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**EMBODIED DEPENDENCIES AND VALENCIAN
SLAVERY IN THE SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES**

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Embodied Dependencies and Valencian Slavery in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate slavery in the Kingdom of Valencia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As we will see, slavery can be analysed in a perspective of both global history and micro-history, that is, the way the Valencian institutions played a precise role in the social control of slavery and in determining the price of slaves. Looking at some personal trajectories of these slaves will allow us to get closer to the Valencian reality of the Early Modern Period, showing us how the very concept of identification of these subjects, by means of brands and tattoos, was particularly important for local institutions precisely to recognize the slaves and possibly runaway slaves. In fact, one of the major concerns of the Valencian authorities was to avoid vagrancy phenomena, which could lead to petty criminal activities. Finally, those institutional mechanisms will also be highlighted by means of which slaves, without running away, could legally reach the much-desired freedom.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Between Reality and Fiction: The Confessions of the Slaves	2
III. Mutilations and Physical Marks.....	7
IV. Global Connections	11
V. The Cost of Slaves and the Price of Freedom.....	13
VI. Conclusions.....	19
Bibliography.....	22

I. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse, from a multifaceted perspective, slavery in the Kingdom of Valencia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was one of the main ports of the Spanish monarchy in the Mediterranean and, as we will see, this had repercussions on its slave market, which had a truly global dimension. Effectively, in Valencia there were representatives of many varieties of slave groups. For example, black Africans came from the Muslim market or from the Portuguese trade. Vicenta Cortés Alonso has found reports that a total of up to 5000 enslaved Africans who arrived in Valencia between 1482 and 1516; some years saw the high number of 500 or 600.¹ In addition, there were small numbers of slaves from other ethnic groups, including Jews mainly from North Africa, victims of corsair attacks at sea or in North Africa, although there were no Jews of Iberian origin among them. Native islanders from the Canaries were also sold in Valencia, usually after passing through Castile. A few Amerindians brought from the Spanish and Portuguese possessions of the New World were sold in the Valencian slave markets and, from 1512 onwards a small number of Asians, mainly people from the Indian subcontinent, imported into Europe by the Portuguese. In Valencia, as in Seville, considerable racial mixing developed after the importation of slaves.

Merchants who had slaves to sell used Valencia as a favourite market for the Crown of Aragon. Due to the partial decline that Barcelona experienced in the fifteenth century, Valencia became the most important commercial centre on the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula. Valencians made up about one third of the merchants; the remainder included Castilians, Portuguese, Genoese, Florentines, Venetians, and other Italians. Traders first allowed their newly imported slaves to rest and then publicly displayed them. Before any captives could be sold, the *Baile General* had to register them, and this official collected the royal tax of four to five percent on the sale of human merchandise. At that time and for a long time afterward, the *Baile* had great authority over the lives of slaves. At the time of their registration, another official, the delegate of the King, together with the *Bayle* or his representative, interviewed the captives about their origins and circumstances of slavery. The sellers, in turn, had to swear that their slaves had been legally acquired because of a “just war” against Ottomans.²

This centrality of Valencia was reflected in the slave market, whose circulation was not only internal to the Mediterranean Sea, but on a truly global scale, given the presence in Valencia of slaves from sub-Saharan Africa, but also from the Americas and, sometimes, from Goa. In the course their life, slaves could work in different fields, gain experience in different jobs, aspects that affected their identity and their price when they were sold as a commodity. The process of identifying an individual slave in the *ancien régime* is particularly interesting, starting with the most famous cases studied by Natalie Zemon Davis, such as that of Martin Guerre.³ Age, sex, origin, skin colour, physical strength, were all elements that not only affected the final price but were also valuable data that could be used to identify, for example, a runaway. Among these elements there are also tattoos, of which the Valencian sources sometimes give testimony. These physical marks, as well as the letters “S” and “I” (*sine iure*,

¹ Vicenta Cortés Alonso, *La esclavitud en Valencia durante el reinado de los Reyes Católicos (1479–1516)* (Valencia: Publicaciones del Archivo Municipal, 1964).

² William D. Phillips Jr., *Historia de la esclavitud en España* (Madrid: Playor, 1990), 171–72.

³ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983).

without rights) branded on the cheeks of the slaves, or even the name of their masters, or sometimes their place of origin, allow us to partially reconstruct the history of these individuals. The physical aspect therefore represented the trajectory of their life and can tell us something about the dependent relationships they had with their masters. In Valencia, slaves performed mainly domestic or agricultural tasks and worked in the city's bakeries. Their dependency on their masters also helps us to reflect on a slippery concept such as that of "social death" theorized by Orlando Patterson.⁴ While it is true that slaves very often lived in conditions bordering on mere survival (such as aboard galleys for example), it is also true that the bond of dependency with their master, or other relationships that could be woven between the slaves themselves, did not make them "excluded", unlike the poor and vagrants, who had no place to reside in, nor a master to obey. In the latter case, we are dealing with "socially dead" individuals. Vagrancy, as we will see, was one of the concerns of the authorities who wanted to maintain social control, which is why the case of runaway slaves deserves attention: not only because their masters were looking for them and wanted to take possession of them once more, but also because the presence of itinerants in the kingdom of Valencia, who could engage in petty criminal activities, was a risk that the Valencian authorities did not want to take.

II. Between Reality and Fiction: The Confessions of the Slaves

Merchants who traded or captured a slave had a duty to present him to the *Bayle General* or his lieutenant, who listened to the slave's confession and assessed whether the capture had taken place in a "just war". If it was, property of the captive was granted to the merchant and he paid a tax, the *quinto real*, to the *Baile*.⁵ Usually the merchant led the slave in front of the *Bayle*, although sometimes this did not happen. For example, in 1580, the merchant Juan Auger had introduced three black "*boçals*" (slaves who only knew their own language were called *bozales*, *boçals* in Valencian) into the kingdom, in order to be able to sell them to merchants of Cullera and Denia, and requested the *Baile* not to let them arrive in the city because they had particularly suffered during the sea voyage. The *Baile* accepted the request and evaluated the three slaves according to the statements of Juan Auger himself.⁶

Those presented to the *Baile* included not only recent captives, but sometimes also slaves whose masters wanted to take them out of the Kingdom of Valencia or sell them. In these cases, it was very important to have proof of having previously paid the *quinto real*. This document, which established ownership of the slave, showed the *quinto real*, a tax that corresponded to one fifteenth or one twentieth of his value. This taxation was carried out with the aid of *corredores* of the *Bailía Court*, that is, by agents who had a great deal of experience in the matter and who also had the task of evaluating those slaves who the *Bailía* occasionally put on sale.⁷ If a slave owner was no longer in possession of this proof, the *Bayle* proceeded to evaluate the slave again, and the master had to pay an additional *quinto real*. However, in this case, the master was granted a period of between two months and a year so that he could

⁴ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2018).

⁵ Vicente Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Valencia: CSIC, 1978), 63.

⁶ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 63.

⁷ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 68–69.

bring proof of his previous presentation; if he succeeded, the *Baile* reimbursed him for the second payment.⁸

In order to determine whether a capture had been “in a just war”, the *Baile* needed to know all the circumstances that led to that capture through the subject’s confession. These confessions were transcribed in great detail, but in the seventeenth century they were simplified, in favour of an ever more accurate physical description of the subjects. In the confessions the slave answered the *Baile*’s questions, telling him his name, surnames, religion, where he came from, the names of his parents, how he was captured. The captive began his confession by vowing to tell the truth about what was being asked of him. If the slave was not a Christian, he was made to swear on the sacred texts of his religion or the oath was simply omitted and he said only that he “*farrá verdadera confesió*” (will make a true confession).⁹

Another problem that could arise was that of language. In the *Bailía Court*, the official language was Valencian, although Castilian, French, Italian, and probably Arabic, and therefore most of Mediterranean languages were used. However, no languages were spoken from more distant regions, such as those of the Atlantic coasts of the African continent, from where a large number of slaves came. In this case, translators were used, probably slaves who had already lived in Valencia for some time, and who came from the same remote places as the new subjects. If a translation could not be obtained, only the testimonies of the merchants who had captured the new slaves were collected.¹⁰

The slaves, despite the oath they had to swear, often lied, trying in this way to confuse the interrogators. This, however, happened much less with newly caught than with runaway slaves.

Christophol Velasques dice que es lliure y no es esclau y que no conegue a sos pares si be servi desde chiquet en la casa de D. Fernando de Revasco de dita villa de Fragenal de la Sierra ahon estigue per espai de setse anys y despues de mort aquell ha hanat divagant per lo mond, y lo mes del temps se ha ocupat en ser peixcador, y anant servant de mariner, y ha estat y fet dos viatges a les Indies servint de grumet en los Navios y que sols ha oit dir que a sa Mare le decyen Cecilia y so sab si era esclava o lliure y que el haver venout al loch del Grau es estat pera acomodar-se en alguna barca pera peixcar y anar per lo Mar y que la noticia que fe es que esta bautizat en esta Parrochia de Santa Catharina de dita vila.¹¹

⁸ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 64.

⁹ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 66.

¹⁰ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 67. In Valencian documents, slaves who only knew their own language were called *bozales* (*boçals* in Valencian). This is how the seventy-seven black slaves transported from Guinea by Provençal merchants and who were presented in the *Baylia* by the procurator Glaudo Martí are called: “*Attes que los dits sclaus negres son infels e portats de Guinea per cos de mercaderia y per esser boçals y no poder esser confesats particularment, per ço a aquells adjudica, als dits sclaus, per sclaus de bona guerra, servant y guardadant lo stil que fins a huy sta fernet y guardat en semblants sclaus boçals*”. See Archivo del Reyno de Valencia (henceforth ARV), *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 323.

¹¹ ARV, *Real Cancillería, Real 629, Venta de esclavos* (1666–1686), 1683, s. 111r–111v. “Christophol Velasques tells us that he is not a slave and he does not know his parents. He served as a child in the house of D. Fernando de Revasco of the town of Fragenal de la Sierra, where he lived for seventeen years. After the death of his master, he went wandering the world, and for most of the time occupied himself with being a fisherman. He has served as a sailor and went twice to the Indies, serving as a young sailor on the ships. He has heard that his mother is

A considerable number of confessions of this kind are preserved in the *Reino de Valencia* Archive.

The *Baile General* and his staff monitored the lives of the slaves. His agents visited the cities of the kingdom to determine whether the slave owners had registered their slaves and paid the required tax. He was also responsible for the pursuit and capture of runaway slaves and the sale of individuals who became the property of the Crown through punitive enslavement: vagabonds, unlicensed beggars, convicted adulterers, as well as escaped and recaptured slaves. The Valencians employed most of their slaves as servants and artisans. They worked in all sectors of the economy, but not in large crews. Some masters even hired out their slaves to work for others. Those who acquired slaves came from various classes of Valencian society: nobles, clergymen, merchants, manufacturers, members of the liberal professions, soldiers and army officers, royal officials. It was common for merchant-owned slaves to have extensive freedom of movement, as they worked as agents for their masters.¹²

In the case of Cristophol Velasques, the document does not tell us whether the *quinto real* was paid or not – perhaps because it had already been paid previously – but we know in any case that he was sold for twenty-four pounds and ten *sous* to Antoni Benacer de Gandia. It is a price in line with the market of the period, for an individual, like Velasques, who was forty years old and whose skin colour was that of cooked quince, which would suggest that he was maybe a descendant of Maghrebi slaves. The origin of these individuals was an important datum, because it often had a direct link with the selling price: for example, the slaves from sub-Saharan Africa had the reputation of not being good workers and therefore their value was on average lower than that of Maghrebi slaves who had the reputation of being much more resistant and suitable for any job. Velasques' confession is interesting because he states that for sixteen years, he was a slave of D. Fernando de Revasco in Freganal de la Sierra, near the border with Portugal and that after the death of his master, "*ha anat divagant per lo mond*" (he wandered the world). Implicitly, Velasques claimed that he had been freed by Don Fernando and that, in fact, he had turned into a vagrant. This precarious condition led him to work first as a fisherman and then as a sailor and, he claimed, he had made two trips to the Indies, working as a ship's boy. Finally, the slave stated that his mother was called Cecilia, that he did not know if she had been free or a slave, that he had come to Grau, the maritime quarter of Valencia, to be a fisherman; and that he had been baptized in the Parish of Saint Catherine.

If the *Baile* had believed this story, he would have thought Velasques a free man and therefore could not have sold him as a slave. In reality, as mentioned, the *Baile* sold him to Antoni Benacer and therefore did not – or only partially – believe the story. This is an interesting fact to highlight because, surely, Velasques had not been recognized as a fugitive slave, or at least the sources do not explicitly tell us so. But he was still sold as a slave. So, we can perhaps hypothesize that the fact that Velasques wandered around Valencia was an indication of his

called Cecilia, he doesn't know if she was a slave or free. Having come to the neighborhood of El Grau, he settled a boat to fish and go to the sea. He said that he was baptized in this Parish of Santa Catharina of the said city of Valencia."

¹² Phillips Jr., *Historia de la esclavitud en España*, 174.

social condition, and that for this he was arrested and then put up for sale. His age, forty, also made him still attractive as a commodity and he was sold without difficulty.

A different case is that of the Arab Francisco Saymon, who openly declared that he was a fugitive slave:

Es natural alarp ahon lo portaren chiquet a Portugal ahon lo feren christia y el batecharen en la Yglesia Mayor de la Vila de Casa Regne de Portugal y desde dit temps fins cosa de cinch anys a esta part servio a Don Juan Carvajal de la Casta del qual seu fuga y anat divagant per diverses ciutats y viles del Reyne de Castilla y havra cosa de un any poch menys que arriba a la present ciutat desposa a treballar en la casa de misericordia a hon al present tambe treballava y en lo dia de huy haventlo enviat al convent de Sant Domingo per un poch de vi pera la dita Casa de Misericordia lo an capturat en un carrer que está prop lo mercat y lo an portat pres en les presons de Sen Arcis per haver confessat com al present també confessa ser esclau.¹³

Francisco Saymon claimed that, after escaping from the service of Don Juan Carvajal de la Casta, he wandered through several cities of the kingdom of Castile. In general, fugitive slaves from Castile and Andalusia tried to reach the Mediterranean coasts and specifically the kingdom of Valencia. Their aim was either to cross the sea and return to Barbary or to blend in with the large population of Moorish origin in Valencian territory. The fugitive slaves mostly came from the south and the centre of the peninsula. Those arriving from the south passed through the towns of Fuente la Higuera and Puerto de Almansa, while those from central and northern Spain passed through Buñol and Puerto de Buñol, locations where the capture of runaway slaves was quite frequent. If they managed to cross these locations, they would seek refuge in other parts of the kingdom, especially in those areas where they thought they could find more shelter, or they could decide to continue towards their intended final destinations.¹⁴ Francisco Saymon, according to his statement, had been a fugitive, but had found work at the House of Mercy in Valencia. Despite this, he was arrested and later sold as a slave. One of the reasons that may have led to his arrest is first and foremost that he was in possession of wine, an aspect that could mark him as a vagabond. Another point to note is the place of his arrest, which was near the market.

It is worth reflecting on the social control that the *Bailía del Reino de Valencia* exercised within its territory and over its subjects. The legislation and decisions taken in the matter of vagrancy in order to eradicate this perceived scourge from the different kingdoms that made up the Spanish monarchy show up the connections between slavery, poverty and vagrancy. If the slave was a subject on the margins of society but still rooted in a certain reality (domestic, galley or agricultural slavery, etc.), the poor person was an individual without ties, neither family nor social, whose only ways to survive were either to voluntarily become a slave or to

¹³ ARV, *Real Cancillería, Real 629, Venta de esclavos* (1666–1686), s. 91r. and 93r., 1675. “He is an Arab native, from where he was taken as a child to Portugal, where he was converted to Christianity and baptized in the *Iglesia Mayor de la Vila de Casa*, Kingdom of Portugal, and from that moment until five years ago he served Don Juan Carvajal de la Casta. He then fled and has been wandering through various cities and towns of the Kingdom of Castile. A year ago, he arrived in this city and went to work in the House of Mercy, where he still works to the present day. Today he had been sent to the Convent of Santo Domingo for some wine for the said House of Mercy. He was captured in a street near the market and taken as a prisoner to the Sen Arcis jail for having confessed that he also confesses to being a slave to the present day.”

¹⁴ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 79.

wander and beg for alms. The vagabonds were sometimes masters of deception and the protagonists of petty criminal acts. They were also adept at begging, showing physical defects – real or alleged – in order to generate compassion from those around them. The laziness of the poor, their indolence and their contempt for work were considered the worst vices. In addition, they used to roam the markets, with the aim of committing petty thefts or stealing food. They could later sell the goods they had stolen. In 1604, the kingdom of Valencia commuted the punishment of the whip for these criminal acts to a fine of fifty Valencian pounds or three years of exile. The second time a false pauper was found guilty he would have to pay fifty pounds or accept a three-year sentence of rowing aboard the king's galleys; male convicts could be sentenced to life-long service aboard the galleys, which meant the "*mort civil çoes que servixca permanent en galera a sa mort*" (civil death, that is, he is condemned to work forever on the galleys).¹⁵ Vagrancy was barely tolerated, since it was seen as the refusal to work. It was therefore regarded as the gateway to criminal acts, such as petty thefts and other crimes. As we have already mentioned, there was a legal tradition, not only within the Spanish monarchy but also in other European states, which pursued fugitives – whether they were servants or slaves – and which gave even greater weight to the suspicions that revolved around vagabonds.

In 1686 Abdala, who may have been a fugitive slave but whose status is unclear,¹⁶ argued in front of the *Baile del Reino de Valencia* that:

Sen vingue de Madrid debes de la present ciutat y a la que fonch dos llegues mes ensa de Molina li ixqueren alcami sis lladres y el robaren llevansli un vestit que portava molt bo de drap de Olanda que tambe loy dexá son amo y los cent y cinquanta reals de a huit que li havia donat lo dit son amo.¹⁷

Abdala, who was over sixty-five and who reached Valencia dressed in rags, was donated in charity by the *Baile* to the convent of the Barefoot Trinitarians of the city.¹⁸ His story is truly paradigmatic in this liminal study of slavery, vagrancy, poverty and picaresque fiction in Early Modern Valencia. From his confession (December 7, 1686) we can learn more about his history. Twenty-three years earlier, in 1663, he had been captured by a flotilla of five Dutch ships, at *Capo Blanco*, near the city of Tarifa (Andalusia), while he was engaged in privateering aboard an Algerian ship. He and his son, Amebillo, were taken to the city of Puerto near the Portuguese *raya* (probably Puerto de Santa María, in Andalusia), where they were sold. They were then bought by a Franciscan religious, Father Martín Vito. In the first months of 1686, Father Martín, now ill and a week before his death, granted Abdala freedom.¹⁹ Abdala received his charter of freedom, along with 150 *reales de a ocho* and a vest of *drap d'Oland*.

¹⁵ María Dolores Guillot Aliaga, "¿Vagabundos o delincuentes? Estudio de la pobreza en el Reino de Valencia," in *Cambios y resistencias sociales en la Edad Moderna. Un análisis comparativo entre el centro y la periferia mediterránea de la Monarquía Hispánica*, eds. Ricardo Franch Benavent, Fernando Andrés Robres, and Rafael Benítez Sánchez-Blanco (Madrid: Silex, 2014): 183–91, 189.

¹⁶ In this regard see Fabrizio Filioli Uranio, "L'economia della carità e i 'beni fuori mercato': il caso di uno schiavo valenciano," *RiMe* 8/I (2021): 175–92.

¹⁷ ARV, *Real Cancillería, Real 629, Venta de esclavos* (1666–1686), s. 131v. "He has come from Madrid to this city. Two leagues from the city, near the village of Molina, six thieves attacked him and stole from him a garment that he had, a very good one from Holland, which his master gave him, and one hundred and fifty *reales de a ocho* that his master has also given him".

¹⁸ ARV, *Real Cancillería, Real 629, Venta de esclavos* (1666–1686), s. 132r.

¹⁹ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 107.

The freed slave was now alone – since his son had been freed two years earlier and had returned to Algiers – and decided to go in search of his cousin, who was a slave of the Count of Monterrey in Madrid. When he reached Madrid, he was told at the count's house that his cousin had already returned to Barbary. Abdala then decided to set out for Valencia, perhaps to settle there permanently or maybe to seek a way to return to Algiers. He was robbed at the village of Molina, whose parish priest later gave him a "*camisa vella, a saragueles y una armilla de drap pardo, molt vells que son lo que porta damunt*"²⁰ (an old shirt, a saragüell,²¹ and a brown stuff jacket, which is all he wears) and finally managed to get to Valencia, where he was first imprisoned and later given in charity to the convent of the Barefoot Trinitarians.²²

Abdala's story represents the parable of a subject who led his life with alternating fortunes and with different identities. First a slave, then a free man and a vagabond, saved by the charity of the parish priest of Molina – or so he argued, since we cannot exclude the possibility that it was Abdala himself who sold the precious clothes given to him by Father Martín Vito to reach Valencia in rags as a beggar and in search of charity, and finally arrived at a safe harbour represented by a convent. So, it is through the interplay of different measures of reality or of unreality – what Jacques Revel has called "scale shifts" (*jeux d'échelles*) – that those different dimensions of the past become visible.²³

III. Mutilations and Physical Marks

The records kept at the ARV often contain detailed physical descriptions of the slaves: wounds, marks on the face – such as the letter "S" on one cheek and the letter "I" on the other – and tattoos represent a set of elements that allowed the identification of the slaves. The fact that they were transcribed in such a systematic way was due to two kinds of reasons: the first is that a slave's health condition had an effect on his selling price; the second is that the authorities would have had data through which a runaway slave might be identified. Furthermore, these descriptions become particularly complete starting from the early years of the seventeenth century, an aspect which perhaps indicates a greater need for control by the *Baile*.²⁴ In 1609, for example, the slave Sebastia, fifteen years old, black, was presented in front of the *Baile*: he presented a "*rosa gran en la galta dreita feta ab foch*" (a large rose branded on the right cheek).²⁵ Sometimes the reference to flowers indicated a possible disease. In 1610, Amet, a twenty-three-year-old mixed-race man from Algiers, was described as follows: "*la cara plena de roses a modo de persona que esta mala del fetge*".²⁶ These "roses" were clearly skin rashes, which according to the thinking of the time were due to liver problems. However, despite his health problems, he was sold for sixty Valencian pounds and the *Baile* took the *quinto real* of four pounds.

²⁰ ARV, *Real Cancilleria*, Real 629, Venta de esclavos (1666–1686), s. 132r.

²¹ The saragüell was a typical pair of Valencian trousers, wide and short. In this regard, see Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 122.

²² ARV, *Real Cancilleria*, Real 629, Venta de esclavos (1666–1686), s. 132r.

²³ Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 137. See also Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

²⁴ In this regard, see the registers ARV, *Bailia General*, Book 210, 1609–1666; ARV, *Bailia General*, *Real Cancilleria*, Real 629, *Venta de Esclavos*, 1666–1686.

²⁵ ARV, *Bailia General*, Book 210, s. 4r.

²⁶ ARV, *Bailia General*, Book 210, s. 48r.

We can also affirm that the individual human body was embedded in a particular society. Mutilations and physical markings were regarded as signs of infamy, or lack of rights, as in the case of slaves.²⁷ The face was the most visible part of the body where the marks were immediately noticeable. In most cases, slaves were branded on the face with a hot iron, in the same way as animals; often the brand consisted of an “S” on one cheek and a nail (in Spanish; *clavo*) on the other (resulting in the word *es-clavo*, slave). Also, since a slave’s monetary value was quite high, the owners sometimes added other distinguishing marks so that everyone would know to who the slave belonged. These marks could be the name of the master printed on the forehead or on a cheek, or crosses, stars etc.²⁸ Mutilations and other physical markings also represented the tensions and obsessions of a society at a precise historical moment. The integrity of the original body was thus subject to a bodily dependence of the individual in relation to the society in which he lived. The body, in this sense, was subject to the intervention of the law that could correct or mark it.²⁹ The mutilation of the hand or tongue appeared as the sanction of criminal acts. Human beings represented both a social model and a political model. The world of slavery had its own hierarchies and values: sobriety, self-denial, physical and moral resistance to work, etc. In addition, an asymmetrical trust between the owner and his slave could mean that the latter must be completely faithful to his owner, obey him without hesitation or disappointment.³⁰

It is necessary to distinguish three types of markings: the scarification practiced in sub-Saharan Africa (consisting of geometric designs generally made up of stripes and dots), called by the documentation *sajaduras* or *sacaduras* which were a useful means of ethnic distinction for merchants; there were also Berber tattoos (only women are marked, and their forehead, chin or brow are usually tattooed, the most frequent drawings being crosses, stars and floral patterns) and the brandings typical of the Iberian Peninsula.³¹

As Bernard Vincent points out, hostages, domestic and agricultural slaves were some of the main figures in the world of Iberian servitude. The fact that a slave might be a *bozal* or a *ladino*, live in Malaga, not far from the Maghreb, or in Valladolid, in the centre of the peninsula, be a slave for weeks or twenty years, depend on a benevolent master or an implacable master, be a sole slave or share his condition with companions in misfortune, be married or not, be in good health or ill and many other criteria meant that the life of each slave was unique.³² Relations between master and slave were fundamentally asymmetrical, and no legal obligation forced the master to have dealings with his subordinate, but the advantage of an agreement between them meant obtaining explicit consent from the dominated, which in practice caused the slave to go from the status of a “thing” to the status of an actor subject to

²⁷ Augustin Redondo, “Mutilations et marques corporelles d’infamie dans la Castille du XVI^e siècle,” in *Le corps dans la société espagnole des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, ed. Augustin Redondo (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990): 185–99, 186.

²⁸ Redondo, Mutilations et marques corporelles, 194–95.

²⁹ Redondo, Mutilations et marques corporelles, 198.

³⁰ François Billacois, “Figures de l’esclavage, métaphores de la condition humaine?,” in *Figures de l’esclave au Moyen-Age et dans le monde moderne*, ed. Henri Bresc (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996): 263–69, 268.

³¹ Arturo Morgado García, *Una metrópoli esclavista. El Cádiz de la modernidad* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2013), 212–13.

³² Bernard Vincent, “L’esclavage dans la Péninsule ibérique à l’époque moderne,” in *Les traites et les esclavages. Perspectives historiques et contemporaine*, ed. Myriam Cottias, Élisabeth Cunin and Antonio De Almeida Mendes (Paris: Karthala, 2010): 67–75, 73–74.

restrictions and who wanted to pursue a goal. The achievement of this objective was what compromised the will of the slave, which allowed the master to ensure his fidelity and optimize the quality of the latter's service. When the master behaved in this way, his ability to impose his conditions was obviously superior to that of the slave, but the latter could mobilize his social relations and the economic capacities available in his society of origin to obtain his liberation quickly or, when not he was linked to his family of origin, he was able to involve his personal skills and knowledge in negotiation. These agreements borrowed the language of family ties, but also that of honour, and it is through it that the actors (dominant or dominated) could develop a discourse of equity whose values were common (loyalty, kindness, service, altruism, protection, affection).³³

In the case of Valencia, we have several testimonies of slaves who were branded or tattooed. In 1609, for example, fifteen-year-old black Sebastia was brought there with "*una rosa gran en la galta dreta feta ab foch*".³⁴ Sebastia, an African, was branded on the right cheek with a large rose. The flower probably was an African tradition. In 1622, the thirty-seven-year-old slave Maria, of Turkish origin, was sold in the kingdom for 70 Valencian pounds and presented "*senyals en la ma squerra y bras pintadas unes pintures con unes flors de bona estatura*".³⁵ His arms were "painted" with flowers, and here we can hypothesize that these paintings or tattoos originated in Anatolia, in part because during the Early Modern Age the lotus flower often represented the Ottoman Empire. In 1639 Bas, an eight-year-old Arab boy, was sold for sixty Valencian pounds; he had a "*rosa de foch en lo bras dret*".³⁶ In 1647, Francis Joseph, a ten- or eleven-year-old Arab boy, was sold for sixty Valencian pounds and presented a "*senyal a modo de flor de lis a modo de ram en lo bras dret*".³⁷ In this case, the reference to the lotus flower, which Francis Joseph had on his right arm, is explicit and we can once again underline that it was a mark of the Middle East and not of the Iberian Peninsula.

In 1661 the thirteen-year-old Moorish slave Xerefa was introduced to Valencia, who was "*señalada en lo front ab unes flors de llis y ab una estella enrossada en cada pols*".³⁸ Xerefa had a lotus flower marking on her forehead, while on each wrist she had a red star. These tattoos are probably of Berber origin because, as Arturo Morgado García states,³⁹ Berber women often had their foreheads tattooed and the same source in the archive points out that Xerefa was *mora*. In 1664 the fourteen-year-old slave Satua arrived in Valencia who, although the source does not expressly tell us where she came from, had "*uns señalets de foch en lo front y en lo nas a la part dreta y una crehueta en la mateixa galta a la usansa turquesca*".⁴⁰ Satua, in addition to the fire marks on her forehead, also had a small cross on her right cheek "in the Turkish custom". We get the reference of the slave's origin directly from its brands: in this case the source tells us that the symbol of a small cross was a Turkish custom.

³³ Natividad Planas, "Musulmans invisibles? Enquête dans des territoires insulaires du Roi d'Espagne (XVIe–XVIIe siècle)," in *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe. Vol. I: Une intégration invisible*, ed. Jocelyne Dakhliya and Bernard Vincent (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2011): 557–92, 570.

³⁴ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 4r.

³⁵ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 109r.

³⁶ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 323v.

³⁷ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 363v.

³⁸ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, f. 403v.

³⁹ Morgado García, *Una metrópoli esclavista*, 212–13.

⁴⁰ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 444v–446r.

These elements help us to read the sources. For example, the nineteen-year-old slave Joan Francisco Vallverde arrived in Valencia in 1658 and was sold for fifty Valencian pounds. We do not know, explicitly, where he came from, but we do know that he was “*moreno claro coes en la galta dretha una es y en la esquerra un clau cabell ordinar i lis morros grosos en la esquerra de la ma dretha una creu, y altrar en lo bracho del mateix bras*”.⁴¹ We therefore know that he had a letter “S” on his right cheek and a nail on his left cheek, symbols that were marked on his skin upon his arrival in the Iberian Peninsula. But we also know that he had a cross on his right hand and another cross on the same arm. From this we can deduce that he was Turkish. While we do not know if he came from Anatolia or from the Barbary states, his origins are likely to be in one of these areas. Sometimes brands or tattoos tell us who the slave belonged to. This is the case of twenty-six-year-old Juan Medellin, from Algiers, who was taken to Valencia in 1585, “*ab unes lletres en la cara que dicen Medellin*”.⁴² So on his face he had letters that spelled “Medellin”, evidently the surname of his master or his ex-master. The mark obviously belonged to the Iberian Peninsula.

Sometimes the brands explicitly speak of the slave’s origin. This is the case with Anthoni, a man of eighteen to twenty years old, who was sold for twenty-five Valencian pounds in 1571 and “*senyalat ab lletres en la cara en les quals se llig Albacete*”.⁴³ Anthoni evidently came from Albacete, a city in the Castilla-La Mancha region and had been marked there. In 1578, Julian, a twenty-two-year-old white man from the rebellion of Granada (1568–1571), was taken to Valencia, “*era senyalat y marcat en les dos galtes ab un clau en cascuna galta y en la front de una magrana*”.⁴⁴ In addition to two nails tattooed or branded on both cheeks, he also had a pomegranate on his forehead, perhaps indicating the opulence of his former master (starting from ancient times, the pomegranate has been the symbol of abundance). In 1561 Joan de Montesinos, an eighteen-year-old from Murcia, was brought to Valencia, “*senyalat en la cara de unes lletres que dizen de Montesinos*”.⁴⁵ Once again, we know the name of the person to whom the slave belonged, that is to a certain Montesinos, who evidently had the slave Joan marked with his name so that, in case of escape, both the slave and the name of his master was immediately recognizable. This criterion of ownership is confirmed by the statement made by the thirty-year-old slave Juan Atienza, from the city of Granada, with white skin, who was captured in Benicarló on 2 August 1635 because he had marks of slavery. Atienza confessed to being a *crisiano viejo* baptized in the church of Santa Scolastica in Granada. He claims that his father was Juan Cabrera and his mother María de Atianza and both lived in Baena as vassals of the Duke of Cossa. When asked about his markings and who had given them to him, he replied:

Fonch interrogat que diga qui le senyalat en la cara ab les tres senyals de foch que te en ella.

E dix que la hun senyal loy feu Pedro Villalobos, mercader de seda, que viu junt a Santiago de les Monges, de la ciutat de Granada, del qual, ell responent, es esclau, y los altres dos

⁴¹ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 380r.

⁴² ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 208, s. 188r.

⁴³ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 59r.

⁴⁴ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 404r.

⁴⁵ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 203, s. LXXXIIr.

los y feren quant lo portaren a vendre a Granada perque el amo, nol volgue comprar, que primer no estigues senyalat.⁴⁶

The master of Atienza marked him three times, on two different occasions: the first time with two marks, when the master bought him and required him to be marked because he was not sure that Juan was a slave, since he had no marks. The second time Juan was given an unspecified mark. He was already the property of the master of Atienza, who probably had his own mark put on Juan, so that he would be recognized case he escaped.

Finally, a similar case is that of Francisco, a thirty-year-old black man from Portuguese India, brought to Valencia in 1561, “*ab unes lettres en la cara que disen Gabriel Ramos*”.⁴⁷ Once again, as in the case of Joan de Montesinos, the name of the master had been branded or tattooed onto the face of the slave. In this case there is another element of undoubted interest, i.e. the fact that Francisco came from the distant Portuguese Indies. It shows the global dimension of slavery and human trafficking in the heart of the Mediterranean.

IV. Global Connections

We can therefore speak of slavery as a global economic and social institution. Effectively, if we look at the latest developments on this historiographical trend, and in particular at the works of Alessandro Stanziani, it is well worth trying to bring the Mediterranean into the idea of *entrelacements du monde* and the global system of forced labour.⁴⁸ There is a broad historiographical tradition on the global history of slavery, which has seen further expansion in recent years.⁴⁹ Precisely for this reason it is worth asking ourselves how a Mediterranean

⁴⁶ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 210, s. 298. “He was questioned about who marked him on his face with the three brands he has. He said that one brand was made by Pedro Villalobos, a silk merchant, who came with Santiago de les Monges, in the city of Granada, of whom he said he was a slave. He said the other two fire marks were branded when he was brought to Granada to be sold, because a master would not want to buy him if he was not previously branded.”

⁴⁷ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 203, s. CXVIIIr.

⁴⁸ Alessandro Stanziani, *Les entrelacements du monde. Histoire globale, pensée globale* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018); Paulin Ismard, “Écrire l’histoire de l’esclavage. Entre approche globale et perspective comparatise,” *Annales HSS* 72-4 (2017): 9–43.

⁴⁹ In this regard, see Gwin Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani, eds., *Debt and Slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013); Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, eds., *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006); Toyin Falola, *The African Diaspora: Slavery, Modernity and Globalization* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013); Peter Kolchin, “L’approche comparée de l’étude de l’esclavage. Problèmes et perspectives,” in *Esclavage et dépendances serviles. Histoire comparée*, eds. Myriam Cottias, Alessandro Stella and Bernard Vincent (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006): 283–301; Patricio Hidalgo Nuchera, *La implantación de la encomienda en Filipinas: de la conquista a la primera década del siglo XVII* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 1990); Patricio Hidalgo Nuchera, *Los autos acordados de la Real Audiencia de las Islas Filipinas de 1598 y 1599* (Madrid: UAM Ediciones, 2012); John V. Lombardi, “Comparative Slave Systems in the Americas: A Critical Review,” in *New Approaches to Latin American History*, eds. Richard Graham and Peter H. Smith (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012): 156–74; Damian Alan Pargas, “Slavery as a Global and Globalizing Phenomenon: An Editorial Note,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 1 (2016): 1–4; Alessandro Stanziani, ed., *Labour, Coercion and Economic Growth in Asia, XVIIth–XXth Centuries*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013); Alessandro Stanziani, *Sailors, Slaves and Immigrants: Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014); Alain Testart, *L’institution de l’esclavage: une approche mondiale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018); Cecile Vidal, “Pour une histoire globale du monde atlantique ou des histoires connectées dans et au-delà du monde atlantique?,” *Annales HSS* 67-2 (2012): 391–413; Jean-Paul Zúñiga,

port like Valencia, belonging to the Spanish monarchy, was part of this system of connections that had a truly global dimension. The case of Francisco, a slave from the Portuguese Indies, is paradigmatic in this sense, but it is not the only one we are aware of.

What can be observed in the Valencian case is that most of these individuals came from the coasts of North Africa and especially from the Oran area and, to a lesser extent, from Algiers. Obviously, another important share of slaves came from the Granada area, especially in the period of the war of the Alpujarras (1568–1571). A large number of slaves came directly from Portuguese markets, which mainly supplied Castile and, to a lesser extent, the kingdom of Valencia. The place of origin of the slaves coming from Portuguese slave markets is often mentioned, namely the Portuguese Indies, Santo Thomé, Cape Verde and Angola. To these we must add the area of Guinea, since traders from there chose the Valencian ports for their ships.⁵⁰

The trade in human beings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not a monopoly of a particular group of people. Anyone, trader or not, could invest a portion of their money by buying a batch of slaves. Some people entered this trade on an occasional basis, perhaps taking advantage of favourable conditions that the market dictated. This is the case, for example, of the numerous slaves who were taken to Valencia during the war of the Alpujarras. In those years individuals of a great variety of professions presented to the *Baile* small groups of slaves whom they had previously purchased from the soldiers who had received them as a reward for having suppressed the Granada rebellion. In 1569, Martín de Ayora, a carter from Yecla, presented six slaves for sale and, in the same year, Joan Delgado, a farmer from Ayora, presented five.⁵¹

There were of course not only occasional traders, but also and above all those who traded large quantities of slaves and were specialized in this type of business. Almost all of them were not Valencians; several were French. This is the case of Juan Bolega, originates from Marseille, who on March 12, 1569, presented sixty black slaves to the *Baile* who he brought aboard his ship, the *Santa Ana*, from Sierra Leone.⁵² Another Frenchman, Peyron Rubau, in 1571 transported a cargo of 238 black captives from Guinea.⁵³ The Provençal merchants Honorat Bermont and Honorat Manzant through the French consul, Glaudo Martí, in 1574 presented a group of 237 slaves, transported once again from Guinea.⁵⁴ From the sale of these large groups of slaves they tried to obtain maximum profit. The conditions under which the slaves were transported were very poor, precisely with the aim of reducing costs. This can be deduced from the 238 slaves transported from Guinea by the French merchant Peyron Rubau in 1571. He confessed that several died along the way, and among those who arrived safely

Espagnols d'outre-mer: émigration, métissage et reproduction sociale à Santiago du Chili au XVII siècle (Paris: Éditions EHESS, 2002).

⁵⁰ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 134.

⁵¹ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 173. In this regard, see ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 205, s. 50; ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 205, s. 54v.

⁵² ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 205, s. 27.

⁵³ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 93.

⁵⁴ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 323.

on the Valencian coast, thirty were seriously ill. For this reason he asked the *Baile* to land them on the beach, just to be able to find them a shelter as soon as possible.⁵⁵

The fact that slaves came to Valencia from all parts of the world is also shown by a physical characteristic always reported by the sources, namely the skin colour of the enslaved. Most of them are reported to have been the colour of cooked quince – *codony cuit* – or bronze black – *negre attesat* –, but there are also cases of white slaves or those of other skin colours. This testifies precisely to the different origins of these subjects and the crossings between the different origins provoked hybridizations that could confuse the scribes of the *Bayle* themselves. Thus, there are cases of *blanco-membrillo* (white – cooked quince), *membrillo-moreno* (cooked quince – Moor), *membrillo-claro* (cooked quince – clear), *moreno-claro* (Moor – clear), “*llor*”-*mulato* (dull – mixed-race), *blanca-“llora”* (white – dull) slaves.⁵⁶

Graullera Sanz was able to collect the data of 2999 Valencian slaves between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and divide them by the colour of their skin, obtaining the following results:

Table 1. Skin colour of 2999 Valencian slaves

Skin colour	Number of slaves
Black	1401
White	363
Quince	365
Mixed-race	22
Moor	53
Clear	1
Dull	3
Dark	2
Without reference	789
Total	2999

Source: V Vicente Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Valencia: CSIC, 1978), 126.

As we can see the black slaves were the majority and this indicates the African and above all sub-Saharan origin of the slaves. In fact, in most cases, the slaves from the Maghreb were white or with quince-coloured skin.

V. The Cost of Slaves and the Price of Freedom

These men and women were undoubtedly assigned very different tasks in Valencia than those aboard the galley ships, where age was crucial. For example, age was not always such an all-important factor, just as physical strength was not always essential. Religion does not seem to be a leading factor either. Slaves might be either Protestants, Muslims or Muslims recently converted to Christianity, and this does not seem to have affected their end price. Sex played a certain role insofar as men were generally priced some *librae* more than women of the same

⁵⁵ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 93.

⁵⁶ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 93.

age, even if this was not always the case and, indeed, on some occasions the situation was reversed. Geographical origin seems to have a weight of some importance: an origin in Guinea, Cape Verde, Angola, Alpujarras etc. seems to have made a difference in some cases to the prices asked for enslaved men. Maghrebi slaves usually fetched a higher price than those from sub-Saharan Africa. There are some examples that are off scale: in 1580 Joana, a female Christian slave probably from the Maghreb and aged between thirty-three and thirty-four, was valued at one hundred Valencian librae, almost triple the usual value assigned other enslaved women of her age.⁵⁷ What was the reason why her value was so high? Finding an answer to this question is neither straightforward nor immediate. It can be assumed that she had learnt a series of skills, such as for example being a translator, so her services were particularly requested and appreciated. Exactly the opposite applies to girls under the age of ten, who had no qualities that could be put to good use, giving them a low market value. A good proportion of Valencia's slaves was destined for domestic service.

The purchase and maintenance of a slave was an investment that needed to generate returns and, in order to achieve this, slaves were employed where they were needed, not just inside the home: work in the fields, supervision of household animals and the owner's business activity, etc. This is the reason for the use of the expression *trabajo mixto* (mixed labour).⁵⁸ Therefore, the domestic slave's main characteristic was his or her ability to be employed in various situations and, in the case of women, their sexual services too, all the more so given that masters usually opposed any desire for marriage among slaves in order not to lose their control over them.⁵⁹ Approximately 4000 slaves were presented to the *Baile* between 1550 and 1686,⁶⁰ which only represented a part of those who were actually taken into the kingdom. A sizeable share from the black market also needs to be added, in other words those not presented so the merchant did not have to pay the *quinto* to the *Baile*.

We can try to establish a relationship between the age of slaves and their price. Let us look at the period 1571–1578 for example:

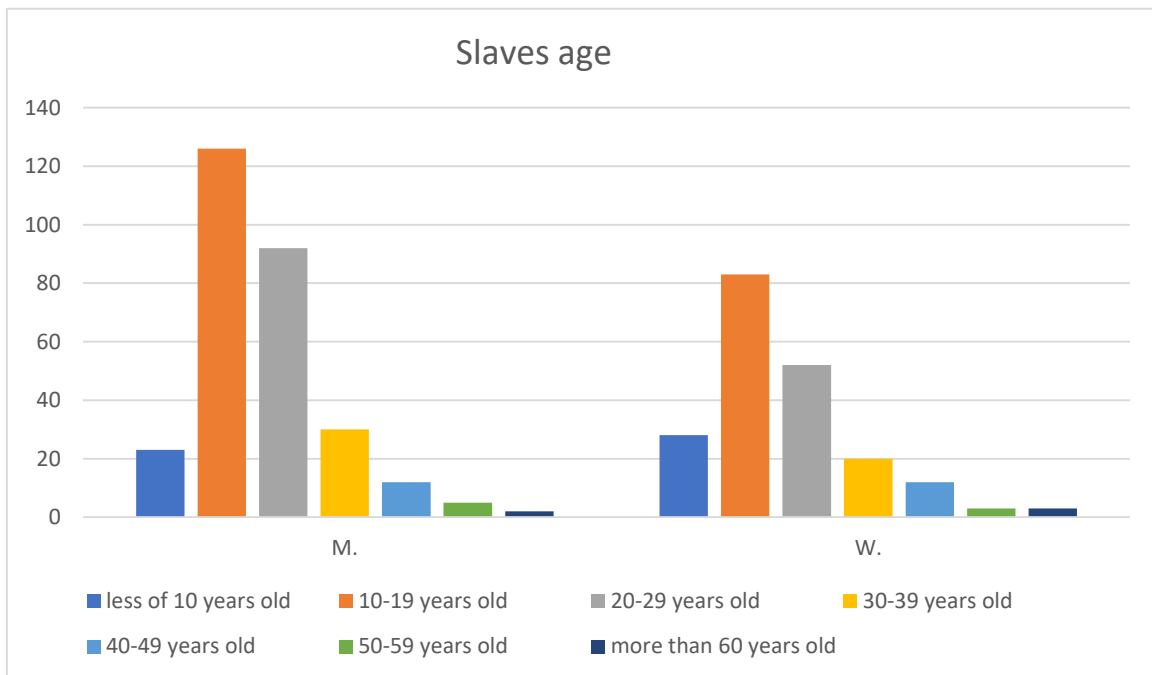
⁵⁷ ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 208, s. 46r.

⁵⁸ Aurelia Martin-Casares and Bernard Vincent, "Esclavage et domesticité dans l'Espagne moderne," in *Esclavage et dépendances serviles*, eds. Myriam Cottias, Alessandro Stella, and Bernard Vincent (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006): 127–37, 132.

⁵⁹ Martin-Casares and Vincent, *Esclavage et domesticité*, 132.

⁶⁰ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 126–27.

Table 2. Age of the slaves introduced in Valencia in the period 1571–1578.



Source: ARV, Bailía, Book 207.

In this first graph, the ages of 478 slaves are extrapolated from the documents of the ARV, divided between men and women. As we can see, in both cases, most of them were very young, aged between ten and nineteen:

Table 3. Average price of slaves introduced in Valencia in the period 1571–1578.



Source: ARV, Bailía, Book 207.

The highest price was paid for male slaves aged between thirty and thirty-nine, with an average value just over twenty-nine Valencian pounds. For female slaves, on the other hand, the highest average value is for the age range between twenty and twenty-nine, with almost twenty-seven Valencian pounds. In this case, a certain congruence between the age of these enslaved persons and their price is visible: For men there was evidently physical strength and also a certain degree of experience, while the fact that the value for women was higher among twenty and twenty-nine years makes it likely that the reproductive factor had a certain weight on the determination of their final price. It should also be emphasized that although it was possible to reconstruct the relationship between price and age of 478 slaves, in this time span 978 slaves were taken to Valencia, many of whom, especially in the early years, came from the Granada rebellion. Such a large number of servile workers makes us think of a particularly active slave market in those years, which in turn makes it likely that Valencia had need of them. This would also explain the high average price paid for their purchase and the fact that the prices paid for black slaves was not very much lower than for those coming from the Maghreb or from the Spanish peninsula itself.

We can try to make a comparison with the immediately preceding period:

Table 4. Age of the slaves introduced in Valencia in the period 1569–1570



Source: ARV, Bailía General, Book 205.

We have a sample of 501 slaves for just two years. Therefore, once again, it is necessary to underline the large need for manpower in Valencia, but also the large numbers actually available on the market.

We can once again look for a relationship between the age and price of slaves:

Table 5. Average price of slaves introduced in Valencia in the period 1569–1570



Source: ARV, Bailía General, Book 205.

In this case, the graph is more difficult to read. The highest prices paid, as far as men are concerned, is for those aged between fifty and fifty-nine. In reality, one single slave cost thirty-five Valencian pounds, and so could simply be an exception. If we eliminate this data, the sample between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine is the one that had the greatest value on the market. This is in line with the data of the period 1571–1578. As for women, the age between thirty and thirty-nine is the one assigned the highest value. In this case, the reproductive aspect is negligible, probably to the advantage of other characteristics of greater importance, such as that of experience in different types of jobs. If we look at the origins of both men and women, once again many come from the Granada area.

As we have already mentioned, the *Baile* collected the *quinto real*. To do this, he needed to know the value put on the slave, which the buyer had to communicate to him. If the *Baile* did not agree with the price, he could ask for the slave to be re-evaluated. So, it should be emphasized that if the law of supply and demand had a certain weight in determining the price of slaves, it is also true that other variables intervened, such as the estimate made by the *Baile*. This estimate was made by observing the enslaved person, his or her age, physical characteristics, sex, and origin. If in the decade 1570–1580 the average value was twenty-five to thirty pounds, in the following periods it rises to an average of sixty pounds at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁶¹ As can be seen from the graphs, women’s monetary value was slightly lower than that of men, an aspect which underlines that sex was also an important variable in determining the price of the slave. Health problems were also reflected in the estimate, as in the case of Amet, of twenty-four to twenty-five years, who in 1573 should have

⁶¹ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 169.

been estimated at between twenty-five and thirty pounds, but who is instead estimated at fifteen pounds because *manco de la dita ma esquerre* (has no fingers in his left hand).⁶²

There were occasions when a slave was able to obtain the much-desired freedom. Usually this was done in a graceful way by the hand of the master, who, to thank him for all the years spent in his service, freed him. This act had to be witnessed in writing, because in this way the freedman could prove his condition, and prove that he was not a fugitive. The Valencian *Fueros* (the most important *corpus* of Valencian laws) established the following rule: “*Aquells qui donaran libertat als seus servus, o als seus catius: donen la ab la carta, o ab testimonis. E si la donaren ab testament aquella franquea haia valor*”.⁶³ The charter of freedom therefore had a great value, because it was the only document that certified the condition of freedom, preventing freed slaves from ending up in prison. Given the importance of this document, it is likely that there was a black market in which these certificates circulated. There are several testimonies that highlight this aspect, as in the case of Simón Castellano, a twenty-year-old black slave, who was captured in the Valencian town of Albalat in 1579. During the interrogation, he confessed to being a fugitive slave of Hierónimo Castellano, from Carmona, and that he believed he could get away with it due to the false charter of freedom in his possession.⁶⁴

There was also the possibility of slaves begging in order to collect the money for their ransom. Begging was well regulated in the *longue durée*; as early as 1337 the sovereign Pedro II stated that Moors who did not belong to the kingdom were forbidden to ask for alms.⁶⁵ Indeed, if they transgressed this rule, they would be captured as prisoners of the king. The same fate befell those slaves who belonged to the kingdom.⁶⁶ They had permission to “*acaptar*” (beg), but only if they had obtained a license from the *Baile General*.⁶⁷ The Valencian *Fueros* received a provision from Juan I in 1389, which stated that the slaves Moors who had been redeemed by their master and who were natives of the Kingdom were not allowed to ask for alms: the penalty was to fall back into captivity.⁶⁸ For the fulfilment of this rule, an incentive was offered to the complainant: if he found a Moor not authorized to beg and captured him, he was allowed to sell the slave and keep one third of the profit, while the other two thirds went to the sovereign. In this way, any Valencian could gain from the capture of a slave or an ex-slave who did not comply with the rules of the *Fueros*.⁶⁹

It can therefore be seen that not only the activity of “*acaptar*” was very well regulated, but also that through a series of rules it was intended to avoid vagrancy around the kingdom, especially for those slaves who had the possibility of freeing themselves or who had already been freed by their masters. Begging in order to obtain one’s freedom was considered a legitimate activity, as long as it was under the control of the *Bailía* and complied with

⁶² ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 207, s. 366. In this regard, see Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 170.

⁶³ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 157.

⁶⁴ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 158. In this regard, see ARV, *Bailía General*, Book 209, s. 131.

⁶⁵ ARV, *Real 659, Libre negre*, s. 111.

⁶⁶ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 54.

⁶⁷ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 54.

⁶⁸ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 55.

⁶⁹ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 55.

legislation on the subject. This means that not everyone had the authorization from the *Baile* to move around the kingdom to collect the alms necessary to pay their own ransom.

Another possibility to obtain freedom was baptism for those slaves whose master was a Jew. If the slave got baptized, with or against the will of his master, he freed himself from his condition, provided he also paid six *maravedís* to his former master. If he did not have that amount of money available, he could move on to serve a Christian master, for the time necessary – and no more than two months – to collect that sum. If after two months he failed to collect the six *maravedís*, it was the *Bailía* who took charge of the slave, cancelling the debt with his former Jewish master and keeping the slave in its service until he had the six *maravedís*. Only then he could finally recover the much-desired freedom.⁷⁰

VI. Conclusions

The Valencian case shows us how slavery in the Early Modern Period was a complex phenomenon and that it really had a global dimension. Valencia, as a port of call for slave ships, began to experience some success thanks to the relative decline of Barcelona. It became the main port of that part of the Iberian Peninsula. This first geopolitical datum helps us to understand the importance of Valencia in the slave trade. Slaves, as we have seen, did not come only from Ottoman Europe and the Maghreb, but also from sub-Saharan Africa and, subsequently, from Goa and from Spanish America. The presence of such a number of different ethnic groups lead Valencia to experience the presence of multiple ethnic groups within its walls. We can say that the city represented a hub of some importance in the global slave trade and certainly a hub of the first magnitude on the Mediterranean. Another level of analysis is connected to the *Baile* who had the task of hearing the confessions of the slaves and deciding their value, on the basis of which the merchants had to pay the *quinto real*. There is therefore a very important aspect of controlling the entrances of these subjects, both to collect the tax, both to be able to recognize fugitive slaves, and to avoid wandering problems.

Social control represented a very central point in the presence of slaves in Valencia, as the detailed documents preserved at the ARV testify. The protocol of the presentation of captives in front of the *Baile*, who listened to their confessions, ascertained whether the captive had been taken in “just war”, and decided their monetary value based on a number of variables, such as age, sex, physical condition, origin, previous experience in servile work. This was useful not only to put an economic value on the newly enslaved, but also recorded their physical appearance, in order to control not only the slave trade, but also and above all to control the slaves themselves and any phenomena of deviance such as petty criminal activities, escape attempts, and vagrancy. Therefore, speaking of “embodied dependencies”, we must think not only about the asymmetrical relationships between the slave and his master, but also of the way in which these “human commodities” were embedded within the society and were heavily dependent on the social control.

Although the tattoos, the brands (such as, for example, the letters “S” and “I” on the cheeks) or scars, might lead one to think at first glance of persons excluded from society, the reality is that they were definitely “stuck people” or almost blocked within the society – without the

⁷⁰ Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 160.

possibility to change their social status – although they enjoyed very few rights. They were, in fact, immobilized in the society and by the society. As we have seen, the only solution they had to get out of this situation was either to flee, running the risk of being captured and imprisoned, or to hope for the benevolence of their masters who could decide to free them or grant them the possibility of begging to pay for their freedom. Also in this case, it should be emphasized, once again the figure of the *Baile* is central, because it was he and he alone, who authorized the slaves to beg. This aspect once again underlines the highly asymmetrical relationships of dependence that the slaves had not only with their master but also with the highest authority of the kingdom, the *Baile*. Or, as mentioned, their master could decide to grant them the charter of liberty after a certain number of years of service or by means of specific testamentary provisions that decreed the slave's freedom when the master was dead. In any case, these are forms of asymmetrical dependence that we could define as plural and *multiscale*.

If the political aspect with its actors – mainly the *Baile* – is a level of analysis of considerable interest, another aspect to underline is that relating to those who were involved in the slave trade and their purchases. As we have observed, there were always individuals such as small artisans, merchants or lesser nobles, who bought some slaves from time to time, either because they actually needed them or because they hoped to resell them later at a higher price, thus speculating in the city market. We have had the opportunity to observe that during the years of the war of the Alpujarras, 1568–1571, a considerable quantity of *moriscos* from Granada were taken to the city, often bought by persons who did not have the slave trade as their main occupation. However, there are cases in which we are faced with major traders who were used to managing a large market. These include a number of French merchants who, as we have seen, managed to land hundreds of slaves from Guinea in Valencia. These were real slave ships; this was human trafficking on a large scale. This aspect highlights how important the economic dimension was in human trafficking and how some individuals were able to earn large sums of money by exploiting this trade. Not only that. This trade took place on a global scale: human beings from another continent, from thousands of kilometres away, from a different cultural area demonstrate that this phenomenon had such a dimension it must be considered as global. And the port of Valencia was one of the main ports of call for this trade in the Mediterranean, perhaps sometimes even more so than Barcelona in this period. Slaves often came to Valencia through other intermediaries, who were not only the French, but also and above all the Portuguese. And the Portuguese traded slaves from their American and Indian domains on the Iberian Peninsula. Here, then, we can find in Valencia the echo and the traces of that global trade we have talked about, but also of forms of asymmetrical dependencies that followed the slaves throughout their entire existence.

It is worth underlining, once again, how these relations were of a *multiscale* type: with the merchant who sold them; with their new master; with political authority; with the society they lived in. We must certainly not forget that contrary to what Orlando Patterson claims, slaves were anything but “socially dead”.⁷¹ Their agency, albeit limited, was present and, in the Valencian case, for example, it could be made explicit in their ability to collect alms to pay the price of their freedom. Not only that. It is certain that not all master-slave relationships were violent. A slave's positive attitude in performing his various tasks could not only be reflected

⁷¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*.

in a good relationship with his master, but also in the hope of obtaining freedom thanks to services rendered. To conclude, slavery in Valencia in the Early Modern Age is the mirror of a complex phenomenon, with global dimensions, with asymmetrical and *multiscale* dynamics, in which enslaved individuals had a very little possibility of achieving their much-desired freedom. Their marks and scars reflected the slave condition and of their own biography, which often began on another continent and thousands of miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Political and social control, the need for cheap labour, self-representation of one's power, were all elements that made slavery possible and necessary in a maritime and continental space in which slaves were embedded, so that both agriculture and domestic labour, and labour on board the royal galleys, could function efficiently and continuously.

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