

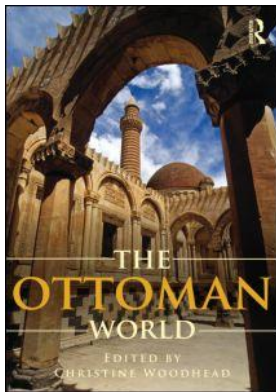
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The Ottoman World

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Masters, Servants and Slaves

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PART IV

ORDINARY PEOPLE



CHAPTER TWENTY

MASTERS, SERVANTS AND SLAVES

Household formation among the urban notables
of early Ottoman Aleppo

Charles L. Wilkins

Students of Ottoman history have long recognized the household as one of the building blocks of Ottoman society and politics. In the last few decades important contributions have been made to the scholarly understanding of the varying structures, operations and functions of elite households. Many historians have been interested in the devolution of power from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, when high state officials and other grandees built large household organizations to undertake responsibilities that once had belonged exclusively to the central government.¹ Underlying these studies is the basic argument that the patrimonial household organizations of the larger political elite provided the necessary administrative agency for perpetuating dynastic state authority just when the political institutions of the central imperial state were faced with serious challenges.²

How households among the common, subject populations shaped, and were shaped by, changing political and social conditions presents a challenging but no less important question. The relationship of the household (who one lives with) to the family (who one is related to) is of central importance. The starting assumption is that the households of the elite service class (the *'askeri*) combined kinship-based family units with servants, slaves and clients, while households of the subject population (*the re'aya*) were family units defined by kinship relations alone. Complicating this picture, however, is the emerging scholarly view that there was considerable internal variation in the make-up of both elite and subject households, as well as the established fact that the boundary between elite and subject populations was constantly contested and shifting.³

Contributing to this view are studies that have drawn on the theories and methods of sociology, anthropology and gender studies to challenge essentialist assumptions of the 'traditional' Middle Eastern family in the early modern and modern periods. Such works trace generational cycles of change in household structure, chart regional and cultural variations, point to the environmental factors affecting family formation, and shed light on the constructed nature of 'family' itself.⁴ The pioneering study of Margaret Meriwether on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Aleppo, a major Ottoman trading and administrative city in the north of geographical Syria, focuses on the family dynamics of a distinct but composite social group, the urban notables, ordinar-

ily termed the *a'yan*. Made up of locally assigned military-administrative cadres, the *ulama* and merchants, the urban notables were active in various configurations in cities throughout the empire and were distinguished mostly by their role as political mediators between the central state authorities and the local subject populations.⁵ While Meriwether's work is primarily one of family history, the fact that the object of her study is the dominant urban class means that her conclusions about family practices relate as much to elite political strategies as they do to the social habits and customs of the general population.⁶ The urban notables thus straddled the boundaries between rulers and ruled and as such engaged in practices reflective of both social segments. Focused on Aleppo in the seventeenth century, the present essay offers a contribution to the study of urban notable households as a demographically significant and influential stratum of Ottoman society. While the urban notables are most closely associated with the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when they asserted unprecedented political influence vis-à-vis the central government, one can also find in early centuries urban notable groups defined by high social status, wealth, and some measure of political influence.

A soldier, civilian official, scholar or merchant – all members of the urban notable elite – might go about building a household in any number of ways, but the three principal strategies were marriage, the establishment of patron–client (*intisab*) ties, and the acquisition of slaves and servants – all of which were overlapping and interrelated.⁷ Marriage was contracted for a variety of purposes: elite men might marry women of similar status to cement alliances between families, or they might marry beneath their status, apparently with the expectation that the wife acquiesce in practices such as polygamy and concubinage.⁸ No less important were *intisab* ties, especially as a multiplier of human resources for the household.⁹ Depending on his social and professional position, an Ottoman soldier or bureaucrat might patronize individuals whom he could place strategically in offices for the advancement of household interests, or enter into a relationship of clientage with a more powerful official and link his fortunes to the same.

This chapter concentrates on the third strategy of household formation, the acquisition and employment of servants and slaves, with some attention given to the overlapping category of patron–client ties.¹⁰ By doing so, it seeks to discern the ways in which elite households organized human resources on a medium to large scale, in efforts to preserve their material assets and project their influence. It considers both free-born Muslims and slaves/freedmen, on the proposition that household heads employed the two groups in similar ways and downplayed the legal and social distinctions between them. Indeed, the institution of Islamic slavery, in both legal theory and social practice, promoted the integration and mobility of slaves in Muslim society. Identifying an array of pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions, one recent attempt to place Islamic slavery in a comparative framework argues that the household was not only the primary but also the *necessary* agent of the socialization of slaves in Muslim societies.¹¹

Forming the main sources for this study are the local law court records (*sijillat al-mahakim al-shar'iyya*), which were maintained by Ottoman judges (*qadis*) in all cities and towns across the empire; the law court records of Aleppo are presently preserved in the National Archives of Syria.¹² The law court records of Aleppo were the recourse primarily of propertied persons, which means that court records reflect their interests and less those of the lower classes.¹³ These records should also be seen as embedded

in local society and therefore a site of conflict and accommodation between Islamic law, imperial decree and local custom, mediated by local political and social interests; in fact, it is more accurate to call these law courts ‘Ottoman’, in accordance with the nature of the multi-ethnic Ottoman state, than ‘Islamic’.¹⁴ Unless otherwise stated, the court records used in this analysis date from the period 1640 to 1700.

HOUSEHOLDS AND SERVANTS

Free-born persons working as servants were found in large numbers in both commercial establishments and households. In craft and trade guilds (*asnaf*),¹⁵ the key element in the relationship between master and apprentice was a constrained reciprocity founded on the Islamic legal concept of labour rental (*isti’jar*): the apprentice provided reliable labour, and in return the master provided compensation in the form of cash, goods, room and board, training, or a combination of these.¹⁶ The reciprocity was constrained because, although the master (*ustad*, *mu’allim*) directly hired his apprentices (sing. *ajir*, *sani*), the guild created lateral and other professional ties that tempered this hierarchical relationship. For example, in 1660 the silver embroiderers’ guild (*sirmakashiyya*) chose one of their members to train all the apprentices in the craft, in effect limiting the dependence of the apprentice on his original master.¹⁷ Sometimes the *qadi* also intervened to protect what he saw as the rights of the apprentice. In 1645 the court ordered a reluctant barber (*hallaq*) to train his apprentice, since, according to the *qadi*, the barber had originally hired him with the acknowledgment that he would train the apprentice in exchange for the apprentice’s service.¹⁸

In the household, the relationship between master and servant was also based on reciprocity, but the range of moral and material goods being exchanged was greater, and the social groups involved were more diverse. Most importantly, though, constraints acting on the hierarchy of the master–servant relationship were fewer. Servants in a household ranged from anonymous day labourers, who were hired on a short-term basis, to domestic servants, who lived with the family most of their lives and enjoyed social intimacy with its members. In elite households, which varied greatly in size, free-born persons serving the household head and his family members could include an array of functionaries, among them servants with specialized duties, literate cadres such as scribes and prayer leaders (imams), and soldiers. These functionaries ordinarily entered the household through the relationship of *intisab* (literally, ‘affiliation’), secured initially with a pledge of loyalty (*bay’a*).¹⁹ The exchange that seems to have reinforced this relationship from day to day was what Roy Mottahedeh calls ‘gratitude for benefit’, in which the household head bestowed salary, material allowances, housing, patronage and other benefits at his disposal, and the servant showed his ‘gratitude’ through his loyalty and the faithful discharge of his duties, whatever they were.²⁰ No third party entered to mediate this relationship, so that theoretically the master’s protection and support was more comprehensive, and the obedience of the servant more absolute.

The social norms governing the relationship between the household head and his free servants are difficult to recover given the often oral basis of these understandings and the discretionary nature of household ties. At least in some cases, the labour rental (*isti’jar*) does seem to have served as the legal framework, or at least as the starting point, for some relationships. Labour rental agreements that provide specific services,

and in which persons could hire out their labour to more than one employer at a time, were commonly struck and governed a wide array of kinds of human labour, including those in trade and craft associations named above. There were, on the other hand, labour rental agreements that appear to secure the full and exclusive use of a person's labour, thereby suggesting the circumstances of a patrimonial household.²¹ Although dating exclusively from the mid-sixteenth century, these documents of 'self-rental' (*al-ijara bi'l-nafs*) emerge as a flexible legal mechanism for recruiting household labour. In the handful of self-rental documents that survive from the fragmentary record of the early Ottoman period, young men from other parts of the empire – Albania and the Anatolian cities of Ankara, Kayseri and Ayntab – agreed to hire themselves out to individual residents of Aleppo for a fixed period of time, most commonly three years, with some variation in the kind and amount of compensation. The recruitment by Aleppans of non-Aleppans, furthermore, would be a sound household-building strategy, since recent migrants typically would have neither any competing loyalties in local society nor any stable source of outside income giving them independence from the household head.

To offer a specific example of self-rental, in 1553 a certain Haydar b. Sulayman, an Albanian Muslim, hired himself out (*ajara nafsbu*) to a Muslim resident of Aleppo, Qaraman b. Dawud, for a period of three years, on terms that he be paid 5 *qibrisis* annually, and in addition, that his master keep him clothed with a shirt (*qamis*), pants (*sarawil*), coat (*qunbaz*) and turban (*'imama*).²² The fact that Haydar was a young man and a transient stranger in Aleppo, that he hired himself out with no restriction except with respect to time, and that the employer provided him with clothes points to his impending attachment to a patrimonial household. The fairly elaborate provision of clothes – important markers of status in the Ottoman world – tied the servant Haydar to the household head, making him 'his' man and a projection of the household's prestige and influence. It should be noted that, while self-rental contracts like that of Haydar are theoretically voluntary agreements, it seems likely that there may have been circumstances in which the household head exercised considerable leverage, such as if the would-be servant needed protection from creditors, personal enemies or slavers.²³

In reviewing the self-rental agreements, one might observe that the law court, at least in the sixteenth century, appears to exert some degree of regulation over contractual ties between the two parties when they were defined by the exchange of material goods. Such a legal framework may have given some measure of assurance to masters and servants as they first entered into that relationship, but, as trust grew between them, court regulation was needed less and less. More broadly, if the available sources are any guide, the disappearance of self-rental agreements by the seventeenth century may point either to some unilateral contraction of the court's authority to oversee household labour or to the assertion of urban notable households, following the lead of great elite households, to regulate their own affairs more fully.

Relations of service, especially after material obligations such as self-rental are fulfilled, should not necessarily be seen as durable and long term. It appears that, with respect to ties of clientage, the parties could dissolve those ties frequently. Writing towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman historian and man of letters Mustafa Ali (1541–1600) complained of state functionaries who frequently changed their allegiance from one high state official to another in the pursuit of self-advancement.²⁴ The law court of seventeenth-century Aleppo did not recognize *intisab*

relations as such, but the court records do shed light on the procedures by which such relations were dissolved. While there is no generic term for the master, since he is usually described by his official position, the sources typically refer to the free-born servant as *khadim*.²⁵ The small number of cases found suggest that high state officials frequently employed free-born servants to administer the rural districts around Aleppo, especially to carry out security and law enforcement duties as the *subaşı*, who might be likened to the chief of police in the area, or as one of his deputies. Servants (*khadim*) also appear in the records as members of soldiers' retinues and as such are distinguished from the soldiers' slaves ('*abd* or *mamluk*).²⁶ These positions clearly comprise only a part of the range of duties that servants could provide to elite households.

Perhaps typical of a long-term *intisab* relationship cultivated by provincial officials was that between a one-time chief finance officer (*defterdar*) of Aleppo, Hajj Mehmed Efendi, and his servant (*khadim*) Zu'l-Fikar Bey b. Kaya 'Ali. In an *ibra*' (release of claims) action in 1663, these two individuals settled all accounts after a period of twenty years, in which Mehmed Efendi had his servant Zu'l-Fikar Bey serve as *subaşı* for the village of Abin and collect its revenues.²⁷ As an indicator of the absence of any distinction between servants and freedmen made by the court, on the same day Hajj Mehmed Efendi also released all claims on his freedman (*mu'taq*) Yusuf b. 'Abdullah, of Georgian origin, whom he had manumitted and who had then served him 'a long time' as collector of the non-Muslim poll tax.²⁸ The language of these documents is essentially the same. Other documents go beyond the financial aspects of the *intisab* relationship to touch on the commitments which bound together master and servant, or patron and client. In 1656, a young convert to Islam originally from Diyarbakr, Hasan b. 'Abdullah, testified in court that he was a servant (*khadim*) to Isma'il Agha, one of the Janissary officers of a one-time governor of Aleppo, but that Isma'il Agha had travelled to Cairo, leaving him with the imam of a residential quarter in Aleppo until he could return. The imam, who held various administrative responsibilities in the quarter, appears to have been deputized by the officer to maintain his servants in the city and was himself probably a client of the officer. Hasan declared before the court that he no longer desired to be in the service (*khidma*) of Isma'il Agha and, having renounced any claim against the imam, requested to go 'wherever he wanted'. After the imam verified the testimony, the *qadi* apparently released the former servant.²⁹ Significantly, the concern of the *qadi* was not whether Hasan was meeting the obligations of his relationship with his master Isma'il Agha – he was in effect unilaterally breaching an *intisab* agreement – but rather whether there were outstanding material claims between Hasan and the imam. Thus the court also seems to have mediated the termination of the clientage relationship, but only indirectly, and when those relations produced material obligations resulting from loans and other financial transactions. That the court records make no explicit mention of clientage as such suggests that, with the possible exception of self-rental, commitments were made informally or within the household sphere, which had its own independent traditions of obligation and accountability.

A second court document is comparable in significance. In the same year, 1656, a European (*Ifranji*) from Crete named Giovanni, son of Giorgio, acknowledged in court that he was the servant (*khadim*) of an Ottoman sea captain, Veli Kapudan b. 'Abdullah. Perhaps a Venetian captured in the continuing Ottoman military campaign in Crete, Giovanni now expressed the desire to leave the service of Veli Kapudan

and declared his intent to remain Christian. Veli Kapudan was present in court and verified Giovanni's statements, and a document recording the event was prepared for Giovanni to carry on his person from that time on.³⁰ The *qadi* in this case was not interested in regulating any formal contractual tie that might have existed between the two individuals.³¹ Rather, it seems, he had two other purposes in mind. Since Giovanni was now without a patron or affiliation, the *qadi* recognized the need to fix his personal status so that he would not be enslaved or seized as a fugitive slave. Just as important, he probably also wanted to ensure that Giovanni was given ample opportunity to consider conversion to Islam. We might compare the preoccupation of the *qadi* in this instance to the attitude of the Aleppo law court towards the purchase by Christians of Christian slaves, which is also documented in court records. In such cases, prior to concluding the sale, the *qadi* ordinarily reminded the slave that he could convert to Islam and thereby avoid bondage under Christian masters, since by law Christians could not own Muslim slaves. Integration into a Christian household, so reasoned the *qadi* in these cases, would limit the interaction of the slave with the Muslim community, denying him increased opportunities to consider the perceived benefits of conversion.³² Correspondingly, the passage of the Christian Giovanni from membership in a Muslim household to an unaffiliated status represented for the *qadi* a lost opportunity to bring an errant soul into the Muslim fold. Here the court implicitly recognized service in the household of an Ottoman official as a socializing and assimilating process beneficial to the Muslim community. The case of Giovanni suggests that one way the court authorities shaped *intisab* relationships, though indirectly, was to promote master–client relations as an instrument of conversion when the servant was non-Muslim.

In certain situations, court authorities also recognized the relationship between master and servant by including the servant in assessments of household economy. Akin to alimony and child support assignments (*nafaqa*), these assessments took place when the court imposed on an absent man, usually a travelling merchant or soldier on campaign, the costs of maintaining his household. What seems to have guided the court in determining the daily cost of the household was the style of life to which principal family members had become accustomed. Hence, in 1679 the court in Aleppo imposed on the absent 'pride of merchants' Hajj Yusuf Çelebi b. Hajj Salah al-Din al-'Arifi a substantial allowance of 1 *ghursh asadi* per day.³³ This was to meet the daily needs of his wife, Khadija bt. Ahmad Efendi al-Zuhrawi, her two minor children, Sayyid Muhammad Salih and Tayyiba, a female slave (*jariya*) who cared for the children, a second female slave who attended Khadija, and a male servant (*khadim*) who supplied the household with items from the market.³⁴ We suspect, however, that obtaining an allowance for servants was not automatic: women from influential families probably enjoyed a higher rate of success in this regard. Khadija was herself from an influential Shiite family, the Zuhrawis.³⁵

The obverse side of the servant's benefit from membership in the household was his share in its legal liability. The servant's liability arose in cases where the household head and his dependants had been sued for an indemnity for bodily injury (*diya*). In one case from 1655, members of a peasant family sued a soldier, Mehmed Beşe b. Ca'fer Kuloğlu, for compensation after their son had drowned while providing service – milling flour – for the soldier's retinue. After an apparent settlement between the two parties, the peasant family released all claims not only to the soldier, but also to his

companion (*rafiq*) Mustafa Beşe b. Ahmad, and his servant (*khadim*) Khalifa b. Salah al-Din.³⁶ In a second case from 1664, a man sued members of the English merchant community and their servants (*khadam*) for reparation after he had been injured by a stray bullet while working in a suburban Aleppo garden; it seems that members of the community were close by when the incident took place.³⁷ No cases appear, however, in which the household head is held responsible for and pays an indemnity for an action committed by a free-born servant of his. The legal parameters of the household in these matters remain unclear.

So far this analysis has focused on the ways in which households recruited and retained servants who were adults. Another strategy was adoption of minor children, specifically when the court deemed the natural parents too poor to raise them, or when the children were orphans. While it has been shown that the taking in of orphans was common in Islamic societies, little evidence has emerged on the circumstances in which adoption was practised.³⁸ In a series of three transactions dating from 1679, a woman claimed that she was indigent and unable to raise her two minor sons; she then handed one son over to a high-status teacher (*mudarris*), who was the son of a district official (*bek*), and the other to a soldier, so that each would raise and provide for one son (*li-yurabbihî wa yasunahu tahta tarbiyatihî*). The *qadi* protected the interests of the children by requiring the teacher and soldier to spend a minimum amount on their sustenance and clothing (the *nafaqa* maintenance mentioned above). Significantly, these actions were carried out in the presence of the boys' paternal uncle, who ordinarily would have served as a safety net for them and their mother; that he possessed the title of *haji* suggests that he was a man of some means.³⁹ Lack of additional information on these cases prevents the drawing of any firm conclusions, but it may be that the adoption of these boys into these elite households was seen by the mother and her brother-in-law as a strategy of social mobility, whereby they would receive professional training and be appropriately socialized. A second case is very similar in structure and terminology but expressly adds as a purpose of such action not only childraising (*tarabbi*) but also adoption (*tabanni*).⁴⁰

By his own account the seventeenth-century Armenian traveller Eremya Çelebi had been adopted with his parents' consent by an influential Armenian and raised and educated by him.⁴¹ These cases resemble Ottoman practices of the nineteenth century, when, according to Ehud Toledano,

households would take in girls, and sometimes also boys, from poor families within their patronage orbit, bring them up within the households, use their labour in return for food and shelter, train them according to need and talent, and later marry them off and set them up in life . . . , thereby expanding patronage networks.⁴²

Based on the preceding examples from Aleppo, one wonders to what extent families of greater means may have also placed their children in families of elite status to secure their futures. Toledano describes this practice as a 'substitute arrangement' as the slave trade contracted and slaves were less available. In these and other cases, the law court may have tacitly sanctioned what were 'strategic' adoptions to advance the interests of urban notable households.



Figure 20.1 The Nur-al-Din room, from an upper-class house in Damascus, c.1707.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

HOUSEHOLDS AND SLAVES

Slavery in the Ottoman empire has long been characterized by a striking diversity, encompassing both an involuntary recruitment system run by the imperial state (the *devşirme*), through which enslaved persons could rise to become military and administrative cadres, and an older Islamic legal and social regime that condoned and regulated chattel bondage.⁴³ The present study aims to be inclusive in its definition and, following Toledano,⁴⁴ places all major categories along a single continuum according to the degree of bondage:

- 1 military-administrative, or *kul*, slavery, in which young, enslaved male persons were trained and rose within the state apparatus as servants and property of the sultan;
- 2 *harem* slavery, in which in a course parallel to *kul* slaves, young, enslaved female persons came to serve in the households of political elites as concubines or wives;
- 3 domestic slavery, in which enslaved male and female persons served in non-state elite urban households in a variety of functions and were defined and governed as chattel by classical Islamic law, not the imperial law of *kul* slavery; and
- 4 large-scale institutional slavery, ranging from agricultural slavery, in which enslaved persons were usually employed on extensive agricultural estates established by the government or political elites, to galley slavery, where slaves mixed with convicted criminals to power the vessels of the Ottoman navy.

In all these forms, slavery can be defined as a kind of patronage, ‘an involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners’. The master can exercise force, but if the relationship is to function he ultimately must come to terms with the enslaved person on the basis of a constrained reciprocity.⁴⁵ Given their intermediate social and political position, the urban notable households of Aleppo – the focus of this study – were home to some combination of *kul*, *harem* and domestic slaves (groups 1, 2 and 3).

In contrast with free-born household servants, the status of household slaves as property ironically makes them easier to identify and study; the Ottoman law court, on which this study is based, was *de facto* an institution used primarily to protect proprietary interests. Supplemented with other materials, court records can shed light on, among other topics, aspects of the slave trade, the demography of the slave population, patterns in the composition of the slave-holding population, and avenues of integration slaves could follow into urban notable households. Far from being a static institution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, slavery seems to have spread among the urban notable households as soldiers settled and became integrated in Aleppan society, because the soldiers’ household-building strategies, which drew heavily on the acquisition of slaves and servants, were replicated by a wider segment of non-military social elites.

The demand for slave labour in the urban notable households of Aleppo and other Ottoman cities was sufficient to sustain a lucrative and substantial trade. The trade drew primarily on slaves taken during officially sanctioned raiding along the territorial peripheries of the empire, especially the Caucasus, the Black Sea basin and the Nile valley, but also illegal abduction and enslavement of various populations within the

empire.⁴⁶ The court records in Aleppo contain cases in which free-born adult Muslims had been enslaved and were later released by appeal to a *qadi*.⁴⁷ The court also grappled with the kidnapping of local children for slavery, though it is difficult to say how widespread this activity was. Persons belonging to the local Druze community, an offshoot of Isma‘ili Shiism viewed as heterodox if not heretical by Sunni Muslims, seem to have been particularly vulnerable to kidnapping.⁴⁸ Though strictly speaking not slavery, coerced labour could be extracted in situations of financial dependence. In 1662, a woman living in Aleppo came to court and acknowledged that she owed a debt to a Janissary, who in turn acknowledged that he was requiring her adolescent son to work for him until she made full repayment. If the woman were to remove her son from his service, the soldier added, he would immediately demand repayment of the full sum.⁴⁹ This arrangement points to a form of debt bondage, especially in an economy in which soldiers were major moneylenders.⁵⁰

The size and make-up of the urban slave population in seventeenth-century Aleppo offer clues to the kind and volume of productive labour they could generate for urban notable households. In a city of 100,000 people, enslaved persons probably numbered between 3,000 and 5,000. Though small in relative terms to other slave-holding societies, this slave population nevertheless came from diverse and distant regions. A survey of the sales and manumissions found in law court records between 1640 and 1700 reinforces the finding observed elsewhere that the Ottoman slave population was predominantly male – on average 60 per cent throughout that period.⁵¹ The labour force in Aleppo, both free and enslaved, may have had a larger proportion of males than other cities because the city served as a staging point for caravans between Anatolia and the Arab lands and because it was a strategic logistical centre for military campaigns.⁵² From a long-term historical perspective, however, male predominance gave way to female predominance, as Ottoman armies and their vassals in the eighteenth century lost the offensive along their frontiers with European states and ceased to enslave on the scale commensurate with territorial expansion.⁵³

The urban notable households of Aleppo were also home to a distinctive mix of slave ethnicities, with Russians and Georgians predominating in both sexes throughout much of the seventeenth century. A court record survey indicates that Georgians and Russians together accounted for an average of 65 per cent of the total slave population, Georgians comprising 33 per cent and Russians 32 per cent. Persons of Ethiopian, Nubian, Hungarian and Circassian ethnicity also formed significant minorities.⁵⁴ Situated in the north Caucasian frontier between the warring Ottoman and Safavid empires, Georgia had witnessed political fragmentation and the large-scale enslavement of its populations since the sixteenth century. Comparable numbers of Russian slaves in Aleppo resulted from the regular raiding operations in the northern Black Sea littoral by the Ottoman vassal Crimean Tatars from the sixteenth century onwards.⁵⁵ The dominance of the Georgians and Russians as a proportion of the total slave population marks the growing geostrategic importance of the confrontation between the Ottomans and Russians (and their vassal counterparts) along their common frontier in the seventeenth century.

One should view the Aleppan urban notable households that acquired these slaves neither as a general template for urban notable households in other Ottoman cities nor as an internally undifferentiated elite class. Based on the available architectural evidence, Aleppan households appear to have been smaller in size than those in other

major cities in the Arab provinces, not only Cairo but even the neighbouring Syrian city of Damascus.⁵⁶ The ability of Aleppan households to maintain large contingents of retainers, including slaves, thus appears to have been comparatively limited. Just as important, the constituent groups of the urban notable stratum – the military-administrative cadres, the religious establishment and the merchant community – all had differing purposes, and therefore differing strategies in building their households. Immediately noticeable in a survey of manumissions, sales and purchases is the domination of slave-holding by military-administrative cadres, a group comprising soldiers and civil bureaucratic officials. Comprising roughly 5 per cent of the urban population if one includes both regular and irregular soldiers,⁵⁷ military-administrative cadres figured in about 50 per cent of cases involving slaves.⁵⁸ Reasons for this pattern abound. *Grande*s in this group accumulated slaves and placed them in state offices under their control as a means of extending their influence. Military cadres of higher ranks, compensated by *timar* assignments, were required by law to bring additional armed retainers on campaign, and slaves fit naturally in this role. More generally, the sale of slaves captured on the battlefield could bring the individual Ottoman soldier a sizeable income,⁵⁹ or else the soldier could give slaves as gifts to cement ties and alliances.⁶⁰ These practices were in addition to the more widespread strategy of employing slaves as household servants or concubines. In comparison with other social groups, the disproportionately large number of male slaves owned by these cadres⁶¹ suggests that they employed slaves primarily as soldiers, scribes, or servants working in male-dominated occupations directly supporting the master's profession.

In a way similar to the military-administrative cadres' employment of slaves as supporting their primary occupation, merchants purchased larger numbers of male slaves to build up a reliable and trustworthy corps of commercial agents – agents who could expand the household's trading network geographically and diversify its operations. Studies on a variety of Ottoman cities have shown that merchants relied heavily on freedmen to conduct business on their behalf and entrusted to them large amounts of capital.⁶² That merchants in this sample were second only to military-administrative cadres in the number of slaves they owned – they figured in 20 per cent of all such cases – underscores the importance they attached to slaves in the building of households.⁶³ The great importance of Aleppo as a node of international, long-distance commerce may also have had the effect of driving up the proportion of traders employing slaves.

Certain other slave-owning groups among the urban notable and the general population are worth noting. Elite women, mostly female relatives of military-administrative elites, were the third most active as slave-owners, appearing in about 10 per cent of all slave cases, reflecting the general access that military-administrative households had to slaves of both sexes. The slaves of elite women were almost entirely female, confirming the observation that elite women could and did develop their own separate, female retinues.⁶⁴ The absolute number of slaves owned by the *ulama*, the broad class of educational, judicial and religious functionaries, is relatively small, but this may be the result more of the *ulama*'s small population than their lack of interest in owning slaves.⁶⁵ The rough balance between male and female slaves owned by the *ulama* points to the relatively greater demand by these groups for female domestic service and/or concubinage. Among other Muslim groups, even artisans could own slaves, though only the wealthier members of this group could afford to do so.⁶⁶ Local Christians,

who numbered roughly one-quarter of Aleppo's population, were active as slave-owners, though this seems to have been restricted largely to affluent male merchants.⁶⁷

The heads of urban notable households, of whatever social group, could purchase slaves easily enough, but the process of inducing a slave to become a productive and self-content, eventually loyal, member of the household posed a major challenge. This study returns to the supposition that slavery is a kind of patronage that requires negotiation and accommodation, however lopsided, between master and slave. What follows is a selective survey of the actions that a household head could take to meet the slave 'halfway', to integrate him or her into the household. The master's repertory included: (1) the master's formal recognition of a slave woman as the mother of his child (*umm al-walad* status); (2) manumission; (3) gifts (*hiba*); (4) bequests (*wasiya*); and (5) the naming of slaves as beneficiaries in charitable endowments (*waqfs*). As the most frequently encountered actions in the court records, *umm al-walad* status and manumission will be considered here.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that the mutual acceptance between master and slave was always a contingent process and could easily result in the flight or resale of the slave for any number of reasons. With respect to flight, Ebussuud, head of the Ottoman religious hierarchy (*seyhülislam*) in the mid-sixteenth century, was only the most prominent of many Ottoman jurists who issued legal opinions on fugitive slaves, underscoring the contemporary relevance of the issue.⁶⁸ For their part, Ottoman judges routinely upheld the rights of slave-owners to recover their fugitive slaves, with judicial officials in different cities co-operating in the searches and investigations. The absolute number of cases dealing with fugitive slaves in the court records of Aleppo is small, but, where found, they indicate slaves being apprehended and returned to their owners, sometimes at a considerable geographical distance.⁶⁹ Toledano's extensive study of the lives of slaves in the nineteenth century indicates that a wide range of circumstances impelled slaves to flee. Some sought to avoid chronic physical abuse and forced abortion, while others ought to prevent resale or the break-up of a slave family through resale; still others sought simply to be free.⁷⁰

For female slaves, one might argue that the key event of cultural and social integration was bearing a child by her master, which gave the woman *umm al-walad* ('mother of the child') status. By law, her child was a free-born Muslim, and after the birth she could not be resold.⁷¹ Actual practice varied considerably. Some masters, after having children with their female slaves, manumitted them and then immediately married them.⁷² If her child was a son, and that son possessed the qualities to succeed the master of the household, the status of his mother was further enhanced. Other masters, however, refused to grant the status or otherwise contravened the spirit of the law. Some masters after the birth of the child married the *umm al-walad* off to other persons, perhaps clients or relatives, a practice which the court sometimes sanctioned.⁷³ If the master died, his heirs not infrequently challenged the slave's claims to the status.⁷⁴ Overall, the court records present a mixed experience for female slaves with *umm al-walad* status, showing that the claim was frequently contested; even when the status was granted, its implementation was not guaranteed and had to be actively defended.

Common to the experience of both female and male slaves was the hope of manumission. Islamic law prescribes three types, all of which are made unilaterally by the master: immediate or 'pious' manumission (*itq*), the grant of provisional manumis-

sion that takes effect after the death of the master (*tadbir*) and contractual manumission (*mukataba*), according to which the master grants the slave freedom in exchange for a fixed amount of money or labour.⁷⁵ Patterns of manumission in Aleppo suggest that the master in general used such an act only selectively as a strategy of accommodation and reconciliation addressing the concerns of the intended slave. According to the court records, 98 per cent of all manumissions in Aleppo between 1640 and 1700 were immediate manumissions (*itq*). In comparison with the provisional and contractual types of manumission, immediate manumission is less likely to have been a planned and deliberate act by the master carried out specifically to reward or compensate his slave. By their very nature, both the provisional and contractual manumissions signalled clearly to the slave that his master did not intend his bondage to be indefinite. In many cases, other factors may have been more important in the timing of the manumissions. Studies of manumission in other Ottoman cities show that a variety of occasions – the circumcision of a son, conversion of the slave to Islam, a son’s marriage, the owner’s participation in a military campaign, and the promotion of the owner in the Ottoman hierarchy – prompted the owner to manumit.⁷⁶ Furthermore, of all the immediate manumissions documented in the Aleppo court records between 1640 and 1700, roughly 20 per cent were carried out as part of a longer series of two or more manumissions by the same slave-owner, pointing to the likelihood that manumission was the immediate outcome of some event in the personal life of the slave-owner and not a reflection of the relations between the individual slave and the owner. Another 10 per cent took place in the context of an ongoing inheritance dispute, based on references in the text of the document; in these cases, the heirs freed the slaves left by the deceased. In sum, it seems that, by using immediate manumission in the overwhelming majority of cases, the master held his cards close to his chest, reminding the slave of his superior legal and social position, even at the risk of alienating him and driving him to flee or resist.

CONCLUSION

In their recruitment of servants and slaves, the urban notables of Aleppo necessarily deployed different strategies, but the foundation of a cohesive and durable household was a common goal. Certain limited conclusions can be drawn with respect to the structure and dynamics of master–servant relations. The conclusions are limited because, as discussed above, the court dealt with the relations of service (*khidma*) and clientage (*intisab*) only insofar as they entailed some contractual exchange of material value or touched on the primacy of (Sunni) Islam as a religious affiliation. First, and related to the court’s purview, it should be confirmed that, as complex organizations, urban notable households enjoyed an autonomy in which they set custom and resolved internal disputes without recourse to the court system, in contrast with other organizations such as guilds, residential neighbourhoods and locally assigned military units, which regularly brought such matters to the *qadi*’s attention.⁷⁷ Second, if sixteenth-century records reflect a longer-term reality, methods used by local household heads to recruit servants and retainers were not homogeneously informal but rather included the court-regulated self-rental contract, which appears to have been employed especially to secure durable relationships with young men migrating from other parts of the empire. Third, urban notable groups, ranging from the religious establishment

to military cadres, appear to have engaged in the practice of adopting children, with the full assent of adult male relatives, as a way of building their households, perhaps used selectively to target children with exceptional potential. The overall impression of how households employed servants and clients is one of pragmatism, flexibility and fluidity.

With respect to slaves, the court records suggest that the relationship between them and their masters was based on a reciprocity whose scope and nature varied greatly with the personality of the household head and the domestic tone he set. Just as there were masters who manumitted and married the slave mothers of their children, there were others who exploited them simply as concubines. The pattern of manumissions, however, suggests a more general tendency on the part of the household head to preserve control. The predominant use of immediate manumission (*itq*) and the virtual absence of other, long-term manumission arrangements point to prevailing household culture in which the authority of the household head was robust. The paucity of court records documenting the grievances of slaves with respect to their master's treatment, and the matched paucity of instances of resistance and flight, suggests a household culture where slaves may have found some social space within which they found consolation and managed to cope. Toledano's recent synthesis of scholarship on slave diaspora communities in the empire contends that slaves were able to adapt psychologically to the foreignness of their new environment in part through participation in collective rituals that preserved elements of their original cultures.⁷⁸

NOTES

- 1 Akdağ 1966; İnalçık 1977; İnalçık 1980a: 286, 296–303; Abou-el-Haj 1974; Kunt 1983. Works that provide case studies of provincial *grande*s include Griswold 1983; Cohen 1973; Rafeq 1966; and Sakaoğlu 1998.
- 2 Hathaway 1997; Peirce 1993: 229–65.
- 3 For an excellent overview and critique of *askeri-reaya* boundaries, see Canbakal 2007.
- 4 Tucker 1988; Duben 1985, 1990; Duben and Behar 1991; Gerber 1989; Cuno 1995; Establet and Pascual 1994.
- 5 The classic formulation of the urban notables as political players is Hourani 1968.
- 6 Meriwether 1999: 30–68, *passim*.
- 7 Findley 2006.
- 8 See, for example, Peirce 1993: 28–56; Hathaway 1997: 109–24; Meriwether 1999: 111–52.
- 9 On the *intisab* relationship in the Ottoman official class, see Findley 1980: 30–9. On the related medieval institution of *istisna*, see Mottahedeh 2001: 82–93.
- 10 Slave-holding in the Ottoman empire should be viewed as only one part of a broader social phenomenon in the early modern Mediterranean basin. Scholars have given considerable attention to the slave-holding practices of the Tuscans. See, for example, Bono 1999, 1988.
- 11 Ze'evi 2000.
- 12 For a catalogue of law court records preserved in the National Archives of Syria, see Marino and Okawara 1999. References to such records hereafter will be abbreviated as SMS, followed by the volume and page numbers and the date in both Islamic Hijra and Common Era forms.
- 13 Perhaps the best brief discussion of this bias is Doumani 1995: 10–11.
- 14 For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Ergene 2003: 99–124.
- 15 For an overview of Ottoman guilds in this period, see Faroqhi 1994: 586–95.
- 16 Tyan 1971; al-Ḥalabi 1905: 117–22; and Shaykhzada 1910: II, 367–405.
- 17 SMS 28: 111; cf. SMS 28: 190.
- 18 SMS 24: 363.

- 19 Fleischer 1986a: 19–20.
20 Mottahedeh 2001: 72–8.
21 The person who hires out his labour in this way is called an *ajir khass*. See Tyan 1971; al-Halabi 1905: 120; and Shaykhzada 1910: II, 393.
22 SMS 1: 63. The *qibrisi* coin referred to in the document may be the Venetian ducat. The island of Cyprus (Ar. Qibris) was ruled by Venice at the time.
23 For some suggestive evidence, see SMS 1: 82.
24 Fleischer 1986a: 209.
25 While *khadim* was sometimes used to refer to eunuchs, it is clear that, in the vast majority of cases considered here, that was not what was meant; see Lewis 1990: 56; Redhouse 1980: 818–19.
26 For an example of *subaşı* employment, from 1645, see SMS 24: 11. In this capacity, servants could also contract loans with villagers on behalf of their patrons.
27 SMS 2: 408. The revenues of the village of Abin (located in the district of Ma'arrat Misrin south-west of Aleppo) may originally have been assigned as a prebend to Hajj Mehmed Efendi when he was *defterdar*. Thereafter he was able to maintain *de facto* fiscal control over the village, probably through moneylending.
28 SMS 2: 407.
29 SMS 3: 779.
30 SMS 3: 795.
31 Indeed, missing from this document is any mention of claims between the two parties that might result from loans, commissions or other commercial interactions; perhaps these matters had been settled in another document.
32 SMS 30: 254, dated 1074/1664; SMS 32: 411, dated 1085/1674; SMS 36: 95, dated 1098/1687.
33 On the coin known in Arabic as the *ghirsh asadi* (pl. *ghurush asadi*), or the Dutch *leuwenthaler*, see Pamuk 1994: 963–4.
34 SMS 34: 160. On the practice of *nafaqa*, see Meron 1971; de Bellefonds 1971a.
35 Salati 1992: 70–71, 145; Meriwether 1999: 193.
36 SMS 3: 400.
37 SMS 30: 291.
38 Sonbol 1995: 58.
39 SMS 34: 143–4.
40 SMS 3: 253, dated 1098/1686.
41 Eremya Çelebi Kömürçüyan 1988: x.
42 Toledano 1998: 164; 2007: 73.
43 Kunt 1983: 41–2; Faroqhi 1994: 564; Peirce 2003: 315; and Toledano 2007: 20–1.
44 Toledano 2007: 33.
45 Ibid.
46 Wilkins forthcoming 2012.
47 For a study of enslavement of free Muslim persons in the late Ottoman empire, see Saydam 1996.
48 On the enslavement of Muslim Shii groups, see Erdem 1996: 20–3.
49 SMS 27: 384.
50 On the role of soldiers in the Aleppan credit market, see Masters 1988: 153–64; and Wilkins 2010: 173–9.
51 Wilkins forthcoming 2012.
52 Studies on other Ottoman cities provide some comparison and contrast. See Sak 1989: 163; Jennings 1987: 295.
53 Zilfi 2010: 189–235.
54 Wilkins forthcoming 2012.
55 İnalçık 1979: 37–40; İnalçık 1994: I, 283–5; Brunschvig 1960.
56 Hathaway 1997: 5–16, 32–51; Khoury 1997: 120–33; Meriwether 1999: 96–7; Abdel Nour 1982: 130.

- 57 Wilkins 2010: 115–52.
58 Wilkins 2005: II, 238.
59 İnalçık 1979: 26–7, 36; Raymond 1973–4: II, 680–1; and Zilfi 2006: 237.
60 See, for example, Hathaway 1995b; 1997: 110.
61 Wilkins forthcoming 2012.
62 For evidence of this practice in Edirne, see Barkan 1966: 28. On Bursa, see İnalçık 1969: 110; and Sahillioğlu 1985: 74. On Ankara, see Ongan 1974: 48, 113. For evidence of such practices in the court records of Aleppo, see Meriwether 1999: 97, 101; SMS 27: 491, dated 1074/1663; and SMS 33: 63–4, dated 1088/1688.
63 Wilkins 2005: II, 439–40.
64 Ibid.: II, 440–1.
65 For a discussion of the *ulama* as slave-owners, see Zilfi 2010: 222–3.
66 Raymond 1973–4: II, 681–2; Fisher 1980b: 38; Faroqhi 2000b: 13. Patterns in Aleppo contrast with those of Cairo, where large numbers of artisans owned slaves. This, according to Raymond, highlights the degree to which slave-holding was integrated into the Egyptian social structure.
67 SMS 32: 130, dated 1083/1672; SMS 35: 604, dated 1097/1686.
68 Düzdağ 1998: 204–6; Çatalcalı Ali Efendi 1856: 175–7; Minkarizade Yahya, Harvard Law School Library MS 1402: 156–8; and Yenişehirli Abdullah 1849: 201–2. For a focused discussion on fugitives in the early sixteenth century, see Seng 1996: 152–63.
69 SMS 25: 318, dated 1059/1649; SMS 30: 99, dated 1073/1663. For other studies, see Seng 1996: 159–60; Seng 1999: 31–2; Sak 1989: 193–5; Walz 1978: 205–6; Ongan 1974: 104.
70 Toledano 2007: 79–107.
71 Schacht 2000; Brunschvig 1960.
72 See, for example, SMS 35: 665, dated 1097/1686.
73 SMS 30: 275, dated 1074/1664; SMS 27: 294, dated 1071/1661; SMS 28: 594, dated 1073/1663.
74 Tucker 1985: 183–5; Fisher 1980b: 52; Zilfi 2010: 162–4. Examples of women coming to court in Aleppo to defend their *umm al-walad* status include SMS 26: 368, dated 1071/1661; SMS 4: 63, dated 1090/1679; SMS 27: 294, dated 1071/1661.
75 Brunschvig 1960; cf. Erdem 1996: 152–3. The granting of permission (*idhn*) to the slave to conduct commercial affairs on behalf of the master (and thus attain *ma'dhun* status) was another way of showing favour to a slave and reducing his legal incapacity. See de Bellefonds 1971b; Marmon 1999: 6, 13.
76 Fisher 1980b: 50, citing Galabov 1960.
77 Wilkins 2010.
78 Toledano 2007: 204–54.