enslaved and enslaver: the enslaved were dependent on the enslaver for every detail of their personal life, and the enslaver depended on the enslaved on the success of their economic independence. The integration and empowerment of the enslaved became an interest to both enslaved and enslaver and created dynamics that led to the social integration of the first, an integration from which the second benefited. Moreover, this interdependency continued after manumission which opened more options for both sides. Manumitted slaves acted as empowered agents in the family household to which they belonged and of which they were a part. We would be wrong to think that manumitted slaves had better conditions if they lived a "free life" independently of their enslaver's household. A "free life" meant a hard and detached life from any social and economic framework, a homeless life, with no source of living and minimal living conditions. Such was the situation of the poor who lived in a daily war of survival on the margins of society. It is precisely dependency ties that have provided living conditions and opportunities of empowerment. The uniqueness of the case of Byzantine slavery lies in the fact that the manumission of the enslaved was worthwhile to both enslaved and enslaver because the first remained dependent on the household of the second. The empowerment of the first contributed to the empowerment of the second. These dynamics point to the transformation of the enslaved from being a passive victim into an active agent. In other words: in Byzantium, the empowerment of the enslaved was beneficial to the enslaver. Development in the legal status of the enslaved gave them more and more options when it came to their private lives, and was the engine behind their empowerment. The analysis of the case of Byzantine slavery provides a unique perspective on questions regarding slavery in

general. It shows that structural economic, social, and legal elements are what shapes the civil status of the enslaved.

NOTES

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6. Rotman, “The Medieval Slave Trade.”
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