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Sicily and the Two Seas: The Cross Currents of Race and Slavery in Early Modern Palermo

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Sicily and the Two Seas:

The Cross Currents of Race and Slavery

in Early Modern Palermo

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Lori De Lucia

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sicily and the Two Seas:

The Cross Currents of Race and Slavery

in Early Modern Palermo

by

Lori De Lucia

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Andrew Apter, Co-Chair

Professor Ghislaine E. Lydon, Co-Chair

This dissertation examines an early modern slave trade that extended from the Central

Sahel into the Mediterranean in order to reposition Sicily's dynamic role in defining ideas of race

through its practices of slavery. From the late fifteenth century through the end of the sixteenth

century, there were many enslaved Black Africans in Palermo, yet, scholarship on slavery in

Sicily rarely focuses specifically on this population. More recently Sicily has been incorporated

into studies of slavery on the Iberian Peninsula, as an export market of the wider Atlantic-

European slave trades growing at the same time, or as an important source for captives from

corsair warfare. I focus on Palermo as a Christian Mediterranean port city that became a major

purchaser of enslaved West Africans from the Libyan coastline for the span of about one hundred years. First, I consider how ideologies of race were developed and transformed along this trans-Saharan slave trade route from the Central Sahel into the Mediterranean and how they justified the enslavement and forced migrations of West Africans. As enslaved Black populations grew in Iberian cities, and Spain and Portugal expanded their empires across the Atlantic, religious social hierarchies were reinvented in order to fit new marginalized communities into their world. By the end of the sixteenth century, these hierarchies had assumed a broader racial significance. Secondly, I examine the distinctions emerging in Sicily within its diverse enslaved community. Here, there was a dialectic relationship between practices of slavery and the formation of racial identities; and this is most clearly seen in how Black Africans moved into slavery differently than their North African counterparts, and had less mobility once enslaved. Black Africans were more likely to stay in Sicilian households and be converted in the Catholic church at the same time that they were in kept in subjugated social statuses even once freed. Ultimately, I am arguing that a history of enslaved Black Africans in Sicily highlights the fragile and violent nature of the boundaries between the interconnected worlds of the early modern Mediterranean, boundaries that continue to restrict mobility in the sea today.

The dissertation of Lori De Lucia is approved.

John A. Agnew

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University of California, Los Angeles

2020

To my nonna,

Lorenza Martucci De Lucia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tsinstiya ɗaya ba ta shara.[1]
One twig does not sweep.

At a time when Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have shown the great

economic, social and racial disparities in our country, I hope that the American university system

seeks to reinvent itself as a more inclusive and accessible space. I could not have written this

dissertation without listening to the voices of diverse scholars, colleagues, teachers, and friends

who have challenged the way that I see and approach the world, and my research.

I am grateful to the many people who led me to pursuing this doctorate. John Hutchison

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Buehler for sharing her midwifery knowledge. I appreciate all the support I have found along the

way from Agatha E. Palma, Sabrina Smith, Amber Withers, Janice Levi, Nana Osei-Opare,

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[1] A. H. M Kirk-Greene, *Hausa Ba Dabo Ba Ne* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 19.

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Book Review
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Web-Based Collaborative Publications
"African Proverbs Project: Hausa Proverbs," *Boston University*. 2012.
http://www.bu.edu/africa/alp/index1/african-proverbs-project/hausa-proverbs/

"Profiles in Nigerien Artisanry: The Artists of Niamey," *Boston University*. 2011.
http://www.bu.edu/africa/alp/index1/profiles/

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2007, after having spent two years living in Niger, I visited my relatives in southern Italy. On a trip to the outdoor markets in Caserta I encountered many Black African vendors. I tried starting a conversation with a vendor who also spoke French, curious to know if he had connections to Niger, but he looked away, seemingly suspicious of my questions. At the same time, my Italian relatives also looked away. There seemed to be a code of invisibility that I had breached, and it had made both parties uncomfortable. This dissertation is a reaction to that moment of invisibility, and an attempt to construct a longer lens of the history of race and slavery in Italy that helped create it.[1] As my research has developed from the present day migration crisis in Italy back to a fifteenth century slave trafficking route, the histories between Niger, which would have been part of the Borno sultanate, and Southern Italy have become more intertwined than I could have expected. This is a history of an early modern slave trade that extended from the Central Sahel into the Mediterranean and a repositioning of Sicily's dynamic role in defining ideas of race through its own practices of slavery.

Italian historian Salvatore Bono hypothesized that by the sixteenth century there were one hundred and fifty thousand slaves in the European Christian world, with one hundred thousand

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[1] Ubax Cristina Ali Farah and Mondadori, *Madre piccola* (Milano: Frassinelli, 2007); Pap Khouma, *Noi italiani neri: storie di ordinario razzismo* (Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2010); Khouma, *I Was an Elephant Salesman: Adventures between Dakar, Paris, and Milan*, trans. Rebecca Crockett-Hopkins (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010);Angelica Pesarini and Guido Tintori, "Mixed Identities in Italy: A Country in Denial," in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Classification*, ed. Zarine L Rocha and P. J Aspinall (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland : Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Igiaba Scego, *Adua*, trans. Jamie Richards (New York: New Vessel Press, 2017). This follows a more recent trend in which many African and Black Italian authors such as the ones cited above have increased the visibility of their own stories living in Italy, and united in a call across genres to further confront racism and its social consequences in the Italian context.

on the Iberian Peninsula and anywhere from fifty to one hundred thousand in Italy.[2] The

unreliable estimates for sixteenth-century Sicily range from twelve to fifty thousand slaves in

any given year, with the majority being Black Africans.[3] This was a stark difference from the

early medieval period in Sicily, during which the majority of its slave population was Caucasians

from Eastern Europe.[4] Yet, scholarship on slavery in Sicily rarely focuses specifically on this

African population. More recently Sicily has been incorporated into studies of slavery on the

Iberian Peninsula, as an export market of the wider Atlantic-European slave trades growing at

the same time.[5] The terminology used to document Africans in Sicily revealed that they were

arriving from an ancient trans-Saharan slave trade route that extended from the Lake Chad region

into present-day Libya. Both the spread of Islam across the Central Sahel and changing alliances

in the Mediterranean affected the increase in this trade.[6] I focus on the enslaved Africans

trafficked into Palermo to examine how early conceptions of race both shaped, and were shaped

by, the mobility of Black Africans in the Mediterranean, and Sicily itself.

At its most ambitious, this history critiques the idea of the West as a meaningful

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[2] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993), 194.

[3] Salvatore Bono, "Schiavi in Italia: Maghrebini, neri, slavi, ebrei e altri (secc. xvi–xix)," *Mediterranea Ricerche Storiche* 7, no. 19 (2010): 239; Matteo Gaudioso, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926), 25. The most common terminology is "scavo nigro" or "scava nigra."

[4] Charles Verlinden, "L'esclavage en Sicile au bas Moyen Age," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 35 (1963): 32.

[5] Avelino Texiera da Mota, "Entrée d'esclaves noirs à Valence, 1445–1482: le remplacement de la voie saharienne par la voie atlantique," in *Le Sol, la parole et l'écrit: 2000 ans d'histoire africaine : mélanges en hommage à Raymond Mauny*, eds. Jean Devisse, Claude Hélène Perrot, Yves Person, and Jean-Pierre Chrétien (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer: diffusion, L'Harmattan, 1981), 579–94; Charles Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970).

[6] Throughout this chapter, I will be using Central Sahel to refer to the region that has historically been referred to as the Central Sudan. Because of the historical motives for defining a black Africa discussed in this dissertation, I have opted to follow the more recent trend in scholarship to use Sahel and will primarily be focusing on Hausaland and Borno (present-day northern Nigeria, Chad, and Niger).

analytical frame for a history that spans across interconnected regions. The growth of the West, both as a concept and as an economic and political force, has allowed for destructive and unitary narratives of modernity.[7] Historians have long criticized its impact, as creating false boundaries between regions, time periods, and people.[8] Examining borderlands, such as Sicily, offers the opportunity to challenge these boundaries by highlighting the extent of interaction that occurred at their very center. Trade and the exchange of ideas beyond the Christian shores of the Mediterranean influenced Sicily at the same time that they were being defined as peripheral and ahistorical. As historian Robin D. G. Kelley maintains, "just as Europe invented Africa and the New World, we cannot understand the invention of Europe and the New World without Africa and African people."[9] If this was a period in which Europe was defining itself as both white and Christian, then the practice of slavery in Sicily offers the opportunity to examine how both Europeans and Africans were actively shaping this identity beyond the Atlantic context.[10]

Deconstructing Racialized Borders

> For every gallon of ink that has been spilt on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its consequences, only one very small drop has been spilt on the study of the forced migration of Black Africans into the Mediterranean world of Islam and the broader question of slavery within Muslim societies.[11]

[7] Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, and Harry Zohn, *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968); Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West Was One: One the Uses and Limitations of Diaspora," *The Black Scholar* 30, no. 3/4 (October 1, 2000): 31–35; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974); Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[8] Janet L Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350.* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 20; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

[9] Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West was Won: On the Uses and Limitations of Diaspora," 34.

[10] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee: corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009), XII.

-John Hunwick

What has been the impact of race on the writing of history?[12]
-Maghan Keita

As John Hunwick wrote, much of the scholarship on slavery focuses on the Atlantic.

While the Atlantic slave trade that developed in the sixteenth century was unique in its volume

and the role it played in shaping capitalism in the modern world, it also coexisted with diverse

trans-Saharan and Mediterranean slave trades. Here I am following Hunwick's call for a refocus

on trans-Saharan slave trades, but from the perspective of a Christian Mediterranean port city

that became a major purchaser of enslaved Africans for the span of about one hundred years. In

order to address the lack of scholarship on trans-Saharan slave trades connected to the

Mediterranean, it is important to consider Maghan Keita's question. The racialized border

between North Africa and "sub-Saharan Africa" has had a long-lasting impact on the writing of

African and Mediterranean history.[13] As historian Ghislaine Lydon pointed out, this border

effectively created two Africas, one that has been grouped as white and Mediterranean, and the

other a Black sub-Saharan Africa.[14] This border is not new; in Greek and medieval Arab

geographies, the fourth clime unified North Africa and Southern Europe as being the "most

moderate in its climate and the most civilized in its inhabitants."[15] In the fifteenth century,

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[11] John O Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), ix.

[12] Maghan Keita, *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 210.

[13] Ghislaine Lydon, "Saharan Oceans and Bridges, Barriers and Divides in Africa's Historiographical Landscape," *The Journal of African History* 56, no. 1 (2015): 1,22.

[14] Lydon, "Saharan Oceans," 3.

[15] John O. Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 126.

Gomes Eanes de Zurara described the beginning of the land of negroes at the sight of two palm trees after the Sahara.[16] Braudel reiterated this geo-cultural grouping when he wrote that "the Mediterranean climate lies between the northern limit of the olive tree and the northern limit of the palm grove" and that this shared climate led to the "same ways of life."[17] Twenty-first century Italian scholar Bonaffini wrote that:

> It is in fact undeniable that Mediterranean Europe is historically, politically, and economically tied to the countries of North Africa and the Levant much more than it is to Atlantic Europe. On the other hand, we consider that you could not put in doubt that the Egyptians and Arabs are, in terms of culture, history and civilization much closer to us than to the tribes of the Congo and Dahomey.[18]

One impact of this southern Saharan border has been on historiographies that ignored the complex and dynamic ways Saharan spaces have connected people, trade, and religious networks. Like the Mediterranean, the Sahara is also a dynamic space that has served as both a barrier and a connector.[19] In this history, the Saharan space allowed for Borno to form political alliances with Spanish and Ottoman officials that resulted in the exchange of commodities,

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[16] Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. Translated by Raymond C. Beazley and Edgar Prestage (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1896, 2010), 2:176.

[17] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 234-235.

[18] Giuseppe Bonaffini, Lucia Bonafede, and Teresa Dispenza, *La Sicilia per l'unità del Mediterraneo: primi studi e contributi* (Palermo [etc.]: ILA Palma, 2008), 11. "E' innegabile infatti che l'Europa mediterranea sia storicamente, politicamente, ed economicamente legata ai Paesi del nord Africa e dell'Oriente Mediterraneo molto piu' di quanto non lo sia a quelli dell'Europa atlantica. D'altra parte riteniamo non possa mettersi in dubbio che egiziani ed arabi siano, per cultura, storia e civilta' molto piu' vicini a noi che alle tribu' del Congo e del Dahomey."

[19] See e.g. Samuel DeJohn Anderson, "Domesticating the Médersa: Franco-Muslim Education and Colonial Rule in Northwest Africa, 1850-1960" (PhD Diss, University of California, 2018), 18, 21; Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *North Africa, Islam, and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War* (London; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 2001); Lydon, "Saharan Oceans;" James McDougall and Judith Scheele, *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012). Historian Ghislaine Lydon has shown the importance of more recent scholarship that position the Sahara as a space worthy of study in itself. Clancy-Smith, McDougall and Scheele, provide frameworks for conducting history on mobility in these regions. Anderson provides an example of how institutions such as the Medersa developed across the Sahara.

enslaved people, and Islamic ideologies. At the same time it was constructed as a border between Islam and paganism, and in turn a white and Black Africa.

Work on slavery in the Mediterranean has revolved around corsair warfare and the role of primarily white captives in the Mediterranean economy.[20] In doing so it has remained committed to the definition of a Mediterranean that unified coastlines, but ended at the Saharan border. Belgian historian Charles Verlinden made an important intervention in his study of slavery in medieval Italy when he showed that enslaved Black people in medieval Sicily had arrived from a trans-Saharan trade route that led to Barqa in present day Libya.[21] They were recorded in notarial records from as early as 1327, when a confraternity bought an enslaved person from Barqa.[22] But Verlinden also suggested that over the fifteenth century the source of enslaved Black Africans in Sicily shifted to the Iberian slave trade along the Atlantic coast of Africa.[23] This was later disputed by Historian Maurice Aymard who proposed that the trans-Saharan trade route remained more important in Sicily, even citing the importance of enslaved people from Borno in Sicily.[24] Most historians recognize that the trade into Barqa connected to Sicilian markets, but

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[20] See e.g. Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters - White Slavery in the Mediterranean, The Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jacques Heers, *The Barbary corsairs: warfare in the Mediterranean, 1480-1580* (London: Greenhill, 2003); Michel Fontenay, "Routes et Modalités Du Commerce Des Esclaves Dans La Méditerranée Des Temps Modernes (XVI e , XVII e et XVIII e Siècles)," *Revue Historique* 308, no. 4 (640) (2006): 813–30; Youval Rotman, "Captif Ou Esclave? Entre Marché d'esclaves et Marché de Captifs En Méditerranée Médiévale," in *Les Esclavages En Méditerranée : Espaces et Dynamiques Économiques*, ed. Fabienne P. Guillén and Salah Trabelsi, Collection de La Casa de Velázquez (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2017), 25–46.

[21] Charles Verlinden, "L'esclavage en Sicile au bas Moyen Age." *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome.* 35 (1963): 42.

[22] During this period Africans were often described in Latin as a *servum nigram* or sometimes in the Saracen category, which would later be replaced by Moor in the sixteenth century.

[23] Verlinden, L'esclavage, 69-70. In the first half of the fifteenth century over the course of eighteen years there were thirty-two notarial acts in which forty-one black slaves were sold in one market in Palermo. By the second half, the number of transactions and slaves sold had more than doubled, and Monts de Barca was rarely mentioned. His evidence revolved on the lack of any mention of Monts de Barca after the second half of the fifteenth century.

[24] Maurice Aymard, "De La Traite Aux Chiourmes: La Fin de L'esclavage Dans La Sicile Moderne," *Bulletin de*

the reason for an increase of enslaved Africans in Sicily during the late fifteenth and sixteenth century remains unclear. While Verlinden attributed it to the rise in the Atlantic trade, other scholars have pointed to the rise in corsair warfare.[25] The jump to the Atlantic or corsair warfare is a logical assumption in the dynamics of a historiography of the Mediterranean that has shut off Africa south of the Sahara. Even when the words Borno appeared in a 1565 census, an Italian author assumed it must have been Borneo, in southeast Asia, rather than Borno in West Africa.[26] In this dissertation, I will further develop Aymard's conclusion by showing that the increase was at least as much due to the growth of Borno and Hausa states as it was to political shifts in the Mediterranean.

Reconstructing the Sahara as a connective sea resituates the Central Sahel as an integral element in this history. Borno expanded considerably in the sixteenth century and in Kano during the fifteenth and sixteenth century campaigns on the South intensified.[27] Many enslaved Africans stayed in the Sahel where they were often used for military purposes, concubines, and domestic use.[28] From the chronicles of Kano and Songhay, it is also evident that the enslaved men and women were used as status markers, forms of currency, and for labor and protection of the gold industry.[29] But it was also economically and politically important for rulers in the Sahel to

l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome, Vol. XLIV, (1974): 1-21.

[25] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee*, 12, 134. Historian Fiume wrote that corsair raids were at their peak in the early sixteenth century and moved captives from Libya and Tunisia to Sicily and Southern Italy.

[26] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 374–420.

[27] Mahdi Adamu, "The Hausa and Their Neighbors in the Central Sudan," in *General History of Africa*, ed. D. T Niane, vol. IV (London: Heinemann, 1984), 288, 299.

[28] Allan G. B Fisher and Humphrey J Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa; the Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade,* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 23.

[29] Paul E Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge

maintain relationships with rulers in the North. One of the ways Borno did so was through the

slave trade to the Ottoman North that supplied them with military equipment and horses. There is

less information on these trades but some scholars have ventured rough estimates, with the

export trade across the Sahara desert, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean ranging from 5,000 to 10,000

enslaved people per year for the centuries before 1600.[30]

Race: The Same but Different

> The construction of race is never a neutral act that can be decontextualized from a hierarchy
> of power.[31]
> -Sierra Lomuto

In addition to looking at how geographic conceptualizations of race have influenced the

writing of this trans-Saharan history, I also examine the construction of race in relation to

practices of slavery along this trafficking route. I am not looking at race as a concept detached

from its actions nor am I looking for its origins.[32] The search for origins of ideas in the early

modern period is connected to a teleological view of history that relies on the assumption that the

birth of history started with the creation of the Western world.[33] While in its modern context race

University Press, 2012), 33; H. R Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs: Being Mainly Translations of a Number of Arabic Manuscripts Relating to the Central and Western Sudan* (London: Cass, 1967).

[30] Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 25, 27.

[31] Sierra Lomuto, "Race and Vulnerability: Mongols in Thirteenth-Century Ethnographic Travel Writing," in *Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*, ed. Ann E Zimo et al. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 30.

[32] Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge UK: University Press, 2009).

[33] Bruce S. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 14, 21. I am focusing on arguments of race developed in work from Bruce Hall and Geraldine Heng. Where the former focuses on "the work" that race did, and the latter developed a more flexible idea of the invention, and re-invention, of race.

relies on false biological premises, I don't think it is useful to think of race as a distinctly modern

phenomenon. Beginning in the seventeenth century, biology was activated to support "a moral

ordering" of the world that had already begun to take place in different regions of the world at

earlier periods.[34] In a very broad definition, I am considering race as a term used to differentiate

groups of people, in which the traits assigned to these groups were considered hereditary and

immutable.[35] First, I consider how ideologies of race were developed and transformed along this

trans-Saharan slave trade route from the Central Sahel into the Mediterranean and how they

justified the enslavement and forced migrations of West Africans. Secondly, I examine whether

there were racialized distinctions emerging in Sicily within its diverse enslaved community.

Ultimately, I am arguing that the concept of race played a role in differentiating West Africans

from their North African and Jewish counterparts, and was actively used as a tool of social

stratification on both the Islamic and Christian shores of the Mediterranean. I am referencing

Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell's description of the trans-Saharan slave trades as being "the

same but different," because I do not contend that race contained the same meaning in each

place, but that shared ideologies played different functions in each local setting.[36]

Scholarship on the Central Sahel and North Africa shows that religious and racial

ideologies worked in hand and hand, and were employed in different ways to serve specific

functions. In the Central Sahel, concepts of race were tied to Arab lineages that rulers used to

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[34] Hall, *A History of Ra*ce, 9; Keita, *Race and The Writing of History*, 16-18. As Keita writes, with the support of Kwame Appiah's work, "race is an ill-gotten, unsubstantiated, pseudoscientific configuration designed to justify and rationalize the distribution of the world's resources." Hall uses the term "moral ordering."

[35] Hall, A History of Race, 11-12; Heng, 267.

[36] Hunwick and Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora*, ix.

assert their divine power.[37] John Hunwick pointed to the racist ideologies in medieval Arabic writing, but questioned their significance when he wrote that "it must be said that some of the stereotypes of Blacks in the geographical/ethnographic literature merely echo material that originated in the ancient Greek writing."[38] More recent scholarship has examined how slavery and race interacted in North Africa beyond being a passive reiteration of Greek ideology. Historian Chouki El Hamel assertively concluded that "Morocco did in fact demonstrate the exploitation of Blacks and the ideological foundation for a society divided by skin color. Hence, religious principles were substituted by racial concepts and a racist ideology in order to establish and preserve the social boundaries that demarcate the identities and privileges of the Arabs and the Berbers."[39] Historian Rémi Dewière also found potential similarities in Tripoli, where Black Africans were under social restrictions that confined them to certain neighborhoods, and defined who they could marry.[40]

In European history, the discussion of marginalization and persecution during this time period is most often framed in religious rather than racial terms.[41] With a sudden influx of Black

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[37] Michael A. Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 303; Amir H Idris, *Conflict and Politics of Identity in Sudan* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006),26; Baz Lecocq, "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race and Social Categories in Late Twentieth-Century Northern Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2005): 47.

[38] Hunwick and Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora*, xx-xxi.

[39] Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

[40] Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly de Barbarie, 1685, MF 12219, 36r, Bibliothèque nationale de France cited in Rémi Dewière, "L'esclave, le savant et le sultan" (PhD thesis, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2015), 586.

[41] Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English, *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Interaction and Cultural Change* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Stephen O'Shea, *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (New York: Walker:Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2006); Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern*

Africans into the European slave populations, the question of race became an important consideration in the distinctions being made between marginalized groups in Iberia. During this time Blackness was associated with paganism, so it fell outside the wars occurring among the Abrahamic religions. Historian James Sweet has considered the influence of skin color in early modern Iberian slavery, tracing it through a longer genealogy of value judgments based on Black skin color in medieval Arabic writings.[42] He acknowledged that while the scientific definition had not yet been developed, distinctions were being made in which there was "less worth attributed to human beings who had black or brown skins."[43] In an unsettling example, he cited the lack of burial rights for Guinean slaves in Lisbon, whose corpses were being thrown on the streets. In other cases enslaved Africans were favored, such as in Valencia where most purchasers preferred a slave directly from Africa, because they described them as uncivilized, and more malleable.[44] These distinctions affected states of freedom and opportunities for social mobility on the Iberian peninsula, and deserve further analysis in the local context of Palermo.

Why Palermo?

Early modern northern Italy conforms with studies of European slavery that have found the use of enslaved people primarily within elite domestic courts in urban centers.[45] This

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World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[42] James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 54, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 143–66.

[43] Sweet, "The Iberian Roots," 165.

[44] Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars,* 60.

[45] Domenico Gioffré, *Il mercato degli schiavi a Genova nel secolo XV* (Genova: Fratelli Bozzi, 1971); T. F Earle and K. J. P Lowe, eds. *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University

specialized use resulted in small enslaved populations and has discouraged further studies from

Europeanists, with historian Sally Mckee writing that "in the case of Italy, singling out slaves as

commodities worthy of study here suggests that the trade in human chattel played a greater role

in the economies of Renaissance Italy than it actually did."[46] While the focus of my project is not

to prove that slaves played an important economic role to Europe's commercial revolution,

Mckee herself acknowledged that the situation was likely different in Southern Italy.[47] In

Palermo, there were higher numbers both due to captives from corsair warfare and the growing

slave trade from Borno and enslaved men and women were used in domestic, agricultural, and

criminal labor. Despite the high presence of enslaved people in Sicily, research on slavery

specific to Southern Italy remains primarily insular to Italian scholars. Ultimately it is

fragmented both spatially and temporally. In the late nineteenth century, two Italian scholars

showed the variations in notarial practices at the points of sale of enslaved people.[48] In 1926,

Matteo Gaudioso revisited the topic of slavery in Sicily from the fourteenth to eighteenth

centuries, and made a more comprehensive contribution by considering the networks involved in

the procurement of slaves and the legal rights of enslaved and freed people.[49] In the early 1970s,

Anastasia Motta published an article on the legal status of enslaved and freed people in

Messina.[50] More recently, historians Giovanna Fiume and Salvatore Bono have provided

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Press, 2005); Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 306; Phillips, 7.

[46] McKee, "Domestic Slavery," 306-308.

[47] Mckee, 316.

[48] Corrado Avolio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia nel secolo XVI.* (Firenze: Tipografia cooperativa, 1888); Giuseppe Cosentino, "I Notari in Sicilia," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, 2, 12 (1887).

[49] Matteo Gaudioso, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926).

[50] Giovanna Anastasi Motta, "La Schiavitu a Messina Nel Primo Cinquecento," *Archivio Storico per La Sicilia*

expansive works that situate the importance of Italy in the study of Mediterranean slavery and have also specifically looked at Sicilian African saints. All of these scholars have shown the potential for Sicilian archives in the research on slavery, but few focus specifically on the enslavement of Black Africans as unique to the diverse slavery systems of the Mediterranean.

I approach Palermo as Atlantic Historian Lara Putnam's telling example; one that "points to unsuspected social networks and flows of information that cut across or swam against fundamental currents."[51] Palermo is an exceptional example of slavery in Italy, where enslaved members of its neighborhoods composed at times up to 20% of the population. I am adopting Historian Celine Dauverd's periodization from 1480-1620, what she termed "the second phase" of the relationship between the Iberian crown and its trading nations, in which there was a rise in the Castilian conflict with Ottoman Turks over control of the Mediterranean.[52] The rise in conflicts in the Mediterranean would have contributed to a rise in the exchange of captives between Sicilian and North African shores, that some scholars have linked to the rise of enslaved West Africans in Palermo. During this period there was also the Spanish takeover of Tripoli and the rise of Borno and Hausa states. Both of these factors would have given Sicilian diplomats temporary direct control of a growing slave trade from Borno that had previously been in the hands of the Ottoman.

At the same time that I disconnect the Atlantic-Iberian trade as an important source of enslaved Africans in Sicily, I also recenter it within the shared racial ideologies developing

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Orientale 1 (1974): 305–42.

[51] Lara Putnam, "To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (April 1, 2006): 616.

[52] Céline Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans: Trade Diaspora in Early Modern Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (January 1, 2006): 48.

across a Mediterranean Europe that had an influx of Black Africans living in their cities and

towns. During this time Sicily was divided into three zones, each with different relationships to

the Mediterranean, and all were impacted by this population shift.[53] On the eastern point,

Messina was also an important port for the importation of enslaved people but many of its

archives were destroyed in the World War II.[54] I focus on the western side of Sicily because

Palermo and Trapani were active commercial centers that connected networks from Genoa to the

North African coast.[55] They were also the political headquarters of the Senate and the Spanish

viceroys.[56] Historiographies of slavery on the Iberian peninsula are referenced in my work in a

comparative approach. They are especially relevant because they represent another borderland

with high populations of Black Africans, and long-standing Muslim communities connected to a

history of Arab rule. My research draws on the more abundant scholarship from Lisbon and

Valencia specifically, to compare the religious and racial tensions that impacted the integration,

assimilation and social mobility of enslaved Africans.[57]

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[53] David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200-1500: The Struggle for Dominion* (London; New York: Longman, 1997), 74; Stephen R. Epstein, "Cities, Regions and the Late Medieval Crisis: Sicily and Tuscany Compared," *Past & Present*, no. 130 (February 1, 1991): 17; Carmelo Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante e Tunisia Nei Secoli XIV E XV* (Trapani: Società Editrice Drepanum, 1952), 18. Abulafia and Trasselli both wrote that Messina looked away from rest of Sicily and was more politically aligned with the Italian mainland and Egypt.

[54] Maurice Aymard, "De La Traite," 6; Peter Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563-1667," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 1 (2009): 47; Carmelo Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante e Tunisia Nei Secoli XIV E XV* (Trapani: Società Editrice Drepanum, 1952), 13. Mazur noted that Messina and Siracusa were important ports for slaves. Aymard wrote that the arrival of enslaved people varied from place to place, there were more slaves in Augusta which was a hot spot for Barberossa, and close to Siracusa which was a big center for the arrival of Muslim and Black slaves, Registers in Catania and Syracuse, while incomplete, show the same thing. Trasselli recognized that medieval Messina was one of more active ports with both Africa and Asia minor, but many its archives were destroyed in the war.

[55] Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante,* 21. Trapani was also an important port on the western coast that was positioned on a trade route between Genoa and the Levant.

[56] Epstein,"Cities, Regions," 26. According to Epstein after the 1430s Palermo expanded largely thanks to the presence of government and after a revolt in 1450 due to its privileged food provisioning, but it did not regain full primacy before 1500.

[57] Debra Blumenthal, "'La Casa Dels Negres': Black African Solidarity in Late Medieval Valencia," in *Black*

Methodologies and Chapter Outline

> All history is the history of gaps.[58]
> -P.E.H. Hair

> Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.[59]
> - Michel-Rolph Trouillot

In working with primarily Sicilian documents it is important to consider some of the challenges of reaching the history of those oppressed, in this case enslaved Africans, in documents that replicate the power structures in which they were created. In order to overcome this obstacle I address two gaps; the silence *in* the archives and the silencing *of* the archives. When I first approached archivists in Sicily and explained my project they told me I would not find what I was looking for. They emphatically said there were no African slaves in Sicily. They would quickly redirect me to the redemption archives that dealt with captives of corsair warfare. In many ways they were right - I would not find what I was looking for. Enslaved Africans do appear in sixteenth century documents in Sicilian archives - but with baptized names or listed with only ages and prices. I did not find firsthand narratives of their experiences. Instead, they appear briefly, and through the lens of European eyes. African historians have been well trained in the importance of oral histories to Africa, and some have tried to challenge European texts by

Africans in Renaissance Europe, eds. Kate Lowe and T. F Earle (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Kate Lowe, "Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation to, or Appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470-1520," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 31, no. 2 (2008): 67–86.

[58] P. E. H. Hair, *Africa Encountered: European Contacts and Evidence, 1450-1700* (Hampshire; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Variorum, 1997), IX.

[59] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 51.

finding the oral element in the written word, reconstructing the African voices that were likely present at the construction of texts such as European travelogues.[60] But there is a significant limitation to this methodology in its application to legal, commercial and census documents, in which enslaved Africans would have played little role in their construction. As much as I can I have looked for those unintended moments, the ones, in which Ginzburg explained a "conflicting cultural reality may leak out even from such heavily controlled texts."[61] The closest I come to these moments is with the canonization records from San Benedetto, in which there were direct testimonies from people who had lived at the same time as Benedetto.

The second approach to gaining more insight into the African part of this history has been to address the silencing of certain archives. Here, I am referring to the separation of archives, and the silencing of extant historical documents from Africa in Mediterranean histories, and particularly Sicilian ones. An important discussion that arose from an Italian discourse on geopolitics in the 1990s encouraged recentering Sicily in the Mediterranean, instead of at the periphery of Italy and Europe.[62] Massimo Cacciari encouraged the idea of a boundless Mediterranean that would explore influences from outside of the European world.[63] Giuseppe Bonaffini emphasized that Sicily had an integral role in uniting these larger Mediterranean networks because of its geographic link to Muslim trade networks and corsairs.[64] With this shift,

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[60] Gérard Chouin, "Seen, Said, or Deduced? Travel Accounts, Historical Criticism, and Discourse Theory: Towards an 'Archeology' of Dialogue in Seventeenth-Century Guinea," *History in Africa* 28 (January 1, 2001): 53-70.

[61] Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 161.

[62] Norma Bouchard, "Italy's Geophilosophies of the Mediterranean," *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (January 1, 2011): 352.

[63] Bouchard, "Italy's Geophilosopies, 347-348; Massimo Cacciari, *Geofilosofia dell'Europa*. (Milano: Adelphi, 2003).

[64] Bonaffini, Bonafede, and Dispenza, *La Sicilia per l'unità del Mediterraneo: primi studi e contributi*, 11-13.

the interpretative horizons were changed, with influences from Africa becoming integrally linked to Mediterranean history. Methodologically, it meant that writing a history of Sicily would require a reconsideration of the archives from the African regions to which it was connected.

In this dissertation, where there are gaps in the Sicilian archives, it is often useful to turn to those from Tripoli and the Central Sahel. This is done primarily in the first chapter, where I explore the origins of the slave trade in Borno, the trafficking of enslaved people from the Central Sahel into North Africa, and the interaction of shared racial stereotypes across the Mediterranean shores. For this part of the history, I am primarily using translated Arabic documents from North Africa and the Central Sahel. The insights gained from these archives guide my interpretation of Sicilian archives throughout the rest of the dissertation. As someone who has studied and taught the Hausa language and its Ajami orthographic traditions, I am a strong proponent of positioning African language sources in their rightful places in shaping these histories. Much more to stands to be done with Hausa Ajami documents and embodied histories of the Bori Hausa cults in Northern Africa that could inform this history but because of limitations of funding and time, I am reserved to hold this as a goal for a future project.[65]

The majority of this dissertation focuses on the experiences of slavery once an African arrived, and most likely, remained in Sicily.[66] I collected, transcribed and translated my sources from local Sicilian archives in Palermo over the course of a year. During this time I visited the Archivio di Stato di Palermo, at both the Gancia and Catena sites, Archivio Storico Diocesano di

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[65] Hunwick and Troutt Powell, The African Diaspora, xxiii. Notes the importance of Hausa Bori cults.

[66] John Hunwick, "Black Africans in the Mediterranean World: Introduction to a Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora," in *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, ed. Elizabeth Savage (London; Portland, Or.: F. Cass, 1992), 5–6. I am adopting an approach suggested by Hunwick in this article that "studies will inevitably go beyond a study of the institution of slavery to examine the social role and economic status of freed slaves, their degree of social mobility, their cultural assimilation (or lack of it), questions of colour and racial prejudice etc. Both in historical perspective and in the contemporary world."

Palermo, Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo, and the Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo. Throughout my dissertation, I have integrated census records, senate proclamations, parochial burial and baptism records, and the canonization records of San Benedetto il Moro, an enslaved African who lived and died in Palermo. In addition I draw from the rich work of Italian historians such as Carmello Trasselli, Armando Di Pasquale, Salvatore Bono, and Giovanna Fiume who have mined the Sicilian archives and shared their findings in numerous publications. Many of the Sicilian documents reveal the power structures that were being created to limit the social mobility of Black Africans. These are important because they often remained codified in law, and social perceptions, longer than the system of slavery itself. As much I can, I also look for the unintended messages conveyed of what West Africans carried with them into Sicily voluntarily - through religious practices and cultural traditions.

Chapter two is an examination of the growth of Borno and the Hausa states and their political, religious, and economic alliances in North Africa that supported the trafficking of enslaved Sahelians northwards. I also consider how the movement of racial ideologies across this route corresponded to a separate system of slavery that existed in the Mediterranean alongside that of corsair warfare.

In chapter three, I consider the discordant narratives from notarial records documenting the movement of enslaved people along the European shores of the Mediterranean and the census information from households in Palermo that reveal a high number of enslaved Africans. Exploring the gap between the two archives shows that Sicily had distinct practices of slavery from Northern Italy, and played a less significant role in the Atlantic-Iberian export slave trade.

In chapter four I look at how the interests of elite Sicilian slaveholders determined the experiences of their enslaved men and women. The Spanish monarchy's attention to its Atlantic

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empire and Mediterranean expansion impacted both the economic and political climate for urban elite Sicilians in Palermo and, in turn, the distinct ways enslaved Africans were used to meet the economic, agricultural, financial and criminal needs of these same Sicilians.

In chapter five I examine the canonization records of San Benedetto and parochial records from Palermo to analyze the complex, and often contradictory, roles the Catholic Church played in Sicilian slavery. Many priests owned slaves, and the church helped propagate racial stereotypes of Black Africans. At the same time, enslaved Africans turned to the church to create their own social lives and communities in Sicily.

Chapter 2: Slavery and Captivity Across the Sahelian-Mediterranean Region[1]

In the mid-sixteenth century, San Antonio da Noto was an enslaved Black man who lived in Sicily. According to the few Sicilian accounts of his life, corsairs captured him during a land raid of the Sicilian countryside and took him to Tunisia.[2] In Tunisia, he renounced Catholicism and became a famous marabout. After forty years, he was reportedly overcome with remorse and abandoned Islam for Catholicism. As a result he was executed in Tunisia in 1561 and became a Catholic martyr. Genoese merchants smuggled his corpse out of Tunisia and brought his relics back to Genoa.[3] On the surface, his life was clearly a victorious account of Catholicism over Islam. But his history also offers small clues of the more complex interactions a Black man may have had in the growing religious wars and the diverse forms of slavery systems of the Mediterranean. First, Antonio had been enslaved prior to being taken in corsair raid. This suggests that there was a separate practice of slavery in Sicily than that resulting from corsair activity. Once captured in the Mediterranean, he moved between Catholicism and Islam. On both shorelines, his religion was depicted as exceptional; as a Muslim Black man, he became a famous marabout, and as a Catholic Black man he achieved sainthood. This type of mobility between shorelines and religions was often reserved for North Africans and Europeans. Despite a strong presence of Islam across the Sahel, Black Africans were increasingly being labeled as

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[1] Different versions of sections of this chapter have been published in the following book chapter: Lori De Lucia, "The Space between Borno and Palermo: Slavery and Its Boundaries in the Late Medieval Saharan-Mediterranean Region," in *Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*, ed. Ann E Zimo et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 11-26.

[2] Salvatore Bono, "Due Santi Negri: Benedetto Da San Fratello e Antonio Da Noto," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1966): 78.

[3] Corrado Avolio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia nel secolo XVI.* (Firenze: Tipografia cooperativa, 1888), 14-15; Bono, "Due Santi Negri," 78-79.

pagans in North Africa, and once in Sicily their conversion to Catholicism, and residency, was usually a more permanent status. The networks that intersected in the retelling of San Antonio's story were important carriers of ideas and people across the Sahelo-Mediterranean region in this time period. This chapter aims to reconnect the Sicilian slave trade of Black Africans to its source in the Central Sahel and examine the trans-Saharan construction of the archetype of an inherently enslaveable Black African that developed alongside practices of slavery in the Mediterranean.

In the first half of this chapter, I will examine the evidence that most Black Africans entering Sicily were connected to a slave trafficking route that extended from the Borno region to Barqa on the North African coast. While many enslaved Africans stayed in the Central Sahel, some were also exported northward to Mediterranean shores. For the medieval period, there is a paucity of scholarship on the volume of these trans-Saharan slave trades, resulting in only rough estimates of the export trade across the Saharan desert, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 slaves per year for the centuries before 1600.[4] The numbers of enslaved people moving specifically from the Central Sahel into North Africa are even more difficult to estimate. It is however clear that the trans-Saharan slave trade continued to grow with the expansion of the Atlantic, and during the sixteenth century exports of enslaved people from Songhay and Borno to the North and East reached their peak.[5] There were four major trans-Saharan trade routes in West Africa that could carry slaves to Northern markets; the route from Borno was the shortest distance to the northern coast in Tripoli and had been used to transport captives as early as the

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[4] Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25.

[5] Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 27.

eighth century.[6] Historians have argued that from the fifteenth century Iberian Peninsula exports replaced North Africa as the main supplier of slaves into Europe. The first part of this chapter counters with key indicators that the expanding trans-Saharan trade remained Sicily's primary source at least through the early sixteenth century.[7]

In recent scholarship, the increase of enslaved Black Africans along the European coasts of the Mediterranean is often analyzed in the context of the growing Atlantic trade, and in many ways this is still useful. Africans were entering into a new racialized category of Blackness when they arrived in Europe. In both Iberian and Sicilian markets, there was a distinction being made between enslaved Moors and Black Africans that reflected a general knowledge of the northern frontiers of the Bilād al-Sudān, or the "Land of the Blacks." These borders were borrowed from Muslim scholars. At the same time, in North Africa, Sahelians were also increasingly being systemically marginalized because of their skin color, despite the simultaneous growth of Islamic sultanates in the Sahelian belt. By the seventeenth century in Tripoli, freed Black Africans were restricted to their own neighborhood and were legally only allowed to marry other Black Africans.[8] In the late sixteenth century in Morocco, during the Sultan Mawlay Isma'il's invasion of Songhay, Muslim judges and notaries systemized techniques to classify Black Africans that marked them as different from all other free Moroccans, and made them susceptible to enslavement.[9] The second part of this chapter connects the two spaces enslaved Sahelians

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[6] Bradford G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 1 (1969): 16, 18.

[7] Maurice Aymard, "De La Traite Aux Chiourmes: La Fin de l'esclavage Dans La Sicile Moderne," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* XLIV (1974). Historian Verlinden and da Mota proposed the shift to Iberian markets, whereas in this article Aymard also points to the continued importance of trans-Saharan trade.

[8] Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly de Barbarie, 1685, MF 12219, 36r, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[9] Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

crossed to enter Palermo, the Sahara and Mediterranean, as two heuristic seas in which an archetype of a Black African was being constructed in opposition to both whiteness and Abrahamic religions.[10] It then begins to explore the social consequences of this archetype in relation to assigned types of enslaved labor and access to manumission.

Borno, Islam, and the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade

Beginning in the fifteenth century there was a shift to a more institutionalized practice of Islam across the Central Sahel, in which rulers were declaring themselves divinely ordained through the construction of Arab genealogies. Islam had been adopted as early as the seventh century in Egypt and had a strong hold across North Africa by the ninth century.[11] In Borno, the first *Mai,* or ruler*,* listed in the *Diwan* claimed paternal ties to Saif Ibn Dhī-Yazan of the Beni Himyar of Kuraish, from the same lineage of the prophet Muhammad.[12] In the *Legend of Daura*, the origin of the Hausa states was attributed to the trans-Saharan trek of prince Bayajidda, the son of the king of Baghdad.[13] As rulers in Borno and Hausaland fortified the frontiers of an

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Press, 2013), 103–4, 162.

[10] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 58; Ghislaine Lydon, "Saharan Oceans and Bridges, Barriers and Divides in Africa's Historiographical Landscape," *The Journal of African History* 56, no. 1 (March 2015):3-5. El Hamel discusses shared Mediterranean practices of slavery and Lydon places the use of heuristic seas in a historiographical perspective.

[11] Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds, *Historical Atlas of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.

[12] Ahmad Ibn Furtū, *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma of Bornu (1571–1583) by His Imam. Ahmed Ibn Fartua; Together with the "Diwan of the Sultans of Bornu" and "Girgam" of the Magumi*. Translated by Herbert Richmond Palmer (Lagos: Printed by the government printer, 1926), 84.

[13] Ousmane Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 2016), 73-74; Dierk Lange, "The Bayajidda Legend and Hausa History," in *African Zion: Studies in Black Judaism*, eds. Edith Bruder and Tudor Parfitt (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 138-139. There is dispute over the historical accuracy of this account, but it is worth noting as part of the larger Sahelian trend to establish clerical lineages which will be discussed further later in the chapter.

Islamic Sahel, they were simultaneously creating a pagan "other." According to Islamic law, slaves could only be acquired through jihad, so the frontiers of Islam also signified the frontiers of enslaveable populations.[14] In Borno, the consolidation of power in N'Gazargamu occurred after its split from Kanem and its capital in Njimi to the East of Lake Chad. Njimi, subsequently, became pagan lands and was frequently raided by the Muslim rulers of Borno – likely resulting in the targeted enslavement of the Bulala and Teda ethnic groups residing there.[15] In oral histories from Hausaland, the first Muslim leader "drove out the pagan Hausa, and they fled to the bush."[16] These rural areas became sources of slave raiding, while power became centralized in Kano where King Muhammad Rumfa ruled from 1463 to 1499.[17]

For both Hausaland and Borno, the institutionalization of Islam coincided with the rise of importance in enslaved people for the expansion and maintenance of their power in the Central Sahel. Slave labor was used in the long-standing salt industry in Kawar and Fachi, in present-day Niger, that supplied Sahelian markets.[18] In both places, enslaved men supported the Islamic state; they were used as bodyguards, in royal entourages and armies. During Abdullah Burja's rule from 1438 to 1452, there were supposedly thousands of enslaved men and women who lived in Kano and worked on the King's agricultural estates.[19] There were also hundreds of enslaved

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[14] John O. Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), 53.

[15] Furtū, *History of the First Twelve Years*, 4–5; Dierk Lange, "Ethnogenesis from within the Chadic State. Some Thoughts on the History of Kanem-Borno," *Paideuma* 39 (January 1, 1993): 269.

[16] Mervyn Hiskett, "The 'Song of Bagauda': A Hausa King List and Homily in Verse–II," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 1965): 116.

[17] Heidi J. Nast, "Islam, Gender, and Slavery in West Africa Circa 1500: A Spatial Archaeology of the Kano Palace, Northern Nigeria," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 1 (1996): 69.

[18] Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Borno Salt Industry," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11, no. 4 (1978): 648.

[19] Mahdi Adamu, "The Hausa and Their Neighbors in the Central Sudan," in *General History of Africa*, ed. Djibril

women in Muhammad Rumfa's palace who, in addition to serving as concubines, were responsible for the threshing of grain and the grain tax collection.[20] Muhammad Rumfa had the first formal all-male state council, all of whom came from slave lineages, and he also employed eunuchs in his treasury.[21] In addition, enslaved Africans sustained trans-Sahelian hierarchies through their circulation as diplomatic gifts and tribute payments. For example, Katsina, in Hausaland, paid an annual tribute of 100 enslaved individuals to N'gazargamu, the capital of Borno.[22]

From its new capital on the west of Lake Chad, Borno controlled both the natron trade of the Kawar region that supplied Sahelian markets and the slave trade route that led through the Fezzan to Tripoli.[23] Rémi Dewière termed the period between 1391 and 1574 a time of regional consolidation in Borno.[24] During this time there was a reorganization of commercial networks, that affect trans-Sahelian markets as well as trade toward the North. Dewière noted that the desire to refuel economic connections in the North was marked by a 1440 letter from the sultans of Borno to the merchants of Twat, an important Oasis town, to reestablish Northward trade and then in 1484 the visit of Sultan Ali b. Dunama to Cairo.[25] Part of its ability to maintain its

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Tamsir Niane, Vol. IV (London: Heinemann, 1984), 296; Herbert Richmond Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs: Being Mainly Translations of a Number of Arabic Manuscripts Relating to the Central and Western Sudan* (London: Cass, 1967), 110. This number may be allegorical, but represented the importance of slave labor.

[20] Heidi J. Nast, *Concubines and Power: Five Hundred Years in a Northern Nigerian Palace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 31.

[21] Nast, "Islam, Gender, and Slavery," 55; "Kano Chronicle," in Herbert Richmond Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 109, 112. Nast notes that this was similar to Murat II in Ottoman empire, who had a eunuch-run treasury.

[22] Adamu, "The Hausa and Their Neighbors," 279. Again, this number may have been more figurative than factual.

[23] Ahmad Ibn Furtū, *History of the First Twelve Years*, 4–5.

[24] Rémi Dewière, *Du Lac Tchad à La Mecque : Le Sultanat Du Borno et Son Monde (XVIe-XVIIe Siècle)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017), 3.

[25] Dewière, *Du Lac Tchad*, 3-4.

monopoly of northbound trade was due to Borno's political alliances with North African rulers.

From 1475, the rulers of Bornu were in touch with the Bannu Makki and Banu Ghurab shayhks

of Tripoli, then the temporary Spanish occupiers, and later the Ottoman Turks.[26] One result of

these Northern alliances, was that Borno's rulers received horses, chainmail, and Turkish fighters

in return for enslaved men and women.[27] Interestingly, with the Spanish takeover of Tripoli the

sultan Muhammad b. Idris Borno may have also explored ways to bypass working with the

Catholic Spanish officials, by turning towards westward Saharan trade to Morocco, which means

that some of these enslaved men and women were likely also in Moroccan slave markets, and

potentially its armies.[28]

This simultaneously increased the amount of enslaved Sahelians in the North and

strengthened Borno's military strength in the Sahel. As Borno rose in power, other Sahelian

states attempted to secure alternate routes to trade northwards. The Tuareg took control of Aïr

between 1438 and 1500, an alternate trans-Saharan trade route hub connected to Egypt and North

Africa with access to salt mines.[29] Hausa merchants maintained ties to both of these hubs, and

subsequently increased their raids and trade in horses for slaves to the south of Hausaland in

order to supply both markets in Borno and Air.[30] Later, under Muhammadu Kanta, the growing

Kebbi state in Hausaland also directly challenged Borno's power though military strikes, and its

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[26] Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan," 18.

[27] Robin Law, "Horses, Firearms, and Political Power in Pre-Colonial West Africa," *Past & Present* no. 72 (1976): 131; Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan," 25.

[28] Dewière, *Du Lac Tchad*, 7.

[29] Nast, *Concubines and Power*, 60.

[30] Adamu, "The Hausa and Their Neighbors," 284, 288; Nast, "Islam and Gender," 50.

own expansion into the Agadez region.[31] One outcome of this frequent raiding and conflict in the Sahel was an increase in slaves sent across the Sahel and northward.[32] Another important point here is that the term Borno assigned to many Sahelians in Sicily likely lacked any significant meaning as an ethnic identity, but rather signified the origin point of enslavement for diverse Africans.

At the same time that Sicily lost an important source of slaves in the Eastern Mediterranean, there was also an increase of the number of enslaved Sahelians arriving in North African ports. From 1400 to 1499, it has been estimated that there was an annual average of 5,000 slaves traveling across the Sahara, a number that would fall to 1,413 by the eighteenth century.[33] In addition to the aforementioned growth of Borno's state sanctioned trade and increased conflict in the Sahel, there was also ongoing nomadic raiding along the Saharan edges that contributed to this growth. In the fourteenth century, the Sultan of Borno wrote a letter to the Sultan of Egypt complaining that polytheist Judham Arabs "have seized our free men and our relatives, who are Muslims and sold them to the slave dealers of Egypt and Syria and others; some they have kept for their own service."[34] Later in the fifteenth-century Aïr region, which was connected to the trans-Saharan trade route to Ghadames and Ghat in Libya, a Muslim Fulani cleric wrote a letter to the Egyptian scholar al-Suyūtī, in which he lamented that the inhabitants, most likely Tuareg, "care not for the Qur'an and Sunna, except when there is a dirham or dinar to

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[31] Adamu, 278.

[32] Adamu, 280, 286.

[33] John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Routledge, 2007), 39, 53.

[34] Abu 'l'Abbas Ahmad Al-Qalqashandi, "Subh al-a'sha," in *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, ed. J.F.P. Hopkins and Nehemia Levtzion (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 347.

be had, otherwise not" and that they were raiding and enslaving free Muslim men.[35] One

motivation for this raiding seems to have been the high profit margins. It is hard to estimate

prices, but the value of slaves increased exponentially in Northern markets with one later

example showing that a person who was bought for 9 piastres in Borno, resold for 24 piastres in

Fezzan, and 40 to 60 piastres in Tripoli.[36] Eunuchs potentially garnered ten times the amount

because of the high risk of the operation.[37]

Sicilian Trade with Tripoli

Trade in enslaved people was connected to one of the most important commodities in

Western Sicily, durum wheat. In the late fifteenth century, one Sicilian controlled a significant

portion of the wheat trade in North Africa. In 1455 and 1489 massive shipments of Sicilian

wheat were sent to North Africa; 75,000 quintals, in return for half a ton of gold to the island.[38]

Braudel also pointed to the connection of gold and enslaved people, writing that, "Tripoli, at any

rate, was a rendezvous not only for Black slaves who were still arriving by the Sahara route as

recorded in 1586 but also for gold dust."[39] It is significant that a portion of this wheat trade was

destined specifically for the Barqa region, a hub of the trans-Saharan slave trade route from

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[35] John O Hunwick, "Notes on a Late Fifteenth-Century Document Concerning 'Al-Takrur'," in *African Perspectives: Papers in the History, Politics and Economics of Africa Presented to Thomas Hodgkin*, eds. Christopher Allen and Richard William Johnson (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 14, 17.

[36] Michel Fontenay, "Routes et Modalités Du Commerce Des Esclaves Dans La Méditerranée Des Temps Modernes (XVI e, XVII e et XVIII e Siècles)," *Revue Historique* 308, no. 4 (640) (2006) : 817.

[37] Jan Hogendorn, "The Hideous Trade. Economic Aspects of the 'Manufacture' and Sale of Eunuchs," *Paideuma* 45 (1999): 144.

[38] Braudel, 1:470.

[39] Braudel, 1:475

Borno. Leo Africanus commented of Barqa that people were pawning their children in the

deserts of Barqa for Sicilian wheat.[40] But this was likely more than an informal bartering

experience. There was an established trade of grains between Malta and the Barqa regions, with

historian Abela finding examples of ships in 1494 and 1495 carrying grains to Barqa. One

merchant acquired slave for his creditor as part of this shipment.[41] This connection continued

throughout the sixteenth century, during which trade flourished despite heightened corsair

warfare.[42] The demand for wheat in North Africa grew, as a result of famine and shortages and

the exchange of wheat for enslaved people continued beyond Barqa.[43] In 1544 in Tripoli the

treasurer warned merchants from Malta that the Muslim merchants might try to charge inflated

prices for enslaved Black Africans in exhange for wheat.[44]

European accounts of the slave trade conducted in the town of "*Monti di Barca*" – or

Barqa – also did not suggest a large-scale system.[45] Fifteenth-century Portuguese traveler Zurara

wrote of this trade that:

> To their land (of the Berbers) come some Moors and they sell them of those Negroes
> whom they have kidnapped or else they take them to *Momdebarque*, which is beyond the
> kingdom of Tunis to sell to the Christian merchants who go there and they give them
> these slaves in exchange for bread and some other thing.[46]

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[40] Giovan Lioni Africano, "Della Descrittione Dell'Africa," in *Primo Volume e Terza Editione Delle Navigationi et Viaggi, Raccolto Gia Da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio*, eds. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venetia: 1563) 239.

[41] Joan Abela, *Hospitaller Malta and the Mediterranean Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 166.

[42] Abela, Hospitaller, 168; Carmelo Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante e Tunisia Nei Secoli XIV E XV* (Trapani: Società Editrice Drepanum, 1952), 34. Abela references Goitein, Abulafia, and Green to show that trade continued despite religious antagonism. Italian historian Trasselli also noted that trade flourished despite piracy between Sicily and North Africa.

[43] Carmelo Trasselli, *Siciliani Fra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, Collana Di Testi e Studi Storici (Messina: Intilla, 1981), 129.

[44] Abela, 105.

[45] Barqa was located in present-day Cirenaica.

[46] Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. Translated by Raymond C.

Zurara's depiction of a few Christian merchants trading small items for slaves was probably a deliberate downplay of this trade. The recognition of Castilian merchants participating in an African slave trade would have threatened the Portuguese monopoly that was based on their "discovery of Guinea."[47] Twentieth-century historian Charles Verlinden observed that in the medieval period there was a small number of Black Africans in both Sicily and the Iberian Peninsula marked as being from *Monds de Barca*. When the trade in enslaved Africans increased in Sicily in the sixteenth century, he attributed it to Sicily's role as an export market for the growing Portuguese trade, via the port of Valencia.[48] But by the sixteenth century in Sicily, common terms from the Iberian records such as *Jollof,* that reflected regions of the Senegambian coast, did not appear in commercial or census documents.[49] Verlinden's observation of small numbers of Africans from Barqa during the medieval period was likely because during this period it was primarily a hub for trans-Saharan trade routes into the Muslim Middle East.[50] Later, in a census from 1565 in Palermo half of the total Africans were described specifically as *nigro di Borno*.[51] This suggests that starting in the fifteenth century, contrary to Verlinden's

Beazley and Edgar Prestage (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1896, 2010), 2:233. Words in parentheses are my own.

[47] Zurara, *Chronicle*, 2:347. Zurara used Guinea as a term to denote all of Black Africa.

[48] Charles Verlinden, "L'esclavage en Sicile au bas Moyen Age," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome,* 35 (1963): 91; *Beginnings of Modern Colonization,* 115.

[49] Avelino Texiera da Mota, "Entrée d'esclaves noirs à Valence, 1445–1482: le remplacement de la voie saharienne par la voie atlantique," in *Le Sol, la parole et l'écrit: 2000 ans d'histoire africaine : mélanges en hommage à Raymond Mauny*, eds. Jean Devisse, Claude Hélène Perrot, Yves Person, and Jean-Pierre Chrétien (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer: diffusion, L'Harmattan, 1981), 581–4.

[50] K.P. Moseley, "Caravel and Caravan: West Africa and the World-Economies, ca. 900–1900 AD," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 15, no. 3 (1992): 533.

[51] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 374–420. In this census there was a total of 645 slaves. There were 234 total enslaved men from Africa, with 117 specifically noted as being from Borno. In his analysis, Franchina incorrectly translated this as Borneo.

conclusions, Barqa had grown in importance as an export market into Sicily.

This reconfiguration of the strengthening of Sicily's trade connections to North Africa corresponded to larger political shifts in the Mediterranean. Following the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1452, Sicily lost its main source of slaves from the Eastern Mediterranean, forcing it to look elsewhere.[52] In 1510, Spain gained control of Tripoli and sent officials from Sicily, which was part of the Spanish monarchy, to govern the city. Diego de Obregon, a known slave trafficker, was sent from Sicily to be the secretary of the customs office in Tripoli in 1512.[53] In the same year, Borno sent a mission to Tripoli to assure it would continue its trade in European commodities.[54] As part of the outcome of this meeting, the Spanish were reported to have made a "great trade in Black slaves in Sicily which they had likely received by way of Fazzan."[55] The Fezzan, a section of the Sahara located in present-day Libya, contained a major trade hub along the route from Borno.[56] The shift in political alliances along the Mediterranean shores, an increased demand for Sicilian wheat in North Africa, and Borno's acquirement of exclusive rights to an ancient slave route accompanied by its growth in power all must be considered as integral factors in the increased of enslaved Africans into Sicily.

Defining Borders Across the Sahara

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[52] da Mota, "Entrée d'esclaves noirs," 580.

[53] Nadia Zeldes, "Un Tragico Ritorno: Schiavi Ebrei in Sicilia Dopo La Conquista Spagnola Di Tripoli (1510)," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, anno XIV, no. 54 (2001): 48.

[54] Rémi Dewière, "L'esclave, le savant et le sultan: Représentations du monde et diplomatie au sultanat du Borno (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2015), 74; Ahmad Ibn Furtū, *History of the First Twelve Years*, 57.

[55] Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly de Barbarie, 1685, MF 12219, 108v, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[56] Martin,"Kanem Bornu,"16.

In the latter half of this chapter, I will focus on how concepts of race developed alongside practices of slavery across the regions connected by this slave trafficking route. One of the results of the institutionalization of Islam in Borno and Hausaland was the increase in slave raiding in what were deemed pagan lands. Another result, was the encoding of whiteness onto pre-existing social status systems. Historian Amir Idris wrote that "the importance of race in the Sudan is linked with the construction of Arab origin."[57] This appears to be true for the Hausa and *Maghumi* of Borno. In his work on Borno, Palmer wrote that:

> The history of Bornu is thus the history of its ruling caste the Maghumi. The Maghumi, it is evident from the records, originally counted descent through their mothers, like the modern Tuareg. But with the spread of Islam patrilineal descent became *de rigueur*, and hence it became necessary to invent an Arab pedigree, whether founded on fact or fiction.[58]

In one reference to skin color in the *Diwan*, The annals of the Kings of Borno, the thirteenth-century Sultan Salma was described as "very Black in color. None of Sultan Saif's line was born Black till Sultan Salma. They were all red like the Arabs."[59] Here there is a clear connection to the sultan's color being connected to Arab lineage, and the need to justify that Salma's Blackness was an exception. Similar connections were being made in Tuareg social systems that relied on a caste system that held *imajeghen,* noble warriors, at the top and *inadan,* craftsmen, and *ikelan,* a slave caste, at the bottom.[60] Historian Baz Lecocq, explored how historically those at the top

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[57] Amir H Idris, *Conflict and Politics of Identity in Sudan* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 32.

[58] H. R Palmer, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan,* (London: J. Murray, 1936), 6.

[59] Dierk Lange, Smithsonian Libraries, and African Art Index Project, "An Introduction to the History of Kanem-Borno: The Prologue of the Dīwān," *Borno Museum Society Newsletter*, no. 76–77, 83–84 (July 2008): 79–103; Palmer, *Borno*, 91. The chronological accuracy of the *Diwan* is debated by scholars. Lange proposes that it was at least in existence in the sixteenth century, and is likely based on a collection of oral histories that were transcribed by court historians in Arabic.

[60] Baz Lecocq, "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race and Social Categories in Late Twentieth-Century

were considered racially white, while at the bottom they were considered racially Black and that this was a distinction that became fortified, and transformed, later under colonization.[61] Blackness was also connected to paganism, and therefore lower classes and slaves. In post-Islamized oral histories from Borno and Hausaland, craftsmen and in particular blacksmiths were described as having pagan slave origins.[62] It is important to note, however that the category of Blackness was not always positioned in opposition to whiteness. There were more complex interactions with local belief and social systems, Lecocq points to one example where the Tuareg word *sattafan*, that meant a greenish or shiny Black of a noble person, did not become translated as white until European colonization.[63] The use of whiteness in the fifteenth-century Sahel was increasingly dependent on Islamic scholarship and the power of Arab lineages, but likely also interacted with pre-existing social hierarchies. The relationships of these categories were often a reflection of local expressions of power, or the lack of, and not necessarily skin color. These discussions transformed among North African Muslim clerics, who were shifting the borders of Islam northward, with repercussions for the growing Saharan slave trade.

The idea of sub-Saharan Africa being a separate geographical region from North Africa existed in ancient times. Greeks divided the world into seven climes, which separated Africa

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Northern Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2005): 46.

[61] Lecocq, "The Bellah Question," 45. Lecocq also acknowledged that historians such as Amar Idris have suggested the formation of the concept of whiteness being connected to Islam and an Arab pedigree had already started in the fifteenth century, if not earlier.

[62] H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 74, 99; Francis James Rennell of Rodd, *People of the Veil. Being an Account of the Habits, Organisation and History of the Wandering Tuareg Tribes Which Inhabit the Mountains of Air or Asben in the Central Sahara.* (Oosterhout, N.B.,: Anthropological Publications, 1970); 135. In the Kano Chronicles, there were eleven pagan chiefs were original stock of Kano, one was a blacksmith. In the book of blacksmiths origins were slaves.

[63] Lecocq, 46.

south of the Sahara from the North.[64] Some medieval Arab scholars, who had little to no first-hand knowledge of West Africa, adopted this Greek climatic model. These geographical frontiers carried with them cultural and religious interpretations. The fourth zone, located at the center of the world in the Mediterranean, unified North Africa and Southern Europe as being the "most moderate in its climate and the most civilized in its inhabitants."[65] When Ibn Khaldūn, a fourteenth-century Tunisian scholar, placed the *Bilād al-Sudān*, or Land of Blacks, as part of the first and second climes at the extremes of the world, he described Black people as savages, uncivilized and unintelligent and their skin color a result of being too close to the sun.[66] Al-Dimashqi, a Syrian geographer, similarly described Black people from the equatorial zone like "wild animals and cattle" and went even further to say "they cannot live in the second clime, let alone the third or the fourth."[67] The latter statement lent a biological slant to the definition of Blackness – not only were these authors describing Blackness as inferior, but also as an immutable characteristic that rendered them fundamentally different from people living in the fourth clime. This type of definition was fortified by religious doctrine through the Hamitic theory, or Noah's curse, which originated in the Old Testament. It was employed in Islamic scholarship as early as the tenth century in such a way that attributed certain physical characteristics to Black people, such as "crinkly hair" and "broad faces," and cursed them to a life of servitude for their sins.[68]

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[64] John O. Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 107.

[65] Hunwick, "Region of Mind," 126.

[66] Ibn Khaldūn, "Muqaddima," in Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 321.

[67] Al-Dimashqī, "Nukhbat al-dahr fī 'ajā'ib al-barr wa al-bahr," in Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 205.

[68] James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third

From the eleventh century onward, as Islam spread across the Sahel, a tension arose in how to justify previous claims that Black people could be inferior when they were also Muslim. From the standpoint of Muslim clerics, with the spread of Islam across the Sahel, it was important to accurately define the frontiers of the Bilād al-Sudān, in order to ensure just practices of enslavement. Ibn Khaldūn, who worked for rulers across North Africa and recorded oral histories from Malian scholars, delineated an *irq*, or fence, across the Sahara that separated the Land of the Blacks from the Maghrib.[69] While he still employed the climatic theory for explaining Blackness, he made an exception for the Hausa, Tuareg, Songhay, and people of Borno, as part of the land of Blacks but also Muslim.[70] Another fourteenth-century diplomat Al-'Umarī spent time in Cairo and Damascus, and gathered his information from Sahelians residing in Cairo.[71] He mentioned the Yazani heritage of the Borno rulers and noted that they followed Islamic law. He did not include Borno when he specifically noted three independent white Muslim kings in the Bilād al-Sudān, suggesting that he also considered the people of Borno to be both Black and Muslim.[72] Whereas some of these scholars made exceptions for a Black Islamic Sahel, others described these communities as white in order to rationalize their being Muslim. In the fourteenth century, Ibn Said described Muslims in Mali as acting as whites, and in the fifteenth century, Syrian scholar Ibn Mājid also described people from Borno as Muslim and

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Series, 54, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 149.

[69] Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 317.

[70] Ibn Khaldūn, "'Kitāb al-'Ibar' in Hopkins and Levtzion," *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 325: 332; Hunwick and Powell, 38. He also claimed that some Blacks were descendants of Ham, combining some of the previous mentioned theories.

[71] Levtzion, *Corpus*, 252–3.

[72] Ibn Fadl Allāh al-'Umarī, "Masālik al-absār fī mamālik al-amsār," in Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 274.

white.[73] In North Africa whiteness was not necessarily being used as a physical marker but as an indicator of whether someone was Muslim or not. This logic imitated the climatic theory – but the idea of the fourth zone being "civilized" was replaced with it being "Islamic," and in turn "white."

Muslim clerics from the Sahel and North Africa, were aware of the consequences of defining Black Africans as pagan in North Africa. Chouki El Hamel noted the early sixteenth jurist 'Ali b. Salih al-Balbali, who had resided in Timbuktu and Marrakesh, called the enslavement of Black Muslims as "a great catastrophe" that had a "widespread effect throughout the land in this age."[74] In 1615 in Timbuktu, Ahmad Baba, who also had spent time in Marrakesh and Timbuktu, wrote a Fatwa that denied the legitimacy of enslaving someone based on their skin color.[75] This was in response to letters asking for his opinion on the matter from Muslim clerics in Tuwat, an important commercial hub of Borno's northward trade, and Sus, south of Morocco.[76] As El Hamel notes, Baba's intent was only to defend the Muslim Sahel, not Africans south of Muslim lands, and he put the burden of proof on the buyer and seller, not the enslaved person themselves.[77]

The conversation among Muslim clerics across the Sahara belies a genuine interest in clearly defining Islamic law, and ensuring that people were abiding these laws. In practice, it is questionable how much of this impacted the enslavement of Black Africans.

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[73] Ibn Mājid, "Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī usūl 'ilm al-bahr wa-al-qawā'id," in Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus*, 367; Ibn Said in *Corpus*, 192–3.

[74] El Hamel, 79.

[75] Timothy Cleaveland, "Ahmad Baba Al-Timbukti and His Islamic Critique of Racial Slavery in the Maghrib," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 1 (January 2015): 42-43.

[76] El Hamel, 80.

[77] El Hamel, 81.

In a 1493 letter from Sahelian Muslim cleric, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Lamtuni, who lived

between Hausaland and Aïr to Egyptian scholar, Al-Suyuti wrote that:

> It is the habit of some to have love for the scholars and to pray for the Prophet,
> may God bless him and grant him peace and to perform good deeds and give
> alms, to give food (to the poor)...But at the same time they do not leave off
> puffing themselves up with pride and enslaving free men, fighting one another,
> oppressing others and consuming what is forbidden.[78]

His comments show that even in the heart of the Islamic belt of the Sahel, there were likely many

people who did not follow Islamic law, including when it came to enslavement. In Morocco,

Mawlay Isma'il was actively defying the work of Muslim clerics by enslaving Black Africans

regardless of their religious status. And Ahmad Baba may have been putting his trust too much

into North African merchants who showed signs of expressing more interest in profit, than

determining if their enslaved people had been justly enslaved, which was evident from one

Moroccan scholar's lament that both merchants and buyers in the sixteenth century were less

concerned with an enslaved person's religious status, and more about their price and flaws.[79]

Racial Ideologies Across the Mediterranean

The Ottoman takeover of Constantinople in 1453 had two significant influences on the

slave trade originating from Borno.[80] The first has already been discussed; it cut off an important

source of slaves for Sicily and redirected some of the people trafficked along this route into the

Western Mediterranean. Secondly, it led to increased exchanges between North Africans and

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[78] Hunwick, "Notes on a Late Fifteenth-Century," 17.

[79] Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*, 47.

[80] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee: corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 3–12. Fiume offers a description of the more general impact of this event on Mediterranean corsair warfare.

Europeans through which racial ideologies were shared. Historian Olivia Remie Constable noted, during the Holy Wars, "the most convenient slave was a pagan, whose servitude need not interfere with religious conscience."[81] For both Muslims and Christians, Blackness was increasingly being defined in opposition to the Abrahamic religions.[82] That an archetype of a pagan Black African would develop in unison across the shorelines is not surprising. The rise in corsair warfare produced many captives. Historian Daniel Hershenzon estimated that between 1530 and 1780, there were 1,000,000 to 1,250,000 European Christians enslaved in Morocco and the Ottoman Maghrib.[83] These captives were important sources of knowledge because they spent on average five years in captivity, and often learned the host country's language, cultural and religious traditions.[84] In addition, European rulers began funding travelers' exploratory missions along the African coastlines in an attempt to expand their commercial reach and challenge Ottoman power. And when Spain briefly took control of North African coastal cities such as Tripoli and Tunis, it stationed its diplomats in them. During this time in North Africa, Muslim scholars were defining both where Black Africa began and what it signified and this information was transmitted, and transformed, across the Mediterranean through European travelers, diplomats, and captives.

European explorers were adopting the boundaries of a Black Africa and what it signified

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[81] Olivia Remie Constable, "Muslim Spain and Mediterranean Slavery: The Medieval Slave Trade as an Aspect of Muslim-Christian Relations," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500*, eds. Scott L. Waugh, and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 265.

[82] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 58. In his study on slavery in Morocco, Historian Chouki El-Hamel made a similar observation that "Isma'il's pursuit to legalize the enslavement of Black Moroccans at the same WM as European leaders adopted legal measures to justify Black enslavement represents an amazing independent development, stemming from common roots in a Mediterranean concept of slavery and Abrahamic traditions."

[83] Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 18.

[84] Giovanna Fiume, "Lettres de Barbarie: Esclavage et Rachat de Captifs Siciliens (Xvie–Xviiie Siècle)," *Cahiers de La Méditerranée* 87 (2013): 230.

through their interactions with North Africans. During this time period, Europeans remained

along the African coastlines while North African merchants controlled trans-Saharan slave

trades, forcing them to rely on secondhand information about inland Africa. Portuguese Gomes

Eanes de Zurara and Venetian Alvise Cadamosto, two men sponsored by the Portuguese to travel

along the Atlantic coast of Africa in the mid-fifteenth century, described West Africa as having a

division between the "Land of the Negroes" and the "Land of the Moors"; Zurara described the

beginning of the "Land of the Negroes" at the sight of two palm trees after the Sahara and

Cadamosto used the Senegal river to make this divide.[85] This frontier was simplified from those

of the Muslim scholars, who made exceptions for the Islamic belt across the Sahel. These

travelers also learned about the relationship between North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans

through their observations of African slave trades. Zurara wrote:

> that in the land of the Negroes there is another kingdom called Melli, but this is not
> certain; for they (Moors) bring the Negroes from that kingdom and sell them like the
> others, whereas tis manifest that if they were Moors they would not sell them so.[86]

He drew two important conclusions from this observation of the Moor's slave trade: that Black

Africa must be pagan, and that this lack of religion also implied a lack of civilization. The lack of

clarity in this statement partially comes from Zurara's use of the word Moor, which at times

represents a geographical area, North Africa, and at other times denotes a Muslim.[87] Here it

seems that Zurara questions whether Mali could be a kingdom if it was not inhabited by Moors,

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[85] Alvise Cà da Mosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, eds. Antonio Malfante, Diogo Gomes, and João de Barros. Translated by Gerald .Roe Crone (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937), 34; Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. Translated by Raymond C. Beazley and Edgar Prestage (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1896, 2010), 2:176.

[86] Zurara, 2:234.

[87] Kenneth Wolf, "The 'Moors' of West Africa and the Beginnings of the Portuguese Slave Trade," *Journal of Medieval & Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 465.

or Muslims. And because Moors brought enslaved Black men from there, the people in Mali must not be Muslim. He goes on to note that North Africans employed the Hamitic curse as a justification for their enslavement of Black Africans, which for him is confirmation that Black Africa must be pagan.[88] Zurara also learned the lower commercial value of Black Africans in his direct interaction with the slave trade, in one example he traded one captive Moor for numerous Black captives.[89]

Captives from Mediterranean corsair warfare were another important source of information because they spent a significant amount of time living in their host countries, learned the host languages, and often wrote of their experiences. In both Christian and Muslim captives' accounts, there was a growing divide between North Africa and Black Africa. In the sixteenth century, Leo Africanus, born in Granada as al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, was a captive of the Pope in Rome.[90] In his geography, he wrote that all of "Barbary" was the most noble part of Africa, where white men ruled with reason and law.[91] He contrasted this region to the *Bilād al-Sudān*, which he described as base, uneducated, and barbaric.[92] His depiction was similar to that of Ibn Khaldūn's of the first and second clime, in which Khaldūn wrote "their manners, therefore, are close to those of the dumb animals … .they have the habits of beasts not those of men and eat each other."[93] Khaldūn, however, made an exception for Borno and other Sahelian

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[88] Zurara, 1:54.

[89] Zurara, 1:57.

[90] Crofton Black, "Leo Africanus's 'Descrittione Dell'Africa' and Its Sixteenth-Century Translations," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 65 (2002): 262.

[91] Giovan Lioni Africano, "Della Descrittione Dell'Africa," in *Primo Volume e Terza Editione Delle Navigationi et Viaggi, Raccolto Gia Da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio*, eds. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venetia: 1563), 1.

[92] Africano, 77–81.

[93] Ibn Khaldūn, "Muqaddima," in Hopkins and Levtzion, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 321.

states whereas Leo Africanus wrote specifically of some people from Borno that "they are men without any faith, not Christian nor Jewish nor Muslim, like animals."[94] For Leo Africanus, the depiction of an enslavable Black African evoked both an uncivilized nature and the lack of an Abrahamic religion.

The characterization of Black Africans being uncivilized carried into a telling comment from a seventeenth-century French captive in Tripoli who wrote that while some Europeans confused Moors with Blacks "the inhabitants of Barbary are not Black, but dark skinned and some are even as white as the French. Moors are the bourgeois and the merchants of town."[95] By the seventeenth century, the redeeming qualities that determined North Africans could not be Black were their wealth and status, suggesting that the signs of a civilized community had become less attached to faith and more to economic behaviors. While religion may have become less important in determining enslavability, if skin color had become an immediate visible marker of a slave status, it not only put a Muslim Sahelian more at risk of entering the market under unlawful conditions, but it also marked a more permanent state of slavery.

Racially Decoding the Slave and the Captive

Captives were an essential part of corsair warfare; they were used for labor on boats, and a means of financial profits through ransom exhange. There was an increase in imperial corsair warfare in the fifteenth century, followed by a decline after 1581 when a truce was signed

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[94] Giovan Lione Africano, 80. "Sono huomini che non tengono fede alcuna ne christiana ne giudea ne maomettana ma stanno senza a modo di bestie."

[95] Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly de Barbarie, 1685, MF 12219, 36v, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

between the Ottoman and Spanish empires.[96] During this period in the some of the Christian

ports of the Mediterranean they had up to 500,000 enslaved men available on the piazza,

primarily identified as Muslim.[97] North Africans were more likely to be victims of sea raids, and,

if not ransomed, were sold in markets along the European coastline.[98] Europeans, on the other

hand, were often the victims of land raids. Based off of ransom requests sent to Palermo,

historian Robert Davis estimated that Sicilian coastlines were raided, at minimum, 136 times

between 1570 and 1606.[99] The potential inaccuracies are reflected in the fluctuation of numbers;

with the numbers of European captives in Tunis and Tripoli ranging from 22,000 in 1535, 150 in

1553, 4,025 in 1564 and 2,200 in 1572. Some of these fluctuations could be attributed to external

factors such as disease, with the plague occurring in Tripoli in 1584.[100] There was also likely an

inflation of numbers in narratives in order to raise funds for ransom trips. Larger imperial clashes

also resulted in more captives. The Spanish conquest of Tripoli in 1510 and Tunisia in 1535 led

to an immediate influx of captives from North Africa being sold as slaves in Sicilian markets.

After the conquest of Tripoli, 1400 Jews and Africans entered the market, such an immediate

increase that one diarist reports it led to a sudden price decrease.[101] It was similar on the North

African coastlines; when Barbarossa fled Tunis in 1535 7,000 European were reportedly taken,

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[96] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993), 14; Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea*, 3.

[97] Giuliana Boccadamo, *La redenzione dei cattivi a Napoli nel Cinquecento: lo Statuto di una Confraternita* (Napoli: M. D'Auria, 1985), 10.

[98] Robert C. Davis, "Counting European Slaves on the Barbary Coast," *Past & Present*, no. 172 (2001): 96.

[99] Davis, "Counting European," 95.

[100] Davis, 112.

[101] Ettore Rossi, *Il dominio degli spagnoli e dei Cavalieri di Malta a Tripoli (1510-1551) Con appendice di documenti dell'Archivio dell'Ordine a Malta.* (Intra: A. Airoldi editore, 1937), 15; Nadia Zeldes, "Un Tragico Ritorno," 47–55.

and in 1558 when the Spanish attempted to attack the island of Jerba, 6,500 Europeans were taken.[102]

With ongoing corsair warfare, enslaved Black Africans in Sicily were often living in servitude alongside Jews, North Africans, and Europeans. In terms of identifying Black Africans in the archives, the terminology used at auctions and in census records was often unclear. The term slave, written as both *schiavo* and *scavo* in Sicilian documents, was used for captives of corsair warfare, land raids, and slaves sold in markets. This had changed from the term *servus* which had been used in the earlier medieval period, and was derived from *slav*, which originally signified the slavic origins of enslaved people.[103] Most scholars of slavery in the Mediterranean agree that in terms of terminology, slave and captive, or *cattivo*, were used interchangeably.[104] These two words described victims of diverse types of servitude in the Mediterranean. In his study of Mediterranean slavery, Salvatore Bono, points to the diverse communities of enslaved people that included Europeans, Arab and Ottomans, and Black Africans and five types of servility; slavery, servant, forced labor, debt servitude and penal servitude.[105] He distinguished slavery and servitude as being more permanent statuses, whereas the others were more likely to be a temporary state. Other scholars have focused on making a distinction between the intended use of a slave versus a captive; captives in corsair warfare were part of a larger ransom economy, and the cost to buy them was less than their use value in this economy.[106] As such, they were

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[102] Davis, 91.

[103] Giulia Bonazza, "Essere Schiavi: Il Dibattito Abolizionista e Le Persistenze Della Schiavitu' Negli Stati Italiani Preunitari (1750-1850)" (PhD Diss., Università Ca' Foscari, 2016), 42.

[104] Bono, *Schiavi,* 24; Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea, 3.*Bono contends that use of term captive in contemporary scholarship, is used more because has less harsh connotations.

[105] Bono, *Schiavi,* 16*,* 22. He is also referencing Michael Bush when he distinguishes between 5 types of servility.

[106] Michel Fontenay, "Routes et Modalités," 830; Youval Rotman, "Captif Ou Esclave ? Entre Marché d'esclaves et

more likely to be temporarily enslaved and were a source of revenue not of labor.

While not always reflected in the terminology of the archives or the relevant scholarship, types of servitude also often fell along color lines. First, there was the distinction in the point of origin. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Africans from the Central Sahel were more likely to arrive from a slave trade route that reached Barqa and Tripoli whereas North Africans and Europeans were more likely to have entered into servitude as a result of raids, corsair warfare, and ransom exchanges along the Mediterranean coastlines.[107] If we look at some of the numbers from these instances, we see little to no presence of Black Africans connected to corsair and imperial warfare along the coastlines. From one shipwreck in 1525, 80 Moors were captured and sent to be rowers, build a castle in Trapani, or sold in Sicilian markets.[108] None were listed as Black Africans. Shortly after the Spanish takeover of Tripoli in 1510, there was a public auction in Palermo to which Diego Obregon brought 618 captives from Tripoli. The majority, 370 were listed as Moors. The second largest group, 211, was listed as Jewish. The group of people listed as Black was 33 people, only 5%.[109] At the same time, those listed as Black were also more likely to be referred to as slaves, which I will look at further in the next chapter. Again, in an inventory of men sent to work on the royal galleys in Palermo, Black men were in the minority, only 3%. There were 111 men that were divided between forced and enslaved labor. Of the enslaved men, there were four men listed as specifically Black: Francesco de Lagos Nigro,

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Marché de Captifs En Méditerranée Médiévale," in *Les Esclavages En Méditerranée : Espaces et Dynamiques Économiques*, ed. Fabienne P. Guillén and Salah Trabelsi, Collection de La Casa de Velázquez (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2017): 25–46.

[107] Carmelo Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante*, 49.

[108] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato Del Lavoro Nella Sicilia Rinascimentale," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, 54, no. Anno XIV (2001): 30.

[109] Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, 47v. Archivio di Stato Palermo, Catena.

Rodrigo Nigro, Iohan Nigro, Jorgi Negro de Fra Benedicto.[110] The mention of Lagos, in

Portugal, and their given surnames suggest that they had been enslaved on the Iberian peninsula

and were perhaps even second-generation slaves.

The intended labor of an enslaved person also often fell along color lines. There were

preferred forms of labor for Black Africans in North Africa. In some countries in North Africa,

the description of enslaved Sahelians as being uncivilized and animal-like fit into their demand

for labor in the military. By the seventeenth century, the Moroccan ruler, Mulay Isma'il, formed

an army of 150,000 mainly Black slave soldiers.[111] Eunuchs from the Sahel were highly valued

for their character and loyalty and served both in armies and as state functionaries in Egypt,

Syria, and later the Ottoman Empire.[112] In slavery systems in the Christian Mediterranean, there

were different racialized divisions of labor. North Africans, Turks, and Middle Eastern men

tended to be preferred for their skills in corsair warfare while Black Africans were primarily used

in the domestic sphere. Moors were often described as dangerous and therefore not suitable for

labor in households. Captive Jean Marteilhe described men from the Maghrib as "thieves,

savages, liars" and Spanish writer Cristobal Suares de Figueroa described "Turks" and

"Barbarians" as "unfaithful, bad-intentioned, thieves, drunks, hyper-sexual and guilty of many

sins."[113] Black Africans, on the other hand, were often described as ill-suited to physical labor. In

regards to rowing, an Italian captain wrote that "Blacks are the worst of all and the majority of

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[110] Giuffrida, "Schiavitu," 4.

[111] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 188; Carl F. Petry, "From Slaves to Benefactors: The Habashis of Mamluk Cairo," *Sudanic Africa* 5 (1994): 58.

[112] Hogendorn, "The Hideous Trade," 139; Petry, "From Slaves to Benefactors," 58, 62.

[113] Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi: una storia mediterranea (XVI–XIX secolo)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2016), 70, 113.

them die of melancholy."[114] Instead, Black Africans were described as "easier to handle, and once trained, very productive. They demonstrate more loyalty and affection to their masters."[115] According to Zurara, because they were pagan they "were not hardened in the belief of the other Moors."[116] Similarly, in Valencia most purchasers preferred a slave directly from Africa, because they described them as uncivilized, and more "malleable."[117] This difference in interpretation suggests that while late medieval stereotypes had shared origins across the sea, how they were activated depended on the regional context of their host society. Divisions of labor in both regions positioned Black Africans as different from their enslaved Muslim or Christian counterpart.

As part of the ransom economy, those deemed Muslim or Christian often had certain amenities available to them, such as public baths for European slaves in Barbary and places to worship and bury Muslim slaves in Italy.[118] The most important service was access to manumission through Catholic redemption organizations.[119] While similar organizations specifically for the collection of ransom were not as common on the North African coast, exchanges through these Catholic organizations were a primary way for both Muslim and

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[114] Pantero Pantera, *L'armata Navale Del Capitan Pantero Pantera* (Rome: Egidio Spada, 1614), 131. "I negri sono peggiori di tutti et muoiono la maggior parte di pura malinconia."

[115] Bono, *Schiavi*, 70. The full quote is originally from Cristobal Suares de Figueroa's Plaza Universal de todas las ciencias Madrid, 1615. It is as follows: "Gli schiavi o sono turchi, o barbareschi, o negri: I due primi generi risultano di solito infedeli, mal intenzionati, ladroni, ubriaconi, pieni di mille sensualita e autori di mille delitti … i negri sono di miglior literatura, piu' facili di trattare e, una volta addrestrati, di buon rendimento. Si dimostrano piu' leali e piu' affezionati ai padroni."

[116] Zurara, 1:84.

[117] Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 60.

[118] Bono, *Corsari*, 198, 200.

[119] Bono, Corsari, 203.

Christian slaves to attain manumission.[120] Prior to 1585, local churches fundraised for individuals' ransom, but in 1585 the *Redenzione dei Cattivi,* or Redemption of Captives, was formally created by Phillip II and in 1596 in Palermo all ransom fundraising was centralized through the Santa Maria Nuova church.[121] The main task of this institution was to secure funding through donations and taxation to perform missions to the North African coast, with the majority occurring in Algeria and Tunisia.[122] The church then organized the mission, selected the participants, and provided strict guidelines for exchanges. Once there, members of the mission would have to negotiate with the Pasha to set prices for those enslaved.

In the one of the Santa Maria Nuova church's manuals for a redemption mission in Tunisia, there were instructions in how to choose who should to be ransomed. The priests were first supposed to acquire whoever had family that had fundraised the required amount, which would have been on a provided list of names. The priests also had the discretion to attempt to manumit someone not on the list if they were a very young child still swaddled, a pregnant or very beautiful woman, a young man in critical condition, or a person of great importance.[123] They had the strict restriction that they were not to pay over a third of the prices set for other captives.[124] In other cases there was a direct exchange of people. For example, Diacono Martino, son of Filippo from Caltavuturo was the slave of Mamet in Tunisia. Mamet's son Ali, was serving on the Crown's galleys. The church negotiated an exchange for a sum of money and the

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[120] Bono, 207.

[121] Giuseppe Bonaffini, *La Sicilia e il mercato degli schiavi alla fine del '500* (Palermo: I.L.A. Palma, 1983), 14.

[122] Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *North Africa, Islam, and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War* (London; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 2001), 107.

[123] Libro di viaggio, 1618, N 567, f.9, Redenzione dei Cattivi, ASP, Gancia.

[124] Libro di viaggio, 1618, N 567, f.10, Redenzione dei Cattivi, ASP, Gancia.

manumission of both boys.[125] Redemption opportunities were determined by who could pay the price. On European coastlines, value was determined by family member's ability to fundraise or their social importance. On the North African coast, the ability to track their enslaved family member's whereabouts was likely a service to which most did not have access. Black Africans from the Central Sahel who were geographically separated from their family networks, would have held little value in this ransom and redemption economy and therefore would have had less access to some of the main opportunities for leaving Sicily once there.

Conclusion

While there were people from diverse ethnic backgrounds that would have been enslaved in the Mediterranean, they moved through slavery in different ways. The system of slavery in corsair warfare was constructed in the context of an ongoing religious war between Islam and Catholicism. Captives caught within this system helped sustain the system through their use in galley labor and value in ransom. Institutions, such as the redemption agencies were built up to facilitate exchanges and raise money. At the same time, Portugal was expanding its empire exploring African Atlantic coastlines, and enslaving and trafficking West Africans into the Iberian peninsula. Independent from both of these sources of enslaved Africans was the trans-Saharan slave trade from Borno to Barqa, which grew in numbers with the growth in power of the Borno sultanate, and had increasing interaction with Sicily as a result of demand for Sicilian wheat and temporary Spanish control of cities along the North African coastline.

The different categories of Blackness that enslaved West Africans traveled through was rooted in the microdynamics of each region. In the Central Sahel, as rulers began

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[125] Antonio Starni, August 30 1614, N 1, f.180, Redenzione dei Cattivi, ASP, Gancia.

institutionalizing Islam, the hierarchy of Islamic rulers and pagan slaves was reflected in its own

terms of colorism based on the creation of Arab lineages and indigenous social caste systems. In

North Africa, Blackness was increasingly being socially codified as a pagan enslaveable Other.

The racial geographic line of Blackness was debated by clerics, but in practice seemed to lose

importance in commercial exchanges. Across the shores of the Mediterranean ancient ideas of a

fourth clime retained their imaginary borderlines. North Africa and Southern Europe were

intimately tied together in commercial and ransom exchanges in the larger context of being two

opposing religious forces at war. Blackness, and enslaved Black Africans, were pushed outside

of this system. Entering the Mediterranean, Black Africans were excluded from ransom

exchanges and deemed unsuited for galley labor. The history of Antonio da Noto was an

example of an African that had potentially reached Sicily along the slave trade route from

Tripoli, and was then recaptured into a separate system of slavery of corsair warfare. His

mobility in the Mediterranean stands out as being exceptional not because of the religious

borders he crossed, but the increasingly racialized borders that were beginning to restrict the

freedom and movement of Black Africans across the shores of the Mediterranean.

Chapter 3: Mediterranean Galleys, Public Auctions and Sicilian Households: Understanding the Domestic Populations of Enslaved People in Palermo

This chapter examines what the Sicilian notarial and census records reveal about the relationship between the enslaved populations entering Palermo's markets, and those who remained in servitude in Sicilian households. There are significant gaps in the notarial records, including those of the wholesale trade.[1] In addition the notarial documents housed in the state archives of Palermo, are often illegible due to handwriting or damage. As a result, the examination of notarial records in this chapter relies primarily on those already published. In conjunction with original records from a 1510 public auction of enslaved people sold in Palermo, these notarial records give a sense of the overall movement of enslaved people in the Mediterranean, and the particulars of the import economy in Palermo. For the second part of this chapter I rely on *riveli*, a type of census record, from rural zones surrounding Palermo and partial census documents from Palermo. The latter include the neighborhoods of Kalsa in 1480, Albergheria in 1501 and one for all enslaved men in Palermo in 1565. The existent notarial records reveal a lack of uniformity across the island in the sale of enslaved people. Both foreign and Sicilian merchants were involved and there was variation in the terms of sales used across the island. They also suggest that Black Africans sold in Sicily would have been in the minority. This gap in the records has often been used to suggest that, like in Northern Italy, Sicilian markets were primarily important as a source for enslaved North Africans to supply galley labor in the Mediterranean. But the census documents offer another perspective, in which the majority of enslaved people who stayed in households in Palermo were Black Africans.

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[1] Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 307.

The Merchants

By the late medieval period, Catalan and Genoese merchants controlled the majority of

Sicilian trade. Catalan merchants established communities around the ports of Palermo and

Messina to conduct their import trade in raw cotton and grains from Tunisia to Alexandria.[2] The

Genoese sold silk and Spanish linens along the African coast, stopping in Tripoli, and reinvested

their profits in wax, alum and gold.[3] In a term she coined "symbiotic imperialism," Historian

Céline Dauverd effectively showed how both trade diasporas worked together to support the

Spanish Crown, and Spain in turn afforded them privileges that allowed them to maintain and

grow their trade.[4] As a result, by the early Renaissance the Catalans and Genoese controlled

eighty percent of Sicily's long distance trade.[5] From the medieval period, they were also

involved in moving enslaved people throughout the Mediterranean. Catalan traders provided

military protection for the Spanish crown, and in turn supplied them with captives.[6] The Genoese

exported wheat and enslaved people from the Eastern Mediterranean, primarily chartering ships

between Egypt and Spain.[7] In 1480, forty percent of the population in Kalsa, an important

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[2] David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200-1500: The Struggle for Dominion* (London; New York: Longman 1997), 51-53.

[3] Céline Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans: Trade Diaspora in Early Modern Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (January 1, 2006): 42. The easiest route from Genoa to Tunisia in the thirteenth century took two weeks, went to Tripoli, and stopped at small Italian ports along the way.

[4] Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans," 45.

[5] Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans," 43.

[6] David Abulafia, "Catalan Merchants and the Western Mediterranean, 1236-1300: Studies in the Notarial Acts of Barcelona and Sicily," *Viator*, 16 (January 1985): 230.

[7] J. Devisse and S. Labib, "Africa in Inter-Continental Relations," in *General History of Africa*, ed. D. T Niane, vol. IV (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), 645; William D Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985),104.

commercial center in the port of Palermo, had origins outside of Palermo.[8] Despite their

prominent presence in the commercial centers of Sicily in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century,

these merchants did not seem to control its land-based slave markets.[9]

Charles Verlinden collected thirty-two notarial acts in which enslaved Black people were

sold in the first half of the fifteenth century. Five buyers and four sellers were Catalan, one was

from Lipari, and another Gaeta. The twenty-one others were from Palermo.[10] There was

consistently a higher presence of Sicilians in the transactions that have been recorded from

Palermo, Trapani, and Syracuse.[11] By the sixteenth century there were reportedly slave

merchants in Sicily, *negrieri*, and ships that specialized in the sale of enslaved Black people.[12]

But perhaps because of the lack of wholesale records that Historian McKee points to, there is

little evidence for a monopoly of the trade in Palermo.[13] Instead it seems that some of the

merchants became involved in the trade in Palermo either by circumstance or, temporarily, for

economic gains. Diego de Obregon who was a receiver in the Sicilian Inquisition, a treasurer of

the army, and eventually the secretary of the customs office in Tripoli, was an active transporter

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[8] Armando Di Pasquale, *Aspetti storico-demografici di Sicilia* (Palermo: Ediprint, 1994), 145.

[9] In the sales cited by Verlinden (1963) and Giuffrida (2001) in Palermo, Avolio (1888) in Noto, and Cosentino (1888) in different ports of Sicily neither of these merchant groups appeared in the majority.

[10] Charles Verlinden, "L'esclavage en Sicile au bas Moyen Age," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome.* Vol. 35 (1963): 71.

[11] Verlinden. "L'esclavage," 56-57, 69-70, 79. In the 14th century, Verlinden's records from Palermo show Genoese, Catalans, Pisans, as well as Eastern Sicilians involved in the trade (pp. 56-57) From 1428-1447 there were 32 acts from 3 notaries, with 41 'captive' Black people. 5 sellers and 4 buyers were Catalan, one seller was from Lipari one buyer from Gaeta, and all others were from Palermo (pp. 69-70). From 1450-1474, there were three 3 notaries, and 47 Black women and 47 Black men. There were only a few foreigners among the sales, 2-3 Catalans (pg. 79).

[12] Corrado Avolio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia nel secolo XVI* (Firenze: Tipografia cooperativa,1888), 9.

[13] McKee, "Domestic Slavery," 316.

of both Jewish and African slaves from Tripoli to both Palermo and Naples.[14] Once in Sicily,

Obregon sold these enslaved people to private citizens. Bartolomeo Bartoletti imported books

from Venezia that he paid for with wheat from Sicily, but when a ship carrying his goods was

lost, he wrote that the captain could make up for the loss in books or slaves.[15] Even manumitted

people were involved in the sale of slaves, with examples of a manumitted woman selling an

enslaved Tunisian Moor and, even earlier, freed Saracens selling enslaved people.[16]

The disinterest of any one merchant diaspora in monopolizing the slave trade in Sicily

could be attributed to gaps in the archives, but there is also the possibility that merchants did not

see the potential profits in this trade. Instead, they were turning their attention to the growing

Atlantic trade. In 1452 Pope Nicholas had given the Portuguese commercial control of Atlantic

Africa south of Cape Bojador and passed a law that required all enslaved Africans be brought to

Lisbon before being sent to other markets.[17] Legally, all enslaved Africans coming from the

Atlantic coast of Africa would have to go through the *Casa dos Escravos* in Lisbon, where a

commercial agent recorded all cargoes of the ships and oversaw the sales of slaves. Once

enslaved Africans entered the Iberian peninsula, Northern Italian merchants played a large role in

moving them throughout the Mediterranean. Based in Lisbon, a Florentine trader named

Marchionni, had his own monopoly on the slave trade, from 1486—1493 he imported 1,648 of a

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[14] Nadia Zeldes, "Un Tragico Ritorno: Schiavi Ebrei in Sicilia Dopo La Conquista Spagnola Di Tripoli (1510)," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, no.54, Anno XIV (2001): 48.

[15] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato Del Lavoro Nella Sicilia Rinascimentale," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, no. 54, Anno XIV (2001): 30.

[16] Matteo Gaudioso. *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni.* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926) pg. 135; Giuffrida, 7.

[17] A.C. de C.M. Saunders. *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441-1555*. (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 22.

total of 3,589 slaves.[18] Only half of these slaves were being sold in Lisbon, the others were often exported to the Spanish Kingdom. Marchionni himself had a secondary market in Valencia, to which he sent at least 2,100 Black slaves from 1489—1497.[19] In Valencia, he had another Italian working on his behalf, Cesare de' Barche, who was the most active trader there.[20] De'Barche had competition from his compatriots. From 1479—1516 there were fifty other Italian slave merchants in Valencia, the majority from Genoa.[21] Whereas the Portuguese and northern Italian merchants seemed to be expanding their participation in the Atlantic slave trade, in Sicily's ports the sale of slaves was primarily run by local Sicilians, and less regulated.

In addition to the Atlantic trade, the growing corsair warfare in the Mediterranean and its demand for galley labor also drew the attention of Italian merchant diaspora.[22] Genoese, Venetians, and Florentines found profits in the export business of enslaved Eastern Europeans to Muslim and Christian markets.[23] Sally McKee described this as an overall shift Italy from practices of domestic slavery to galley slavery, in which "Christian merchants from Italy may have enslaved 50,000 people between 1500 and 1700 but those slaves did not dominate the Italian landscape. Naples, Messina, and Palermo became the main Italian slave markets where war captives were sold to state powers looking for labour or to Muslim merchants come to

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[18] Charles Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1970),108.

[19] Debra Blumenthal, "'La Casa Dels Negres': Black African Solidarity in Late Medieval Valencia," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, eds.T.F. Earle and Kate Lowe (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229.

[20] Blumenthal, "La Casa," 229.

[21] Vicenta Cortés Alonso, *La esclavitud en Valencia durante el reinado de los Reyes Católicos (1479-1516)* (Valencia: Excmo. Ayuntamiento, 1964), 174-175.

[22] Francesco Benigno, "Integration and Conflict in Spanish Sicily," in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion 1500-1700*, ed. Thomas James Dandelet and John A. Marino (Rome: Brill, 2007), 27.

[23] McKee, "Domestic Slavery," 315.

ransom Muslim slaves."[24] But galley labor and domestic slavery may not have had an either-or relationship in Sicily. The census records discussed in the latter half of this chapter suggest that at the same time that southern Italy was becoming an important market for the export of enslaved people from corsair warfare, there was an increasing presence of enslaved Black Africans in Sicilian households.

The Types of Sales

Similar to the lack of evidence for specialization among merchants in Sicily, the types of sales used in transactions of enslaved people varied across the island. This is not surprising considering that the island itself had been divided into three regions, each with their own administrative capital.[25] Historian Anastasia Motta provided a useful comparison between the laws of Palermo and Messina to show that legal practices pertaining to slavery were not standardized throughout Sicily, at least until the end of 1500.[26] There are some observable trends, notably that the sale terms for slaves often drew from that of livestock. The majority of sales were conducted in two ways. The first, more common in Western Sicily, was *sacco pleno ossibus*, literally a bag full of bones, meaning a person or animal sold as is. The second *ad usum magazenorum*, in which all the defects had to be listed, was more common in Eastern Sicily.[27] The former term is most similar to the sales of livestock done in public markets, also seen as *ad*

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[24] Mckee, "Domestic Slavery," 321.

[25] Stephan R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 63.

[26] Anastasia Motta, "La Schiavitu a Messina Nel Primo Cinquecento," *Archivio Storico per La Sicilia Orientale*, (1974): 310.

[27] Motta,"La Schiavitu," 311.

usum ferai, in which the buyer would inspect the animal on sight and purchase based on his own assessment. This sale would be final. A sale done *ad usum magazenorum*, however included a set time period in which the buyer could return the person if defects arose that were not cited in the contracted. Both terms, *sacco pleno ossibus* and *ad usum magazenorum* were used interchangeably for the sale of livestock and enslaved people. This overlap of the treatment of slaves and animals carried into other Sicilian practices. Corrado Avolio cited a sixteenth-century example in which enslaved men and women were sold in enclosed areas similar to that of livestock.[28] Taxes on slaves were similar to those placed on meat, produce, and livestock.[29] And in census records, slaves were listed as both part of the household, and under the family's possessions with their livestock.[30]

There were also some important distinctions that were made between the sale of livestock and animals. The first difference was in the type of defects a seller would have to disclose when conducting an *ad usum magazeni* transaction. If any of these defects were found within the given amount of time stated in the contract, then the enslaved person could be returned to the seller. The types of defects listed in these documents included epilepsy, not menstruating, mental disabilities, or a past of running away. The defects point to what may have been important to the buyer; a loyal slave, a female capable of reproducing, and a male performing physical labor. There was also the use of a new term, *gucta,* which was used specifically for slaves suffering from an inconsolable loss of liberty. In 1546 a young boy of seven years was sold with the guarantee that he had never had *gucta,* and would not in the next six months.[31] The feared effects

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[28] Corrado Avolio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia nel secolo XVI* (Firenze: Tipografia cooperativa, 1888), 9.

[29] Gaudioso, *La Schiavitu,*, 52.

[30] Riveli, Ganci 1548, T.R.P. 1137, Riveli, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, La Catena.

[31] Avolio, *La Schiavitu Domestica, 7.*

of this condition were the slaves' inability to work, risk of escape, and premature death. Were a

slave to escape, he risked another form of dehumanization such as was the case for one young

man who subsequently had a bell placed around his neck.[32]

While the regulation of sales was not standardized in early modern Sicily, scholarship has

pointed to influences from Roman law, and contemporary practices involving sales of

livestock.[33] It is also important to add that the legal regulations of slavery in Sicily do not differ

greatly to those found in Maliki law, which was practiced in the Muslim Mediterranean and

North and West Africa, and was a legal system through which many of these enslaved humans

passed before they reached Palermo.[34] Similar to the *ad usum magazeni* sales, in Maliki law

vendors were required to disclose all defects, including ones not found in animals which

included invisible physical flaws and diseases. In addition there was a similar category to *gucta*,

in which sellers needed to disclose a "tendency to run away or penchant for rebelling."[35] In

Maliki law coreligionists were not technically allowed to enslave or own one another, though as

discussed in the previous chapter, this was not always followed in practice. In Sicily there were

also punishments for those who sold Christians to infidels and for non-Christians who owned

baptized slaves, but Mckee remarks there was likely a large illicit trade that would not have been

recorded because of these papal prohibitions.[36] One place in which the laws differed, at least on

paper, was in regards to bulk sale. In Maliki law, selling slaves in bulk was not allowed and each

[32] Avolio, 7.

[33] Motta, *Schiavitu*, 307; Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times*, 4.

[34] Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56.

[35] Ghislaine Lydon. "Slavery, Exchange and Islamic Law: A Glimpse from the Archives of Mali and Mauritania." *African Economic History*, no. 33 (2005): 125.

[36] Matteo Gaudioso, *La schiavitù*, 39; Mckee, 314.

person needed to be priced individually.[37] In Sicily there were numerous situations in which slaves were both sold in bulk, or recorded in census records under one lump sum. Bulk prices not only made it difficult to discern individual prices, but also reflect the structural tendencies of Sicilian commercial practices to dehumanize people through the stripping of individual identities, which will reappear when we examine naming practices later in this chapter.

The *riveli* are also revealing for their categorization of enslaved members in households. The prices for enslaved people were all listed under the *ben mobili,* or property, section of census records, and followed by the animals of the household. This was different from other servants of the household who were listed without a price under the members of the household. In addition, the terminology and descriptions were similar between animals and enslaved humans. Both were categorized by gender, ability to procreate, and in some cases age or health. The same term, *yizzu* and its variations such as *yizotti* were used for baby cows as well as for enslaved children who were born in the household. Without considering extreme exceptions, enslaved humans were the most expensive items in the *ben mobili.*[38] There were exceptions to these categories, one case being that of Roberto di Ludovicu, a forty-two year old head of household who lived in Polizzi in 1584 with his wife, four daughters, two sons. He also had five servants and numerous enslaved people in his house; one freed Moor, two Black slaves, and two white slaves. These people were all cross listed in both the *ben mobili* and the members of the household with the exception of one Black woman named Diana, who was only recorded in the *ben mobili.*

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[37] Lydon, "Slavery, Exchange," 124.

[38] Avolio contends that it was because of their higher price that why they were listed first, but there are examples in the ASP Riveli in which humans are not the most expensive item because of age or health, and still listed first. This suggests that despite price, slaves were the most important item of a household.

The Terminology in a Public Auction

> The administrative and commercial records of the Atlantic slave trade and of Black slavery in Europe and the Americas were produced by and for those who, more often than not, found no profit in recording the African provenances or African names of the slaves.[39]

- P.E.H. Hair

> The ways merchants in Italy differentiated along ethnic and religious lines among the slaves they dealt in sheds light more on how the people of Italy made distinctions among themselves than on the origins and religion of their captives.[40]

- Sally McKee

Charles Verlinden noted that in fourteenth-century Sicily the term *Moro*, unmodified, was used to loosely denote a Muslim North African or someone from the Iberian Muslim population; a Muslim Other.[41] With the arrival of more Black Africans from the Sahel in the late fifteenth century, Sicilians were simultaneously creating a Muslim and a racialized other. The term *nigro* appeared more often than *Moro* to describe these enslaved Africans in the late fifteenth century Sicilian notarial records.[42] Verlinden assumed this reflected an actual shift to the arrival of more Africans from the Iberian trade, but in actuality it may have been part of a larger trend in the Mediterranean to describe Africans by their skin color. This was true on the Iberian peninsula, where there was a shift after 1500 from the description of people as being

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[39] P. E. H. Hair, "Black African Slaves at Valencia, 1482-1516: An Onomastic Inquiry," *History in Africa* 7 (January 1, 1980): 126.

[40] McKee, 305.

[41] Verlinden, "L'esclavage," 42; Wolf, 458. Verlinden suggests that Moor replace the medieval term *Saracen*, which was often used for its native Arab community. Wolf notes the term Moor became asscociate with Islam after the spread of Islam across North Africa in 711.

[42] Verlinden, "L'esclavage," 78-79.

Jaloff, referencing Wolof from the Senegambia region, to more generally being described as *negros*, *negreria,* or from *Guinea.*[43] The commercial records also revealed that Blackness was associated with "uncivilized" qualities, similar to European traveler's accounts we saw in the previous chapter. In two notarial records from Sicily Black Africans were described as savage.[44] In Valencia there was the term *muy bozal* and *bozal* for bush or very bush. These terms were not used to describe Moors, who were in turn becoming racialized as white.[45]

Shortly after the Spanish capture of Tripoli, there was a public auction in Palermo in 1510 in which there were 392 people described as Moors.[46] Of these, twenty-two were specifically noted as Black, and two as olive-skinned, *olivastro*. That skin color was not mentioned in the majority of cases where Moor appeared suggests that the word itself included a white subcontext. This would correspond to the North African Muslim scholarship and European travelogues examined in the previous chapter, in which North Africans were considered to be part of a white and civilized Mediterranean culture. The white Moor was also a flexible social category - one that Europeans could move into, and North Africans could move out of. Peter Mazur offered an example from the mid-sixteenth century in Naples, in which Bonsignore Cacciaguerra said to his former North African slave "once you were a Moor, and now by his grace you are baptized," revealing that through baptism, a North African could move out of the category of Moor.[47] Likewise, many Italians living in captivity in North Africa would convert to

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[43] Hair, "Black African Slaves," 120.

[44] Verlinden, "L'esclavage," 79.

[45] Blumenthal, *Enemies*, 60; Hair, "Black African Slaves," 120. Blumenthal notes that most purchasers preferred a slave directly from Africa, described as boc'al or uncivilized, and more malleable.

[46] Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, 47v. Archivio di Stato Palermo, Catena.

[47] Peter Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563-1667," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 1 (2009): 29-30.

Islam and thereby *farsi turco*, esssentialy making themselves a Turk, a term that was interchangeable with Moor.[48]

The Black Moor terminology in commercial records existed at the same time there was a proliferation of the blackamoor figure, which was omnipresent in Italian art and architecture. Ella Shoat wrote that the blackamoor was "a presumed civilizational "upgrade" for the sub-Saharan "dark continent" which now passes into the Oriental "twilight" zone through an image of opulence usually linked to Moorish Iberia and North Africa well as to the Ottomans."[49] As a European trope then, Shoat contends that the blackamoor was an orientalized go-between uncivilized Black Africans and the North African Moor.[50] He was often depicted as a dark-complexioned servant in Ottoman style clothing. In the commercial records from the public auction, the term *Moro Nigro* could be referencing an enslaved Muslim Sahelian. But the category does not allow us to infer much more into their point of origin, and serves a similar purpose of the blackamoor trope of creating a category between a Black African and a white Moor. In actuality, this person could have been living as a free person up until the Spanish point of capture in Tripoli, been previously enslaved under the Ottoman rulers in North Africa, or trafficked as a slave from the Central Sahel.

At this auction, while in the minority, those listed as Black Africans were more likely to be associated with a slave status. Within the 370 Moors that were not listed as Black, there were 215 females and 155 males. Seven females were modified with *scava* and 2 males, including one child, as *scavu,* that is 2.4% of the Moors were listed as slaves. There were 289 people listed as

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[48] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993).

[49] Ella Shohat, "The Specter of the Blackamoor: Figuring Africa and the Orient," *The Comparatist* 42 (2018): 168.

[50] Shohat, "The Specter," 171.

Jews, with 15, or 5%, listed as slaves.[51] In contrast, there were only 33 people listed specifically as Black at the auction and they were more likely to be described as slaves. 12 of 33 were listed as slaves, or 36%. Of the 26 females, 9 were listed as slaves, which was more than appeared among 215 Moor females. Similarly, 3 of 7 males were listed as slaves; more than appeared among 155 Moor males.

Table 1: 1510 Public Auction in Palermo, Ethnic Identification and Slave Status[52]

Ethnic Identifier	No. of People	No. Listed as Slaves	Percentage Listed as Slaves
Moor	370	9	2.4%
Jewish	289	15	5%
Black	33	12	36%

It is plausible that the application of the term slave appeared in Sicily or North Africa. From Mawlay Isma'il's practices of slavery in sixteenth-century Morocco to the appeals of Muslim Sahelian clerics examined in the previous chapter, there is sufficient evidence that in North Africa Blackness was being equated to enslaveability. By the eighteenth century the French counsel in Morocco wrote that "the words negro and slave are synonymous among the Moors."[53] In early sixteenth-century laws from Tripoli, Abela noted that there were "continuous

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[51] Zeldes, "Un Tragico Ritorno," 55.

[52] All tables in this chapter are based on my original analysis of the records from the 1510 Public Auction in Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, 47r-68r, Archivio di Stato Palermo, Catena; the published transcriptions of census records for Kalsa in Armando Di Pasquale. *Aspetti storico-demografici di Sicilia*. (Palermo: Ediprint, 1994);155-229; the Albergheria census in Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 64r-131r, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, Archivio Storico Comunale Palermo; and the published 1565 militia census in Antonino Franchina."Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565." *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907), 391-420.

[53] El Hamel, 183. This statement is from Louis de Chenier (1722-1795).

and specific distinctions between Moor slaves and Black slaves, the latter being referred to in documents as *testa di nigru*."[54] Whether the application of the word slave here had occurred in Tripoli or in Palermo is unclear, but it is important to note that it would have been made sense in both of the regional contexts at this point in time.

Table 2: 1510 Public Auction, Terminology Used for Black Africans, Females

Description	Number
Mora Nigra	9[55]
Mora Nigra Vecha	3
Mora Nigra Vechissima	3
Moretta Nigra	3
Scava Nigra	4[56]
Scava Nigra Vecha	1
Scava Nigra Vechissima	1
Scavotta Nigra Pichula	2
Total	26

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[54] Joan Abela, *Hospitaller Malta and the Mediterranean Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 159-160. She gives an example from 1521 in Tripoli, and notes that *testa di nigru* was also used in Malta.

[55] One woman listed with *una pichirilla a la minna*, a breastfeeding infant.

[56] One woman is listed with *unu figlestu in braccia*, a young son in her arms.

Table 3: 1510 Public Auction, Terminology Used for Black Africans, Males

Description	Number
Moro Nigro	1
Moro Nigro Vecho	2
Moro Nigro Eunuco	1
Scavo Nigro Vecho	1
Scavo Nigro Eunuco et Vecho	1
Scavu Nigru Pichirillo	1
Total	7

This auction was not representative of the ongoing Mediterranean slave trade connected to Borno or corsair warfare; instead it was an exceptional example of captives taken after the capture of Tripoli. The widespread low prices, less than half of the average price, were because of the very poor physical condition and age of people. On average Moors were priced at 4.85 onze and Black Africans averaged 4.55 onze.[57] Jews were sold at even lower average price of 3 onze, with some selling for less than 1 onze because of their old age or poor health.[58] It is interesting to note that Black Africans were in the minority of those captured after the Spanish capture of Tripoli. It is possible that the people in this auction were the ones that were not valuable in the ransom economy; the weak, the old, and those without families to pay their

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[57] Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, ASP, Catena; Epstein, *An Island for Itself*, xii. Epstein explains the Italian currency system as follows: 1 *onza* was 30 *tari*, 1 *tari* was worth 20 *grani* and 1 *grano* was 6 *denari.* The golden onza was never coined, and *salme* were used to measure agricultural products.

[58] Nadia Zeldes, "Un Tragico Ritorno," 54–55.

ransoms on the shorelines.[59]

The Enslaved People Who Stayed in Sicilian Households

The *riveli* and census records offer an opportunity to explore the numbers of enslaved

people who stayed in Italian households. Historians have estimated that Sicily's servile

population, including slaves and servants, ranged from 12% to 15. %[60] It is difficult to provide

an accurate estimate of the enslaved population for all of Sicily, because across the island there

were variations in both the practice of slavery and census taking. At the highest range, Corrado

Avolio estimated that in each year of the sixteenth century there would not have been less than

50,000 slaves in Sicily.[61] That would have been 9% of the whole population in 1505 and 6.5% in

1548.[62] Later, Antonino Franchina reduced this number estimating that there was a total of

12,000 slaves on the island in 1565.[63] This would have signified a drop of the enslaved

community to 1-1.5% of the population.[64] The variations in these numbers can be attributed to

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[59] Abela, *Hospitaller Malta*, 159. She notes that non-ransomed slaves could be sold by public auction even by
Moors, and if such slave was eventually sold a tax known as *laxuta dela porta* had to be paid.

[60] Henri Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen: économie et société en Sicile, 1300-1450*, vol. 1 ([Roma]: Ecole française
de Rome, 1986), 474; Dipasquale,142; Mckee, 316. Historian Mckee questions its accuracy. Henri Bresc estimates
no more than 12% of Sicily's principle city in servile category. Based on Kalsa neighborhood of Palermo, Historian
Di Pasquale on estimates it would not have been less than 13%, maybe 15.%

[61] Corrado Avolio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia nel secolo XVI* (Firenze: Tipografia cooperativa, 1888), 17.

[62] Di Pasquale, 295. Historian Di Pasquale estimated that Sicily had a population of 559,146 in 1505 that grew to
763,560 in 1548.

[63] Antonino Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII
(1907): 386. He estimates that there would have been a fairly even gender ratio, so assumes the enslaved female
population would have been similar to the male one of 645 recorded in the 1565 census. He then double it to 1290,
and reduced it to 1200 for an even number. He then multiplied this by ten, because Palermo was 1/10 of the
population of Sicily.

[64] If we used the closest population of 763,560 from 1548 then this would have been 1.57 percent of the population.
Or if we used Franchina's logic that Palermo's population in 1565 at 113571 was one tenth of the entire island, than

their sources of data. Avolio based his figures on estimates from a smaller city on the Southeastern side of the island, Noto, during a 90-year time period which would have included the most active period of the slave trade.[65] Franchina on the other hand, based his estimate on a census taken from Palermo in 1565, that did not include the female population, and was taken at a time when the slave trade would have been declining. Overall the numbers for Sicily suggest that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was possible that Sicily had an enslaved community at around 9% of its entire population and this may have dropped significantly after the mid-sixteenth century.

Table 4: Percentage of Enslaved Population in Select Neighborhoods and Cities of Sicily from 1479-1565

Town/Neighborhood	Year	Percentage Enslaved
Kalsa	1479	12.6%
Albergheria	1501-1502	10.5%
Gangi	1548	2%
Palermo	1565	1.13%

If we look specifically at Palermo in select years, we can get a clearer picture of the ratio of its enslaved population. Historian Di Pasquale estimates that Palermo had a population of 25,000 in 1505 that grew to 60,000 by 1548[66] By 1565, Franchina places Palermo's population at 113,571. This fits with what historian Stephan Epstein posited that from 1440 the population of

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it would have been even less at around 1% of the population.

[65] Avolio, *La schiavitù,* 17.

[66] Di Pasquale, 291.

Palermo doubled in almost half a century, and continued to rise until the end of the sixteenth century.[67]

In 1479 Palermo was divided into six neighborhoods. Kalsa and Albergheria were the two largest neighborhoods, nearly twice the size of the four other neighborhoods. Kalsa started from the Chiesa della Catena, near the port of Palermo, and ended in Loggia di Pisa, whereas Albergheria was further inland from the port and included the Cathedral and the Norman Palace.[68] A 1480 census from Kalsa was taken based on households, which included convents but did not include Steri, Palazzo dei Chiaramonte, or the viceroys; some of the wealthiest and most influential households which likely held a significant number of enslaved people. 178 of these households owned slaves, which meant 20% of the population were slave owners. Owning slaves then was fairly common practice, this is confirmed by the fact that it cut across social classes and that the enslaved community composed 12.6% of its population. There was significantly less information recorded about enslaved people, as compared to that for the slaveholders. Names, and places of origin were rarely recorded. What one can surmise is that the population was heavily female, with 50% females, 32% males, and the remaining 18% of unspecified sex.

Table 5: Kalsa 1479, Enslaved Population

Enslaved and Freed Males	195
Enslaved and Freed Males	292
Enslaved, Unknown Sex	125

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[67] Epstein, *Island For Itself*, 61, 147. He attributes this to the price of grain and the "efficient structure of supply."

[68] Di Pasquale, 140.

Total Enslaved	612
Percentage Enslaved to Entire Community	12.6%

Twenty years later there was a census taken in Albergheria, that was part of a larger city-wide census for military conscription. Only this neighborhood remains in the archives, and has up to this point in time not been analyzed in the scholarship on slavery in Sicily. Its numbers are similar to that of Kalsa. Of the 801 households 129 own slaves, that is 16% of households.[69] The enslaved community is 10.5% of the entire population, with a much more evenly split gender divide at 47.4% female and 53% male.

Table 6: Albergheria 1501, Enslaved Population

Enslaved and Freed Males	233
Enslaved and Freed Males	237
Enslaved, Unknown Sex	0
Total Enslaved	470
Percentage Enslaved to Entire Community	10.5%

The percentage of 12% and 10% for the enslaved communities in Kalsa and Albergheria respectively, would have been starkly different from Genoa, where Historian Mckee noted that the numbers fluctuated between 2 and 5%.[70] And with households in both neighborhoods

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[69] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, Archivio Storico Comunale Palermo.

[70] Mckee, 316. Mckee cites the numbers in Northern Italy as follows: "In Genoa the numbers fluctuate between 2 and .5% with between 2-3000 at any time in the 100 years between 1360 and 1460. Slavery in Siena died out by

owning on average two enslaved females and two enslaved males, these numbers suggest that

Palermo was not only an important export market for captives for galley labor, but it had also

had an active internal market for the purchasing of enslaved people in the early sixteenth century.

Table 7: Average Number of Enslaved Men and Women in Households, Kalsa and Albergheria

	Kalsa (1479)	Albergheria (1501)
Average Number Freed and Enslaved Females	2	1.9
Average Number of Freed and Enslaved Males	2	2.8

The *riveli* from Gangi offer a slightly different perspective because they were taken

almost fifty years later in a rural setting in the Val Demone region. Dipasquale estimated the

population of Gangi to be 766 households in 1505 and 977 in 1548.[71] In 1548 the *riveli* show the

population to be 4,094. This would have been during the decline of slavery in Sicily, and

immediately one sees a difference in the distribution. Here the number of households that owns

slaves is only 32, or 3% of the entire population. The total enslaved population is only 2% of the

entire population. In fact it seems to represent only a few families that owned the most slaves. In

five households combined there are 28% of the total population of slaves. Five households hold

almost one third of the slave population. They also owned half of the entire Black population of

slaves. While there are less slaves here, it is hard to discern whether this was due to the decline

in the overall population or because numbers were generally lower in a rural setting. This

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1400. Florence had about 1000 slaves at the end the fourteenth century, and the number had fallen to less than 400 by 1427, with very few households possessing more than one slave. Boni and Delort counted only 200 slaves in Pisa."

[71] Di Pasquale, 292.

question will be further explored in the next chapter, in the examination of how Sicilians were employing their enslaved household members.

Table 8: Gangi 1548, Enslaved Population[72]

Enslaved and Freed Males	35
Enslaved and Freed Males	26
Enslaved, Unknown Sex	15
Total Enslaved	76
Percentage Enslaved to Entire Community	2%

The last census was taken specifically of enslaved men in Palermo in 1565. The owners had to declare their slaves and their physical ability to fight in the army, or risked them being confiscated.[73] In this census there were a total of 645 slaves. Using the ratios from the two other neighborhood censuses from Palermo, it could be estimated that this might be around half of the entire slave population. Assuming this, there may have been approximately 1290 in the total slave population of Palermo in 1565, which would have been almost down to 1% of the entire population. If we were to use the Albergheria census information as a standard for all of Palermo, the total enslaved population in 1500 would have been 2,622. This shows a decline of 1,322 slaves. Given that Albergheria was one of the largest neighborhoods, this number is probably a high estimate. It is also important to remember that in Kalsa the female population was significantly higher than males, so that the difference between the estimates for Palermo in

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[72] Ganci, 1548, N. 1137, f.1-226, T.R.P. Riveli, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Sede Catena.

[73] Franchina. "Un Censimento," 382.

1565 and 1501 might have been even smaller. In addition the number of households containing slaves remains in line with the estimates closer to the turn of the century, with about 100 households per the six zones of Palermo, if it were to be evenly divided.

Defining Race in the Sicilian Household

In urban households the race of the enslaved household members was rarely mentioned. The exceptional cases were in the wealthier households, which were in general afforded more scribal space in the archives. In Kalsa, race is mentioned in 28 households, out of the 178 that are slave owners. 18 were listed as white (*blanca* or *blancu*) and 43 were last as Black (*nigru* or *nigra*). The majority of those listed as white were female. There were no people listed as Moors. In Albergheria race was mentioned in only six households. With 8 listed as white, all women, and twelve enslaved people listed as Black. There were a few examples in the wealthier noble households that offer a more detailed picture. In the Bonanno household, the race was only mentioned with females. There were five males, four white females, and one Black female.[74] In the Agliata household, there were two enslaved Black men who were working in the fields.[75] Treasurer Ribesaltes owned six Black males and twelve females whose skin color was unspecified.[76] There were no people listed as Moors, and again there seems to be a tendency to describe enslaved females as white. It is hard to say whether this reflected a preference for white women or, as Di Pasquale posits, these were the exceptional cases and Black would have been assumed and therefore unwritten.

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[74] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 84r**,** Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, ASCP.

[75] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 69r**,** Albergheria.

[76] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 87f, Albergheria.

Compared to the census records, the *riveli* from Gangi tend to be slightly more detailed because they were used for taxation purposes; both the skin color and the price of the enslaved people was recorded more frequently. Of the 76 people marked as slaves, 46 were described as being Black. That was 61% of the entire enslaved population. The next largest group was the unmarked skin color at 30% of the population, and then much smaller numbers of white (4%) Moor (2.5%) and olive-skinned (2.5%). This shows that in a rural town of Sicily, the Black enslaved members of the household were the majority.

Table 9: Gangi 1548, Enslaved Population Divided by Ethnic Identification

Ethnic Identification	No. of People
Black	46
Olive-Skinned	2
Moor	2
White	3
Unknown	23

Finally, in the 1565 census from Palermo, the men are often described by skin color, name and their place of origin. There were 645 total enslaved men from Africa. 226 men were listed as Black, with 117 being specifically noted as being from Borno. This was the first time, that we have confirmation from the Sicilian archives that Borno was an important source of enslaved Africans in Sicily.

Table 10: Palermo 1565, Men Only, Divided by Ethnic Identification

Skin Color/Ethnic Identification	No. of People	Percentage of Total
Black	226	35%
Olive-Skinned	110	17%
Moor[77]	17	2.5%
White	119	18%
Unknown	173	27%

Table 11: Palermo 1565, Men Only, by Region of Origin

Regional Description	No. of People	Percentage of Total
Africa	54	8%
Arab	19	3%
Barbary	7	1%
Borno	113	17.5%
Tripuli	9	1.4%
Tunisi	31	4.8%
Turkey	6	.93%
Born in the Household or Kingdom[78]	245	38%
Unknown[79]/Other	161	25%

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[77] Included Moor here because it is not a clear geographical indicator. Anytime it was modified by Black, white, or olive-skinned (*olivastro*) it was put into that category.

[78] *Casanatizzo* or *Nato in Regno* in the records.

[79] There were also listed: 1 from Scavonia, 1 from Livante, 2 from Malta, 1 from Calabria, 1 from Castelbuono, 1 from Algeria, 1 from Mallorca, 1 from India, 1 from a monastery.

Like in the rural zone of Gangi in 1548, there was a majority of Black men in the enslaved community of Palermo. Equally significant to understanding how the flow of enslaved people from North Africa was changing was the increased appearance of *casanaticzo*, or those born in the house. There were 245 men described as having been born in that house or in the kingdom of Sicily, that is 38% of the total population. Of those that had been born in the house: forty-eight were white, thirty-one were Black, fifty-eight were olive-skinned, one was listed as white olive-skinned, and 104 were unknown. The high presence of *casanatizzi* likely contributed to the gaps in the notarial records on the high presence of enslaved people in Sicily, because there would not have been a sales transaction for them. At a certain point, less enslaved people may have been sold into houses, but more were being born into them. This also means there must also have been a high number of enslaved women staying in the house, despite them not being explicitly listed in this male-only census.

Table 12: Palermo 1565, Number of Enslaved People Born in the Household

Skin Color/Ethnic Identification	No. of People
Africa	1
Olivastro	57
Bianco	50
Nigro	31
Unknown	106

The Names

Another important piece of information found in the militia census from Palermo is the first, and sometimes last, names of enslaved men. Similar to practices on the Iberian peninsula, it seems that the majority of enslaved men were baptized and given Christian names.[80] The exceptions in this census are few, but reveal an important trend. In the 1565 census there were eighteen names that were not of Catholic origin, but of Arabic or other origin.[81] These included Abdalla (2), Ali (8), Amur (2), Asau (1), Inysi (1), Machommetto (3) and Saytta (1). Of these eighteen, none were listed as being Black Africans. Twelve were listed as being *moro*. Within this group of Moors, three were described as specifically from Tripoli, one from Tunisia, and one *di Africa*. In addition to the Moors, two men were listed as *arabo*, one as *turco*, one as *di Africa*, and one as *blanco di Calibia* (Calabria). One Ali was not denoted with a skin color or place of origin. That no Black Africans appeared with an unbaptized name is telling of their mobility compared to their North African counterparts. Retaining a name that had ties to Islam, and North Africa, not only allowed them to retain part of their identity but it also suggests that these men might plan on returning to North Africa. Their owners would have a better chance of ransoming them if they were Muslim. This potentially temporary status of enslavement would mean that both the owner and the enslaved person had less incentive to assimilate to their Sicilian setting or incorporate into the Catholic Church.

Black Africans, on the other hand, all appeared with christened names and were more

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[80] Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 128, 134; Kate Lowe, "Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation to, or Appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470-1520," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 31, no. 2 (2008): 67–86.

[81] Avolio, 11. In only 1 act he found an 'exotic' Arabic name, Charbia, 15 year old, maybe not yet baptized, all others had Christian names

likely to take on the name of their owner. This signified a more permanent break from previous family and religious ties to the African continent, and a less likely return into a ransom economy. The most common baptized names for enslaved Black African men were Joanni or Joannico (38) Antoni or Antonino (20), Cristofalo (18), Francesco (15), Georgi (15), and Petro (13). Some of the names correspond to their popularity in the names of freed men, where Joanni, or some form of it, shows up in the Albergheria census as the most common name for head of households.[82] Cristofalo (18) and Gaspano (3) only appeared as names for Black Africans, with Cristofalo almost exclusively denoting the person was Black and from Borno. Beneditto also appeared four times, with three listed as Black Africans and one as blanco di Tunisi.

Black Africans were also more likely to have a name that tied them to their owners. There were variations on how this was done. In some cases the owner's last name was given as a first name, such as Alexandro di Vanni whose *casanatizzo,* aged 25, was named Vanni. In other cases the enslaved male was given the first name of his master, such as Antonino Romano who owned Antonino, a Black man from Borno aged 60. Last names were also inherited by slaves, such as with Antonino Lucida who had Matteo Lucido, *nato in Trapani*, aged 15.

Table 13: Palermo 1565, Enslaved Men with a Name Attached to Their Owner

Ethnic/Regional Description	No. of People
Black	27
White	12
Olive Skinned	12
From Africa	2

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[82] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, ASCP.

From Barbary	1
Moorish	1
Arab	1
From Tunisia	1
Turkish	1
Unknown	7

In addition, Black Africans seemed more likely to move between households than out of Sicily. This is indicated where some enslaved men had different last names than their owners, suggesting that the first owners maintained their ties even after a slave had moved into a new household. Of the eight examples of this, five were listed as Black.

Table 14: Palermo 1565 Enslaved Men with a Name Attached to A Different Head of Household

Head of Household	Enslaved Male	Regional/Ethnic Description	Age
Petro Lo Monaco	Antonino Rizzo	Nigro di Burno	40
Geronimo Xibecca	Joanni Calzerano	Nigro di Burno	35
Ottavio Lo Bosco	Caloyero	Unknown	Unknown
Iulio La Rocca	Stephano Majondino	Nigro	45
Iulio La Rocca	Andria Disone	Nigro	25
Matheo Mangarella	Joanni Bianco	Bianco di Tunisi	38
Vincenzo Accomando	Georgi Sacco	Nigro di Burno	40

| Baptista di Novi | Vincenzo Vintimilia | Tunisi | 35 |

The names of these enslaved males show not only ties to their masters, but also to their status. The baptized name Cristofalu, and possibly also Gaspano, marked that an enslaved man was mostly likely a Black African from Borno. In many cases there were also multiple enslaved men in the one household with the same name. Of these cases, twenty-two were described as Black, one as olive-skinned and nine as white. This type of naming could potentially show a family connection among the enslaved men. But the choice to name numerous men the same name in one household was likely part of the larger codification of dehumanization in commercial records such as bulk sales, the use of livestock sales terminology, and the selling of people in warehouse conditions. Not only did it remove any markers of a previous religious or cultural affiliation, it also stripped people of an individual identity.

Table 15: Palermo 1565, Enslaved Men with the Same Name in One Household

Head of Household	Name	Identity Marker	Age
Fabio Minnexi	Antonino	Nigro di Burno	40
Fabio Minnexi	Antonino	Nigro Nato in Regno	20
Fabio Minnexi	Cristofalo	Nigro di Burno	80
Fabio Minnexi	Cristofalo	Nigro di Burno	50
Cesare Lanza	Antonio Jacopo	Nigro di Burno	80
Cesare Lanza	Antoni	Casanatizzo Olivastro	25
Graziano di Ballo	Rinaldo	Nigro di Burno	80
Graziano di Ballo	Rinaldo	Casanatizzo	6

Joanni Mattheo Bascuni	Johannico	Nigro di Burno	40
Joanni Mattheo Bascuni	Joanni	Casanatizzo Nigro	20
Joanni Mattheo Bascuni	Joanni	Nigro	16
Baldassari di Amari	Antonino	Nigro	35
Baldassari di Amari	Antonino	Casanatizzo	22
Blasi Minnexi	Georgi	Nigro	60
Blasi Minnexi	Georgi	Nigro	50
Colantonio Conversano	Cesare	Bianco di Africa	17
Colantonio Conversano	Cesare	Bianco	15
Dominico del Colle	Joanni	Natizzo in casa nigro	13
Dominico del Colle	Joanni	Casanatizzo	2
Duca di Firenze	Cristofalo	Nigro di Burno	35
Duca di Firenze	Cristofalo	Nigro di Burno	25
Guillelmo Valdadaura	Joanni	Nigro di Burno	45
Guillelmo Valdadaura	Joanni	Nigro di Burno	45
Joanni di Amari	Alonso	Scavo bianco	20
Joanni di Amari	Alfonso	Casanatizzo	16
Masi Perricuni	Gioseph Pirricuni	Nigro	50
Masi Perricuni	Gioseph	Nigro	50
Scipione Toscano	Joannico	Casanatizzo olivastro	45
Scipione Toscano	Joannico	Casanatizzo blanco	30
Stephano Sauli	Giulio	Di Tunisi blanco	20
Stephano Sauli	Giulio	Di Tunisi Blanco	18

| Cathernella La Cruci | Vincenzo | Casanatizzo | 5 |
| Cathernella La Cruci | Vincenzo | Casanatizzo Blanco | 4 |

Concluding Remarks

Starting in the fifteenth century enslaved West Africans were being trafficked into Iberian ports, where they were often sold into the hands of other European merchants. Northern Italians supported the growth of this trade, particularly Genoese merchants in the ports of Valencia and Florence. Merchants from Palermo and Naples did not play an active role in this trade, but there were important markets in Southern Italy for galley labor as a result of their proximity and active role in the ongoing corsair warfare between Spain and the Ottoman empire. The role of Southern Italy to the North, repeats a common theme in the early modern economic history of the Mediterranean in which Sicily and Naples were the suppliers of raw materials, in this case the labor, that were then exported and used in the Northern economies.[83] But just as Abulafia and Epstein have critiqued this economic relationship by recentering Sicily's internal market dynamics and its relationship to African economies, the same can be done for the Sicilian slave trade. Sicily's role in the larger Atlantic-Iberian slave trade may have been minor, but its connection to a North African hub connected to trans-Saharan slave trade contributed to distinct enslaved populations from those in Northern Italy. In Sicily, unlike in Northern Italy, there was both an export economy for enslaved galley labor and an import market for enslaved Black

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[83] David Abulafia, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 48; Epstein, *An Island*, 21. Abulafia referenced the raw products of cotton and wheat, Sicily's major exports to North, North resells to South as finished textile. Epstein developed "a critique of prevailing views of southern Italian economic history that is also relevant to other 'backwards' parts of pre-industrial Europe."

Africans from the Sahel.

In this chapter, I considered the local dynamic of the markets in Sicily, and the demographics of those who were enslaved in Sicilian households. The Sicilian terms of sales often involved a process of dehumanization for all enslaved people. The notarial records do not reveal a large population of Black Africans being sold in Sicily. But the sale records from one public auction do reveal changing ideas of a racialized other, some that were shared in North Africa. The census documents, on the other hand, turn inward to look at Sicilian households and suggest that there were other important sources for enslaved Africans arriving in Sicily. Black Africans appeared more frequently than Moors, and there were suggestions that they experienced a more permanent incorporation into the household. The gap between the notarial records and the census documents could suggest that some documents of sales of Black Africans were destroyed at some point, due to war or storage conditions, but it also likely reflects the reality that by the mid-sixteenth century, more Black Africans were born into households than sold in markets.

The end of slavery in Sicily also needs to be understood in the larger Saharan-Mediterranean context. By 1590 owning an enslaved person become financially out of reach for most Sicilians; the price had doubled, from an average of 20 onze as late as 1548 to 40 onze.[84] In Palermo, there was political unrest and an economic crisis, partially due to the circulation of fake currency, which led to limitations and high subsidies on its export products.[85] This was compacted by the ongoing corsair warfare, which drained the Sicilian budget.[86] Historian

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[84] Giuffrida, 32-33. He lists 3 notarial acts from the ASP: 2 sett 1591, Magi Poso mercante catalano vende a Vincenzo de Platamone servam nigram nomine Speranza per 30 onze, 28 sett 1591 Gaspare Mya mercante catalano, vende a Giovanni Genestar Catalano serva olivastra nomine Margarita di eta di circa trent'anni per onze 45, 18 dicembre 1592 Giovanni Simone de Lombra mercante catalano, vende a Giovanni Battista Archeri e Giovanni Ambrosio Caym un servo negro di nome Pietro dell'eta di anni 28 per il prezzo di onze 40.

[85] Nicolo Palmeri, *Somma della storia di Sicilia di Niccolo Palmeri* (G. Meli, 1856), 377.

[86] Benigno, "Integration and Conflict," 27-28; Epstein, *An Island*, 329. Epstein shows personal budgets were already

Aymard pins the beginning of the decline of slavery to be between 1550- 1570, after Tripoli was lost to the Ottomans.[87] The census material from 1565 in Palermo corroborates a decline of new enslaved people entering households. At the same time this shift in power most likely contributed to a growth in the slave trade from Borno under Dūnama b. Muḥammad and his son 'Abdallāh b. Dūnama, who reestablished diplomatic ties with the Ottoman in 1551, and even began to import Turkish mercenaries to fight for them in the Sahel.[88]

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strained by the fifteenth century, and Begnino talks about the defensive responsibilities of Sicily until the end of the sixteenth century.

[87] Aymard. "De La Traite," 19-20.

[88] Rémi Dewière, *Du Lac Tchad à La Mecque : Le Sultanat Du Borno et Son Monde (XVIe-XVIIe Siècle)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017), 9.

Chapter 4: Negotiating Power Beyond the Gaze of the Spanish Monarchy:
The Elite Sicilian Slave Owners of Palermo

From the fifteenth century, elite Sicilians had to negotiate their local rights and privileges

through the Spanish administration, whose interests changed depending on its monarchs. Under

the expansion-minded monarch Charles V, who took power in 1516, the Spanish Habsburg

empire attempted to expand its borders across the Atlantic and North African coastline. This

contributed to a rise in corsair warfare in the Mediterranean, between Suleiman the

Magnificent's Ottoman forces and Spanish fleets. From the time of Ferdinand in 1479 through

the reign of Charles V, Sicily was important to the Spanish monarchy because of its geographical

position and its agricultural products. Accordingly, Spain stationed Genoese fleets on the island

and it placed Genoese, Florentine, and Catalan merchants in its urban centers to manage the

export market of Sicilian agricultural goods. The foreign merchant diasporas in Sicily benefited

in unison with the growth of the Spanish empire, but elite Sicilians faced an increasing restriction

of rights with Spanish growth.[1]

In this environment of being ruled by a monarchy interested in Sicily but not Sicilians,

the elite class had to be creative to assert local power. Some tried to strengthen their relationship

with the monarchy; through their professed loyalty to Spain they could gain trading privileges,

and the rights to royal lands. Others went into debt offering military support. The opportunities

however were limited, because not only were these Sicilians competing against each other, but

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[1] Céline Dauverd. *Imperial Ambition in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Genoese Merchants and the Spanish Crown* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3. Historian Celine Dauverd developed the notion of symbiotic imperialism in her analysis of the Genoese merchant diaspora and the Spanish in the early modern Mediterranean. In this relationship , as Dauverd wrote "Genoese finances enabled Spanish ascendency in Europe; in return, Spain granted the Genoese financial privileges in its domains."

also the Spanish-favored foreign merchant diasporas. It is not surprising then that wealthy

Sicilians were turning their focus inwards to the internal markets of Sicily that Spain, for the

most part, disregarded. They invested in local agriculture ventures and natural resources. With a

growing mistrust of the monarchy's institutions, they also created their own rules of justice that

that they enforced with personal militias. In this chapter, I will first examine how the Spanish

monarchy's attention to a growing Atlantic empire and ongoing corsair warfare impacted both

the positions of power of elite Sicilians, and the ethnic diversity of enslaved populations staying

in Sicily. In turn, I will examine how the growing Sicilian urban elite utilized enslaved men and

women as a means of establishing local power and wealth beyond the gaze of the Spanish

monarchy.

Choosing Sides in an Expanding Mediterranean

In a letter to the new King Charles V in 1516, viceroy Hugo Moncada wrote of Sicily:

This kingdom is its own enemy, the inclination of its inhabitants is to be so
malicious and hateful against each other that they are always fighting and up in
arms; to the extent that officials and ministers need to rigorously pursue justice. And
it is clear from experience that humanity and equality are contrary to their condition,
and the peaceful life of the kingdom.[2]

The tone of Moncada's letter captures Spain's relationship to Sicily during this period. Spain

needed Sicily for its own imperial expansion, but did not trust Sicilians to run themselves.

Starting from the reign of King Ferdinand in 1479, there was a shift in policy in which the

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[2] Carmelo Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico a Carlo V: l'esperienza siciliana, 1475-1525*, vol. 2 (Soveria Mannelli, CZ: Rubbettino, 1982), 554. "Questo regno e' tanto inimicato in se stesso e l'inclinazione degli abitanti e' tanta cattiva e odiosa degli uni contro gli altri, che sempre stanno in sangue e in armi; in modo che sempre gli ufficiali e ministri debbono stare con giustizia molto rigorosa. E si e' visto per esperienza che l'umanita' e l'equita sono contrarie alla loro condizione e al quieto vivere del regno."

Spanish monarchy tried to more tightly control the Sicilian elite. In the late fourteenth century after the death of the Aragonese King John the Great, the "Latin Faction," which was comprised of only a few wealthy Sicilian families, controlled most of Western Sicily's wealth.[3] They relied on the rights and privileges granted from the previous King Alfonso to maintain their incomes.[4] When King Ferdinand assumed power in Spain, he made it possible for Sicilians to buy into baron lands and acquire titles more easily.[5] In 1500 there were seven counts, by 1600, the number had tripled to twenty-one.[6] Because of this, beginning in the late fifteenth century, there was increased competition among new wealthy urban classes and the long-standing Sicilian aristocrats and feudalists, who were all competing for the monarchy's favor.[7] After the death of Ferdinand in 1516 the Spanish viceroy in Sicily, the above-mentioned Hugo Moncada, made an effort to further strip the privileges of feudalists and attempted to stop all direct communication between the Sicilian *Mastri Razionali* and the new King of the Spanish Habsburgs Charles V; making the Spanish Viceroys the only direct line of communication.[8] Moncada's attempts were the last straw in a string of efforts that had been made to minimize the political power of Sicilian elites.

As Spain was restricting rights of feudalists and opening access to noble titles, wealthy Sicilians knew that choosing the right political alliance could mean the rise or fall of their

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[3] Stephan R Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 88-89.

[4] Peter Sammartino and William Roberts, *Sicily: an informal history* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1992), 81; Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 513.

[5] Epstein, *An Island for Itself*, 82.

[6] Sammartino and Roberts, *Sicily*, 87.

[7] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 423.

[8] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 518.

power.[9] Historian Carmello Trasselli stated that, for Sicilians, accepting Charles V would mean the exit of the Aragonese crown and the entrance of a new political organization whose center was out of the Mediterranean.[10] At the local level, there were privileges at risk of being lost that would directly impact the wealth and power of the noble class. The rift among elites during this transition, which often coincided with long-standing personal feuds, resulted in two violent revolts in Palermo. The 1516 revolt involved rioting, looting and murders; it caused the viceroy Moncada to flee to Messina. Piero Squarcialupo, who was opposed to the Spanish presence, led a second revolt in 1517. He gathered a group of nobles to revolt against those who had supported Moncada.[11] In the end Squarcialupo's revolt was short-lived, and ultimately unsuccessful.

In the aftermath of the 1516 and 1517 revolts, those who supported Moncada, and Charles V, benefitted locally. The Bologna family, a prominent Sicilian family that fled Bologna in the thirteenth century, supported Ferdinand the Catholic and subsequently Charles V and Viceroy Moncada.[12] As a result, they played a significant role in the political life of Sicily from the fifteenth century through the sixteenth century. In the last half of the fifteenth century under Ferdinand the Catholic, Simone Bologna was the archbishop of Palermo. Pietro and Gilberto Bologna were Barons of Sambuca in 1491, and Bernardino Bologna was archbishop of Messina. Moncada then nominated Bernardino president of the kingdom in 1512.[13] Their support of Moncada in the 1517 revolt, and the fall of Squarcialupo were advantageous for them. Fabio and

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[9] Epstein, *An Island for Itself*, 322.

[10] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 539.

[11] Trasselli, 382.

[12] Lavinia Pinzarrone, "La Descrittione Della Casa e Famiglia de'Bologni Di Baldassare Di Bernardino Bologna," *Mediterranea: Ricerche Storiche* Anno IV (Agosto 2007): 356-357.

[13] Pinzarrone, "La Descrittione," 369.

Francesco Bologna, Baron of Sambuca, were rectors of the Grand Hospital in Palermo from 1517 to 1518. In 1517 the new viceroy, Ettore Pignatelli, the Duke of Monteleone nominated Fabio as Prefect. Giacomo Bologna was the treasurer.[14] On the other hand, the Imperatore family, who had a centuries-old feud with the Bologna family, had supported a return of French power after the 1516 and 1517 revolts.[15] In 1523 the Imperatore brothers led a failed revolt in support of the French, and also in opposition to the growth of the Bologna's standing in local politics. The brothers were executed and their bodies left in cages for public view.[16] This example of the Bologna and the Imperaturi families in Sicily, one of many, illustrates the significance of the monarchy's rule in deciding the fate of local feuds, and the risk Sicilians took in choosing their political alliances in the larger Mediterranean.

The Sicilian Costs of Spain's Mediterranean Wars

Sicily was in an important geopolitical position for the Spanish monarchy. It served as a source of military supplies, a landing point for Genoese galleys and an export market for captives.[17] By the late fifteenth century, the monarchy's military demands were increasing in response to the growth of Ottoman power. Turkish attacks on Malta, Gozo, and Pantelleria in 1488 put Sicily in a key location to both protect the borders of the Spanish empire and push back in attempt to expand its control to the North African coastline.[18] Spain relied on Genoese fleets

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[14] Trasselli, Da Ferdinando, 611.

[15] Trasselli, 510, 613.

[16] Sammartino and Roberts, 85.

[17] Céline Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans: Trade Diaspora in Early Modern Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (January 1, 2006): 45.

[18] Epstein, 337.

to conduct its war in the Mediterranean. Some wealthy Sicilians profited in participating in Spain's wars. The Baressi family, who were barons in the Val di Catania region, fought in the war for King Giovanni against the French and against rebellious Catalans. In return they gained the right to export out of Palermo free of duty.[19] But serving in the troops was becoming an increasingly undesirable job; soldiers were poorly paid, and often resorted to stealing to make a living.[20]

After the Spanish conquest of Tripoli in 1510, hundreds of Spanish troops deserted their ranks and fled to Sicily. Less than fifty of these soldiers accepted a request to rejoin.[21] With a growing scarcity of voluntary labor, Spain turned to forced and enslaved labor for its troops, a phenomenon that was occurring across the shores in the Islamic Mediterranean.[22] Christian captives were used for galley labor in Ottoman forces, and in Morocco, Sultan Mawlay Isma'il attempted to create a royal army composed of all enslaved Black males.[23] Spain used enslaved North Africans and Eastern Europeans in their fleets.[24] Imprisoned Sicilians also served as part of the forced labor on Spanish galleys.[25] In some Sicilian cases, enrollment in the army was a means to avoid imprisonment. Giovanni Veneziano from Monreale was repeatedly jailed and

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[19] A. Flandina, "Donna Aldonza Santapau," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, 3 (1878): 408.

[20] Nicolo Palmeri, *Somma della storia di Sicilia di Niccolo Palmeri* (G. Meli, 1856), 385.

[21] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 519.

[22] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 841-842.

[23] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993), 192; El Hamel, Black Morocco, 103. Bono notes that enslaved Christians were primarily used for ransom, and secondarily as galley labor.

[24] Bono, Corsari, 110.

[25] Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2:841-842.

was able to avoid one of his prison sentences by enlisting in the army that was preparing for a mission in Tripoli.[26] But the monarchy was already having problems sustaining military expenses under Alfonso and this worsened under the wars between Carlo V and Suleiman.[27] Financial stress from military demands extended to the Sicilian aristocrats, who often personally recruited and paid soldiers to join the army. With the growing demands, they also became heavily indebted.[28] Ultimately, Charles V was forced to turn to knightly orders to undertake Spain's military missions.[29]

Beyond the examples of providing their own labor in the military, elite Sicilians were creative in negotiating personal benefits from a maritime war that was primarily carried out by foreign forces. Some made their own financial gains from privateering boats or even looting ships.[30] Antonio Fardella, a wealthy man from Trapani, both participated in and funded corsair activity along the North African coast.[31] Many Sicilians were uniquely positioned to help fortify the island for protection against corsair attacks. They also used this as an opportunity to protect their own financial investments in coastal lands.[32] The baron Calogero Bonanno, served as a soldier in Caltagirone; in return, he was authorized to populate the feud of Xandicathani like a

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[26] Gaetano Millunzi, "Antonio Veneziano," *Archivio Storico Siciliano* XIX (1894): 26.

[27] Dauverd, *Imperial Ambition*, 47; Palmeri, "Somma della Storia," 390; Carmelo Trasselli, Maurice Aymard, and Monique Aymard, "Du Fait Divers à l'histoire Sociale: Criminalité et Moralité En Sicile Au Début de l'époque Moderne," *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 28, no. 1 (1973): 227.

[28] Epstein, 328-329.

[29] Trasselli, 519.

[30] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993), 73.

[31] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 235.

[32] Antonino Palazzolo, *Le Torri Militari Del Regno Di Sicilia in Eta Moderna* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano Studi Politici Ed Economici, 2011), 29.

castle and enclose it with crenellated towers.[33] This fortified the island, but also his private estates. Similarly, in 1502 Gerardo Bonnano received financing to build a tower to defend his salt mine in Tavila.[34] Some also used Spanish funding as an opportunity for a new business endeavor; in 1490 the General Treasurer Pietro Agliata received funding from the monarchy to start a new ironworks in order to support the military.[35]

The Elite Male Slave Owners of Palermo

The Spanish monarchy was more interested in Sicily's export economy of captives, which provided labor for its galleys, than it was with those who were enslaved domestically in Sicilian households. Historian Sally Mckee observed that "Naples, Messina and Palermo became the main Italian slave markets where war captives were either sold to state power looking for labour or to Muslim merchants come to ransom Muslim slaves."[36] Whether through purchases made in these markets or from captives taken at sea, the majority of state-owned slaves in the early sixteenth century tended to be North African. The royal court owned a group of enslaved men, primarily Moors, who were injured or killed in an explosion at Castellamare in Palermo, where they worked making ammunition for the Spanish.[37] In the account of a shipwreck from 1525, the state took ownership of the eighty Moors on board; twenty were sent to serve on

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[33] Trasselli, 86.

[34] Trasselli, 272.

[35] Palazzolo, 29-30.

[36] Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 321.

[37] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato Del Lavoro Nella Sicilia Rinascimentale," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, 54, no. Anno XIV (2001): 42.

Genoese galleys, another twenty one were assigned to the sailing ships that went between

Trapani and Favignana, and eight were assigned to manual labor in Trapani.[38] The remainders

were distributed as gifts to political and military officials, sold in markets, or donated to

churches. There were suggestions that domestically enslaved West African men were considered

for the monarchy's military efforts, such as the census conducted in Palermo in 1565 in which

enslaved men from Borno were described by their physical ability to participate in the army.[39]

But this may have been intended more for taxation purposes, not only because it was easier to

purchase this labor directly through Palermo's export slave markets or utilize captives from

seized ships, but these populations were also more skilled in maritime warfare.

The Spanish preferences for enslaved North Africans likely contributed to Sicilians

holding a high number of enslaved West Africans in their household. Wealthy and powerful

members of the Sicilian aristocracy were actively participating in slave holding, and had diverse

enslaved individuals in their households over multiple generations. The Lanza family, who

traced their lineage in Sicily back to the eleventh century, was one example of multi-generational

slave owning among this wealthy class.[40] In 1480 in Kalsa Cristofaru Lanza and his wife had 6

children, three boys and three girls, and three enslaved females; two were white, one was

Black.[41] They also had two enslaved males and one male servant. In 1501 in Albergheria

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[38] Tribunale del Concistoro, 20 March 1525, b.n. 99, indizione XIII, Archivio di Stato Palermo, Catena. Transcribed in Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato," 30.

[39] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 374–420.

[40] Armando Di Pasquale, *Aspetti storico-demografici di Sicilia* (Palermo: Ediprint, 1994), 196. Numbers for Kalsa are based on Di Pasquale's transcription of a 1480 census from Kalsa found in the Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo.

[41] Di Pasquale, "Aspetti storico-demografici," 195.

Cristofaru Lanza owned seven enslaved individuals, which included four able-bodied men.[42] In 1510 Marcu Lanza bought an enslaved Jewish woman from Tripoli with her young female child at a public auction.[43] In 1565 Cesare Lanza owned Antoni Jacopo, a Black man from Borno, age 80, Antoni an olive-skinned man, age 25, and Martino an olive-skinned man, age 50.[44] Francesco Lanza owned Francesco, a fifty-year old Black man from Borno.

Similarly, the Aiutamichristo family appeared numerous times in the archives as slave-owners. In 1480 the Aiutamichristo family lived in Kalsa. They had origins in Pisa and had moved to Palermo under the reign of Alfonso.[45] Guglielmo, became the Baron of Misilmeri and signore of Favara, and eventually built a large palace in Kalsa in the 1490s. Into this palace, Guglielmo brought with him five children, four enslaved Black men, three enslaved white women and three enslaved Black women.[46] In 1501 in Albergheria there was a Grillo Aiutamichristo, who owned seven enslaved females, three freed females and fifteen enslaved males.[47] To understand how these wealthy families utilized their enslaved men for protection of their own local interests, it will first be important to understand the urban elites' growing investments in the land, and subsequently the growing competition among each other in the urban center of Palermo.

Enslaved Labor and Western Sicily's Agricultural Production

[42] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 97f, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, Archivio Storico Comunale Palermo.

[43] Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, 47v. Archivio di Stato Palermo, Catena.

[44] Franchina, "Un Censimento," 393.

[45] Di Pasquale, 190.

[46] Di Pasquale, 190.

[47] Numerazione, 1502-1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 66f , Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, ASCP.

Most of Sicily's wealth stemmed from agriculture.[48] While foreign merchant groups may have controlled the export trade in wheat and sugar, Sicilian barons living in urban centers controlled their local production. Wheat, sugar and silk industries grew after 1440 and remained important Sicilian exports through the fifteenth and early sixteenth century.[49] The silk industry was primarily centered in Eastern Sicily, whereas sugar and wheat were important in Western Sicily.[50] Since antiquity, Sicilian wheat was a major export to Northern Italy, the Western Mediterranean, North Africa and the Levant.[51] It remained so until the end of the sixteenth century and Palermo was at the center of this trade.[52] Wheat was often grown on *latifundi*, a popular system of landowning in southern Italy that consisted of privately owned large land estates cultivated for exports and often populated by those working on the estate.[53] In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, many wealthy barons were transforming previously abandoned land into *latifundi.*[54] Guglielmo Ajutamichristu, one of the slave-owners living in Palermo mentioned above, invested in land in the province of Trapani, and forced families that had land and animals to live and pay rent there.[55]

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[48] John Paul Russo, "The Sicilian Latifundia," *Italian Americana* 17, no. 1 (1999): 47.

[49] Epstein, 237.

[50] Maurice Aymard, "From Feudalism to Capitalism in Italy: The Case That Doesn't Fit," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 6, no. 2 (October 1, 1982): 148.

[51] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 579.

[52] Braudel, 58; Russo, 88; Sammartino, 88.

[53] Marta Petrusewicz, "The Demise of *Latifondismo*," in *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, ed. Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (Exeter, Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 20-21.

[54] Aymard, 193.

[55] Trasselli, 423.

In addition to wheat, Sicily also has a long history of sugar production, which began under Arab rule and grew with the Norman rule in the eleventh century.[56] During the fifteenth century Europe lost access to Islamic centers of production with the spread of the Ottoman Empire.[57] At the same time, there was a lowering of the exportation duty on Sicilian sugar to ease competition.[58] As a result, for a brief period, Sicilian sugar trade was thriving in the Mediterranean and at the turn of the sixteenth century, many Sicilians were requesting licenses to build new sugar mills.[59] But significant changes in the sixteenth century led to a quick decline in its profitability. The refinement process was increasingly occurring in the North since there were environmental limitations of supplying enough wood and water to the mills in Sicily.[60] Perhaps most importantly, by the second half of the fifteenth century Sicilian sugar began to compete with the Atlantic imports. As historian J.H. Galloway noted, sugar from Madeira reached Europe after 1450, from Sao Tome in 1490, and from Brazil in the 1530s and 1540s.[61] By 1580 Brazilian sugar was cheaper than Sicilian sugar in Palermo.[62] Even the Ventimiglia family, who received special concessions from the monarchy to produce sugar, was selling their sugar mills by 1609.[63]

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[56] Sidney M. Greenfield, "Plantations, Sugar Cane and Slavery," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 6, no. 1 (July 1, 1979): 94.; Charles Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1970), 20.

[57] Greenfield, "Plantations," 94.

[58] Palmeri, 378.

[59] Epstein, 62.

[60] Orazio Cancila, *Baroni e Popolo Nella Sicilia Del Grano* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1983), 72.; J. H. Galloway, "The Mediterranean Sugar Industry," *Geographical Review* 67, no. 2 (1977): 188.

[61] Galloway, "The Mediterranean Sugar," 190.

[62] Galloway, 191, 193.

[63] Antonino Palazzolo, *Malvicino: L'impianto Della Canna Da Zucchero a Capo d'Orlando Dal XV al XVII Secolo* (Capo d'Orlando: Aeroclub d'Italia, 2011), 12.

To offset the risk of investing in one crop, and to remain competitive in a changing Mediterranean economy, wealthy Sicilians were also diversifying their agricultural produce beyond wheat and sugar. In addition to owning a tuna fishery and sugar mill, Blasco Lanza, inherited a monopoly on the rock salt industry in Valdemone and started an unsuccessful firm for the exploration of metals in Sicily.[64] Capital generated from these efforts was spent on buying privileges and maintaining, often lavish, urban households.[65] Historian John Paul Russo observed that in the sixteenth century these barons owned 160 of the island's 244 towns, or 65.5% and that by 1583 they owned 153 of 195 towns, or 78.4.%[66] It was because of their agricultural endeavors, that urban centers grew and could be sustained.[67] With urban barons investing in rural lands, they also needed to find sources of labor. At a time when many of these barons had enslaved men and women in their households and plantation slavery was developing in the sugar industry of Madeira and Sao Tome, why was enslaved labor not more prominent in Sicilian agriculture?[68]

According to Robin Blackburn, there was a lack of enslaved labor in European agriculture because "while there were thousands of Africans in Portugal and Spain around 1500, they were rare elsewhere in Europe."[69] But the more recent historiography on slavery in Sicily discussed in this dissertation has proven that in Sicily there were high numbers of enslaved Black

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[64] Carmelo Trasselli, *Siciliani Fra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, Collana Di Testi e Studi Storici (Messina: Intilla, 1981), 163.

[65] Sammartino, 87.

[66] Russo, "The Sicilian Latifundia," 44.

[67] Epstein, 72

[68] Greenfield, "Plantations," 101-102, 115.

[69] Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 98.

Africans during the same time period. And, similar to in Valencia, there were some being used for physical labor. [70] In 1480 in Kalsa, Jacobu di Bonannu, along with owning three enslaved males, four enslaved females, and two manumitted females, had four enslaved men at his *massaria*, or large farm. [71] Many enslaved males appeared to have worked on vineyards, an agricultural sector that was growing in the Palermo region, often at the cost of sugar production. [72] Thomeu Li Ferri had had three enslaved males working in his vineyard, and Joanni La Matina had four enslaved males, two of whom were working in the vineyard. [73] Jacobo di Randisi, Antoni Columbi and Anthoninu Alliata also all had at least one enslaved male working on their vineyards. [74]

There were also important counter examples of wealthy slave owners who were heavily invested in agricultural ventures but were *not* using their enslaved members of the household for agricultural labor. Pietro Alliata, who was active in the wheat trade in Tunisia, listed the expenses of one of his firms regulating wheat production in 1491. [75] In the cost breakdown, 47.7% of his costs went to salaried workers. [76] In addition, though he owned enslaved people in his household, their labor was not used in these wheat fields. In 1480 in Kalsa, Pietro Alliata lived with his wife and five children and one enslaved female. In 1501 in Albergheria, a

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[70] Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 96.

[71] Di Pasquale, *Aspetti*, 184.

[72] Cancila, *Baroni*, 77. In the first decade of the 1500s, the region between Monreale and Palermo was rich with vineyards and olive groves, which replaced sugar production.

[73] Di Pasquale, 168, 193.

[74] Di Pasquale, 202, 227, 229.

[75] Carmelo Trasselli, *Siciliani*, 126.

[76] Cancila, "Baroni e Popoli," 27.

neighboring zone in Palermo, there was a forty-year old Pietro Alliata who owned a manumitted woman, four enslaved females, and two enslaved males, only one of who was able-bodied.[77] Both of these individuals owned more enslaved females, and neither listed their enslaved men as working outside of the house.[78] Members of the Ventimiglia family, who controlled a large part of the Sicilian sugar industry, owned no more than five enslaved people in a house, with the majority being women.[79] In Sicily, a sugar mill would employ forty to fifty people, and sugar cultivation employed hundreds, but there are no known examples of enslaved labor being used in sugar refinement, which would have been a highly skilled process.[80] There were examples of enslaved labor being used in the sugar cultivation process in other parts of the Mediterranean, but again there is little evidence for this in Sicily.[81] Instead sugar mill owners used wage laborers, from the north and Calabria.[82] This preference, upon further examination, can illuminate the lack of large-scale use of enslaved labor in agriculture.

Most historians of Italy contend that its agricultural system was fundamentally not set up for slave labor.[83] Blackburn noted that in the European medieval period there was a decline of field slavery as it was replaced with serfdom.[84] In southern Italy in particular there was an early

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[77] Numerazione, 1502-1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 69b, Albergheria.

[78] It is possible this was the same Pietro Alliata in both censuses, but I am unable to confirm this from the records.

[79] Di Pasquale, 198; Franchina 394, 409.

[80] Epstein, 219.

[81] Blackburn, "The Old World Background," 97; William D. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 95-97.

[82] Epstein, 219; Galloway, "The Mediterranean Sugar,"186.

[83] Maurice Aymard, "From Feudalism," 144; Blackburn, 70; Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 318.

[84] Blackburn, 71.

introduction of wage labor, and a shift away from a feudal system in which people were tied to the land.[85] Maurice Aymard calculated that sixty to seventy percent of the seasonal labor in Sicily was supplied by migrant workers from the Sicilian countryside and the southern mainland.[86] In the sixteenth century, barons were buying empty land, and populating them with these labor workers. One reason they had access to a large labor force was because the population grew substantially during this time period, from half a million to over eight hundred thousand.[87] But they also preferred this form of short-term labor because they could negotiate, and renegotiate, rental terms to their benefit.[88] As a result of high rents, indebted peasants would sometimes have to work for free; another common type of labor in the Mediterranean economy referred to as indebted servitude.[89]

With enslaved labor, landowners would lose the important source of rental income. In addition, owning an enslaved person was expensive. Over the course of the sixteenth century the price of enslaved men and women was rising.[90] The option for large-scale enslaved agricultural labor would have only been an option for the wealthy, but even in this case was never preferred. Not only would barons lose rent, they would have to provide long-term food and lodging for their enslaved workers. There were also more hidden costs for enslaved labor because it required

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[85] Aymard, "From Feudalism," 190.

[86] Aymard, 143.

[87] Russo, 46; Sammartino 88.

[88] Epstein, 326; Russo 46-47.

[89] Aymard, 194; Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi: una storia mediterranea (XVI-XIX secolo)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2016), 16. Bono uses Michael Bush to reference five types of Mediterranean servility: slavery, servant, forced labor, indebted servant, and penal servant.

[90] Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato," 34.

greater supervision for fear of revolt or escape.[91] For the owner, in the already risky

Mediterranean economy, utilizing a large enslaved workforce was a high risk, with more

invested and therefore more to lose.[92]

Urban Labor

Small-scale slave ownership cut across classes in the urban centers of Sicily. In Messina,

within the lower classes enslaved members of the household often assumed the labor of their

master or rendered domestic services.[93] In Trapani, an enslaved man was responsible for

transporting tallow and skins from the butcher to the store to make candles, salting and drying

the skins, and salting cheeses.[94] This was similar to the workforce in Valencia, where

Blumenthal points to enslaved men contracted in roles of carpenters, bread bakers, and in the

textile industry.[95] One example in Sicily cited by historian Antonino Giuffrida, comes from a

1448 court case in which there was a death of an enslaved male who was working as a wall

builder in Palermo.[96] In this case, Pietro Calandra of Palermo loaned an enslaved Black man,

Martino, from a priest in order to build a wall for his house. While Martino was digging a hole

there was a landslide that ultimately killed him despite a rush of neighbors trying to dig him out.

In the subsequent court case pursued by the priest, it becomes evident that similar to in

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[91] Blackburn, 71.

[92] Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato," 35

[93] Giovanna Anastasi Motta, "La Schiavitu a Messina Nel Primo Cinquecento," *Archivio Storico per La Sicilia Orientale* 1 (1974): 312-313.

[94] Carmelo Trasselli, *Sicilia Levante e Tunisia Nei Secoli XIV E XV* (Trapani: Società Editrice Drepanum, 1952), 54.

[95] Blumenthal, "Enemies and Familiars," 82.

[96] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato," 41.

agriculture, in urban labor there was still more of a financial risk taken by using enslaved labor. The priest argued that Pietro did not take the necessary safety precautions, such as having a second laborer to move the dirt dug out by Martino. Pietro rebuked that he had explained to Martino the best way to dig to prevent it from caving in, and in turn accused Martino of sleeping in the hole. For Pietro, not taking what the priest suggested was a standard safety precaution may have signified a negligent disregard for the safety of an enslaved man that he may not have had with a free laborer. This was reinforced by his casual accusation of laziness; according to Pietro, Martino died because he had been sleeping. It was likely also an effort to cut costs. Foreign laborers often performed this type of work and, like in agriculture, would have been preferred to slave labor.[97] In order to make using slave labor profitable, Calandra had loaned Martino, avoiding the investment of owning a slave, and had not hired a second laborer as would normally have been required. For the slave owner, however, there was a significant loss. Pietro Calandra was ultimately exonerated and the priest lost capital invested in Martino and the income he would have gained from the rental of Martin's labor.

In Palermo, lower classes would have one or two enslaved people in the household, but wealthier families often had five to upwards of twenty. This fit with a trend of "ostentatious consumption" to which Aymard pointed out in relation to the import of luxury goods into elite Sicilian households.[98] Unlike members of the lower class, however, these wealthy owners could not impart a trade to their enslaved men, because they themselves did not practice one. And though they were often landowners, they did not use the majority of their enslaved men for agricultural labor. Instead it seems important here to turn to what Blackburn noted with regards

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[97] Cancila, 14.

[98] Aymard, "Feudalism," 193.

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to rich European merchants, namely that they preferred enslaved labor in the household because slaves "were beholden neither to lords nor guilds."[99] This idea became even more targeted in a 1615 statement from the Spanish author Cristobal Suares de Figueroa who wrote that enslaved Black men were "better educated, easier to handle, and once trained, very productive. They demonstrate more loyalty and affection to their masters."[100] De Figueroa's focus on Black men as being trainable and easier to handle, can also be read as having no allegiances to other religions or state institutions, and therefore loyal to their owner.

An enslaved man's lack of loyalty to either side of the ongoing war, or in local feuds, could have been of great benefit to wealthy Sicilian owners. Sicilian barons were increasingly relying on their own military resources to exploit their own power. They held large amounts of artillery and war equipment in their households that they were required to supply to the monarchy in times of war.[101] In 1501 in Palermo, the treasurer Giovanni Ribesaltes listed in his household possessions forty-one assorted types of suits of armor, over thirty lances, and six horses.[102] In addition, he owned twelve enslaved men, seven of who were considered able-bodied. With the growth of an urban elite, there was also an in increase in often violent competition to both attain and retain their wealth and status, and enslaved labor was a valuable asset in these feuds.

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[99] Blackburn, 70.

[100] Bono, *Schiavi*, 70. The full quote is originally from Cristobal Suares de Figueroa's Plaza Universal de todas las ciencias Madrid, 1615. It is as follows: "Gli schiavi o sono turchi, o barbareschi, o negri: I due primi generi risultano di solito infedeli, mal intenzionati, ladroni, ubriaconi, pieni di mille sensualita e autori di mille delitti … i negri sono di miglior literatura, piu' facili di trattare e, una volta addrestrati, di buon rendimento. Si dimostrano piu' leali e piu' affezionati ai padroni."

[101] Céline Dauverd, "Genoese and Catalans: Trade Diaspora in Early Modern Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (January 1, 2006): 45; Sammartino, "Sicily," 87.

[102] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 87f, Albergheria.

Enslaved Labor in Criminal Endeavors

> Ad un bon nidu nun manca auceddu, ed a bon scavu nun manca patruni.[103]
> A worthy nest does not lack for a bird; and a good slave does not lack for a lord.
>   -Antonio Veneziano

Some of the most violent crimes in Sicily were committed among the wealthiest families. During the fifteenth and sixteenth century there was a rise of what historian Flandina described as "arbitrary acts of violence" amongst barons.[104] The Aymards and Trasselli argued that this rise in crime was due to a general lack of morality in Sicilians during this period.[105] Their argument recalls Moncada's sixteenth-century lament cited at the beginning of this chapter. They wrote that "the immorality, compared to our norms, was daily, and far from being condemned in the name of a general model of austerity, seemed accepted (*admis par tous*), outside of a few particularly scandalous cases."[106] In addition to what may have been a rise in immorality, it is also important to factor in the increased economic and political pressure and a general mistrust of state institutions that were fueling these rivalries.[107] The former has already been discussed in relation to the monarchy's restriction of rights, the increase of people entering elite classes, and a changing economy with the opening of Atlantic markets. In addition, the judicial system was often unreliable and used to enact personal vendettas. This was true in an example from a feud that existed between the Veneziano and Calogero families in Monreale. The Calogero family utilized their friends, the new governor in Monreale and the judge Pietro Alliata, to have

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[103] Antonio Veneziano, *Ninety Love Octaves*, trans. Gaetano Cipolla (Ottowa: Legas, 2006), 115.

[104] Flandina, "Donna,"408.

[105] Carmelo Trasselli, Maurice Aymard, and Monique Aymard, "Du Fait," 226–46.

[106] Aymards and Trasselli, "Du Fait," 228.

[107] Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 160.

Giovanni and Nicolo Veneziano put in jail, and Antonio Veneziano under house arrest, without the three brothers knowing for what crime they had been arrested.[108] After the Veneziano's release from jail, the brothers requested to be tried for this crime outside of Monreale, to avoid the vindictive actions of the judge, but they were eventually imprisoned and tortured in Castellamare prison in Palermo, for various, possibly false, accusations.[109]

In this atmosphere, justice was often in the hands of powerful and partisan individuals. Wealthy individuals were equipped with hefty arsenals and enslaved men and women in their houses to pursue their vendettas. The Ventimiglia family, who played an important role in the sugar industry in Sicily, were multi-generational slave owners; holding enslaved people in their house in 1480 in Kalsa, purchasing slaves at the 1510 auctions, and as slave owners in the 1565 census. In 1475 there was a personal feud between Pietro de Benedictis and Alfonso Ventimiglia. It ended with Pietro killing Alfonso. Carlo and Enrico, Alfonso's brothers, sought revenge on Pietro but when they couldn't find him, they assaulted and killed his father Cristofaro and his small grandchild, likely the son of Pietro. The accomplices to this crime included Sicilians, Spanish men, and an enslaved and freed Black man. In total, 23 men killed an old man and a young boy.[110] They were accused with their accomplices, and became fugitives of the kingdom.

Similar crimes also occurred in eastern Sicily, where wealthy families were also prominent slave owners. In 1548 the Prince Stradella of Catania owned nineteen enslaved men

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[108] Gaetano Millunzi, "Antonio Veneziano," *Archivio Storico Siciliano* XIX (1894): 42-43.

[109] Millunzi, "Antonio Veneziano," 47, 50.

[110] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 370. These men were listed as Lucas d'Almerich, Jacobus Dodu, Paolo de Carsia, Jacobo Fodella, Matteo de Vita, Nota Pietro de Mallorques, Jacobus Castilionis, Giacomo la Chaxa, Marco Marsano, Nicolo Foix, Filippo Parnaxone, Filippo Belmonte, Antonio Sponczello, Federico Cammisa, Menotto de Carnilivari, Giacomo Longu, Antonio de Marsala, Antonio de Catania, Roderico de Bayona, Simone Delspecii e Michele Etiope.

and women who were mostly Black.[111] In the Catania region there was a feud that erupted in the 1470s that involved the Baressi family, who were wealthy slave owners. In the 1461 will of Leonora and Blasco Barressi there were eleven enslaved Black men and women listed in their property.[112] Their son, Antonio Piero Barressi, was a baron who had participated in the war of King Giovanni in 1471. He married Aldonza Santapau, who was the daughter of Raimondo, a wealthy man from Licodia. In 1473, Antonio found out that his wife Aldonza was having an affair, and killed her lover Pietro Bellopede. The father and the brother of Aldonza told the Viceroy d'Urrea who sent the police to take Aldonza away and give her to the Abbess of Benedettine of Catania as a form of protection. But by the time they arrived she had already been murdered. In turn, the brother of Antonio Barressi, Nicolo, was killed by the Santapau family. The mother of Nicolo, Leonora Barresi, accused five people of the murder; among them was the father of Aldonza, Raimondo Santapau, and a manumitted woman.[113]

The Aftermath of the Crime

Avoiding the social and financial repercussions of committing these crimes could be considered a motivation for using enslaved labor to commit criminal vendettas. This was true for an example in 1456 Valencia, in which a band of at least twelve men beat a laborer's wife named Caterina but a judge ended up only accusing Jordi, the enslaved Black man involved.[114] Wealthy

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[111] Salvatore Bono, "Selon l'arrivage Sur Le Marche. La Multiplicite Ethnique Des Esclaves En Italie (XVI–XIX)," in *Couleurs de l'esclavage Sur Les Deux Rives de La Méditerranée (Moyan Âge-XXe Siècle)*, eds. Roger Botte and Alessandro Stella (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 201.

[112] Inventario, Trabia Serie, 1461, n. 15144, 16f and 16v, ASP, Gancia.

[113] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 390.

[114] Blumenthal, 163, 166-167.

Sicilians, however, may have been less concerned with displacing the blame of the crime. First, there were enough examples of them committing crimes themselves, that both Moncada and Trasselli reasoned there must have been a general sense of immorality among the men of this generation. Secondly, even if they were accused of a crime they often found a route to avoid any harsh sentences through political allies, military service and payments. For example, the wealthy Cesare Lanza, son of Blasco Lanza, murdered a jurist and his own daughter. But despite the severity of his crime he went on to buy the title of baron of Mussomeli from the Campo family and later rose to the title of prince. Harsher judgments may have become more frequent over the course of the sixteenth century; in 1542 Charles V eventually ordered Cesare executed for murder, signifying the shift in policy that Moncada initiated in 1516.[115]

One might expect enslaved people in Sicily to have suffered the most severe consequences after having been accused of a crime, including banishment and imprisonment, because they did not have the same resources, or connections, as their masters to get out of a sentence.[116] But in Sicily, there were cases in which masters stepped in to protect their slaves; in Messina a former master of a freed man paid his judicial costs to pursue an attempted homicide case.[117] In addition, both master and slave were often penalized together, and sometimes even escaped together. In Monreale in 1526 a prisoner escaped with the enslaved man of his friend Antonio Veneziano, the father of the famous Sicilian poet of the same name.[118] In the other examples of murder cited earlier there does not seem to be a clear distinction being made in the

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[115] Trasselli, *Siciliani*,165.

[116] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 616. There was an enslaved man included in the list of people not allowed to enter kingdom, Benedetto schiavo moriscato di Vincenzo di Benedetto.

[117] Motta, 334.

[118] Millunzi, 146. The original document from November 1 1526 is transcribed here.

punishment of free, freed, or enslaved men or women. The King pardoned Antonio Piero Barresi for two murders in August of 1475 through a payment of 500 onze, and Barresi later remarried and had nine children. Giovan Ponzio Santapau was a refugee for 2 years and then pardoned in 1478.[119] Both men were pardoned five years or less following the murders and went on with their lives. It is unclear whether this included the manumitted woman female slave belonging to Raimondo. Because the Ventimiglia family had served King Alfonso in the Naples war, they also were acquitted, along with their accomplices, for the murder of two people. They paid *2000 lire di Barcelona* and another 1600 *lire* two months after their return to the kingdom, with two thirds of the payment coming from Enrico because he was the richest.[120] That one person paid to cover all the men, suggests that there may not have been a financial incentive to use all these accomplices, as it also meant bailing them all out.

The use of enslaved men and women in the feuds of their masters was not unique to Sicily. From her analysis of court cases in Valencia, Debra Blumenthal contends that the use of enslaved Black men in these feuds was done intentionally as a form of humiliation.[121] It is hard to ascertain if there was a preference for enslaved Black labor in the cases of violent crimes in Sicily. There is, however, one example that suggests that Blackness was associated with preferable traits for serving as personal hitmen. Antonio Fardella of Trapani was one of the largest slave-owners in western Sicily; in 1516, he owned one hundred enslaved Black Africans.[122] At the 1510 slave auction in Palermo, he purchased the only two Black eunuchs.[123]

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[119] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 389.

[120] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando*, 370. The pardoning was signed by King Giovanni in the Monastery of S. Maria di Monserrato October 7, 1475, and was executed in 1476.

[121] Blumenthal, 164.

[122] Salvatore Bono, "Schiavi in Italia: Maghrebini, Neri, Slavi, Ebrei e altri (secc. xvi–xix)," *Mediterranea Ricerche Storiche* 7, no. 19 (2010): 239.

He described his enslaved Africans as notable for their force, courage, and loyalty; the same characteristics used to describe Sahelian eunuchs across North Africa, and Black Africans in the Mediterranean.[124] Fardella's translation of African phenotypes into physical strength did not only impact who he purchased, but also how he used them. In Trapani, Fardella had created his own personal militia, including his enslaved men, to fight for him against a rival family.[125]

The Wealthy Slave-Owning Widows

Wealthy widowers were also prominent slave owners in Sicily. In Kalsa in 1480, there were 112 women that were head of households, with 17 of them being slave owners; which means 15% of the female heads of household were slave owners. Widowers were more likely to be slave owners, with 31% of widows owning slaves. In both cases, women were more likely to own female slaves - in the women-owned households, there were eighteen enslaved women, and nine children. There were only four enslaved males, one of who was only eight years old. In 1501 in the neighboring zone of Albergheria, we recall from chapter two that of the 801 households 129 owned slaves, or 16% of the households.[126] There were 131 cases in which women were the head of households. Eleven owned slaves, or 8.4%. Similar to in Kalsa there were more enslaved females than males in women's households. There were fourteen enslaved females and four freed females, compared to only five enslaved males, and no freed men. There

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[123] Conservatoria di Registro, 1510, F. 99, 47v. ASP, Catena. One was listed as *nigro* and the other *moro nigro.*

[124] Bono, "Selon l'arrivage," 201.

[125] Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico*, 679.

[126] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, f.66r, Albergheria.

were also five infants.

These percentages were comparable to the records from the San Giacomo church in the early sixteenth century. San Giacomo was located in Loggia, a neighboring zone along the coastline of Palermo, and was the place of worship for many merchants, bankers and barons.[127] Based on primarily burial records from this church, in the late fifteenth century the number of female household owners were only about 1% of all slave owners but between 1510 and 1514 they fluctuate from 4 to almost 7% of the population of slave owners participating in the church.[128] The slightly lower number compared to the census records from Kalsa and Albergheria makes sense in that these slaves were only recorded when they were being buried, or in one case, baptized by their owners. In San Giacomo, women owners also tended to own female slaves; among 37 female owners they owned 14 enslaved males, and 24 enslaved females.

Like in male-owned households, in many female households there were numerous and diverse enslaved members, including family members of the enslaved person and freed people. In Kalsa, Madonna Constanza di Crispu had one enslaved female, one freed female, and two masculine slaves.[129] Signura Becta Martorella, who had been married to an important civil officer, had 12 women in her household, some freed and some enslaved.[130] Madonna Janna di lu Portu alias Tarantu lived with her son and his wife and three children, along with two enslaved

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[127] Maurice Aymard, "De La Traite Aux Chiourmes: La Fin de l'esclavage Dans La Sicile Moderne," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, vol. XLIV (1974): 9.

[128] libro 1-4, 8-9, 1486-1503, 1510-1514, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina, Archivio Storico Diocesano di Palermo.

[129] Di Pasquale, *Aspetti*, 194.

[130] Di Pasquale, 194.

Black females and one man who worked in the vineyard.[131] Madonna Marella di Rimbau, her sister and widowed daughter, and Fredericu and his wife and daughter of two months lived with a female servant, three enslaved women, two men, four children of the these enslaved members and one man working in the vineyard.[132] In Albergheria, the baroness of Cefalu had two daughters, one enslaved female, and three freed women living in her house.[133] Madonna Janna de Miglazi had three daughters, two enslaved females, one free female with two male sons and one able-bodied enslaved male.[134] Madonna Pina de Mazara had three enslaved females and one of their able-bodied male relatives in her household. Pinia Degranizi had one female slave and her child.[135] Helisabetta Sances had a 3-year-old Mattheo, born in the home, and Contessa di Raccuya had Micheli Nigro, a 25-year-old born in the home.[136]

Table 16: San Giacomo Church, Registers 1-3, 1486-1495, Women Owners

Name of Owner	Action Performed	Description of Enslaved Person
Signura di Castellmare	Baptism	Female Slave
Madonna Stuffa	Burial	Young Male Slave
Madonna Casandra	Burial	Male Slave
Madonna Grissa	Restitution[137]	Two Young Male Slaves
Signura di Castellamari	Burial	Female Slave
A woman at Terrachina	Burial	Female Slave
The wife of Mastro Camuderti	Burial	Female Slave

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[131] Di Pasquale, 186.

[132] Di Pasquale, 185.

[133] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 68r, Albergheria.

[134] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 85v, Albergheria.

[135] Numerazione, 1502–1503, Vol III, Ind VI, 81r, Albergheria.

[136] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 411.

[137] This could be referring to a payment made for a previous burial or baptism.

Madonna Stussa di Nana	Burial	Male Slave
Antonetta di Settimu	Burial	Female Slave
The wife of Mastro Rame Xattu	Burial	Female Slave

Table 17: San Giacomo Church, Register 4, 1499-1503, Women Owners

Name of Owner	Action Performed	Description of Enslaved Person
Madonna Battistima	Burial	Male Slave
Maria Vintimigla	Burial	Male Slave
Mathia Farina	Burial	Female Slave
Marchesa Margarita di Cola Lo murcia	Burial	Female Slave
Francesca Micexa	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Castellana	Burial	Female Slave

Table 18: San Giacomo Church, Registers 8-9, 1510-1514, Women Owners

Name of Owner	Action Performed	Description of Enslaved Person
La soer di lolo	Burial	Male Slave
Madonna Joana	Burial	Male Slave
La fratisca	Burial	Female Slave
Signura Leonora Aglata	Burial	Young Female Slave
Madona Iulani di Mazonara	Burial	Female Slave
Signora Violansi	Burial	Young Male Slave
Signura Eleonora Aglata	Burial	Young Male Slave
La Signura Antonella Sattano	Burial	Male Slave
Madonna Juana la Greca	Burial	Male Slave
A (Unclear) named Agata	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Inditta La Cappillera	Burial	Female Slave
Sogira Ursa di Adasta	Burial	Female Slave
Antonella di Juardi	Burial	Female Slave
La Francisca Madonna Undiata	Burial	Female Slave
La Signura Vionatica	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Angila	Burial	Female Slave
La hereda di Jela bbti Lombardi	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Violansi di Manfo	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Beatrice	Burial	Female Slave
Madonna Bianchina	Burial	Female Slave

In the sixteenth century, a key strategy wealthy Italian women used to manage their families' finances was the through control of their inheritance.[138] There are indicators that Sicilian women benefited financially from the ownership of enslaved people. Women used the enslaved members of their household as a financial asset. In one example from Malta a female slave owner pledged her slave and house as security.[139] In Palermo, wealthy widowed women often controlled the movement of enslaved members of their households in their wills. Melchiora Spatafora was the wife of Guglielmo Spadafora, Secretary of Palermo and Captain in 1574. She was also the daughter of a Bologna, and owned a house in Albergheria. Both Spatafora and Bologna families were prominent slave owners and active members of the urban elite class. In her older age, Melchiora was a widow and a slave owner. In her will she referenced two enslaved women that she owned.[140] She passed these women on to her named successor, Dorothea Opezinghi. She assigned 10 onze annual payment to Matti Spatafora, a white woman, and 6 onze annual payment to Caterina Spatafora, who was a Black woman. After their death, Dorothea was requested to redirect their salaries to finance the redemption activities of Santa Maria La Nova. It is interesting to see that these enslaved women were passed as property between two women, and that Caterina's stipend was established at almost half the value of the white Matti. That the money was then redirected to redemption activities shows that Melchiora was able to secure her own spiritual security, by performing an act of *caritas* at the same time that she helped sustain an

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[138] Maria Anna Noto, "Il Ruolo Delle Nobildonne Nelle Dinamiche Feudali Tra XVI e XVII Secolo Nel Principato Di Caserta," *Quaderni - Mediterranea Ricerche Storiche* 27 (2015): 487. Noto points to examples of sixteenth century women in Caserta who play integral roles in their families' financial and legal matters.

[139] Joan Abela, *Hospitaller Malta and the Mediterranean Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 121.

[140] Testo sotto di Melchiora Spatafora, Redenzione dei Cattivi n97, f.26, ASP, La Gancia

institution that propagated the exchange of enslaved people in the Mediterranean.[141] While there is less information in the archives on these women owners, these few examples are a key indicator that enslaved people, and in particular women, were an important source of wealth for Sicilian women.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter illustrated the precarious nature of power among Sicily's elite class. Local power was tied to the monarchy; showing loyalty translated to political appointments and financial privileges whereas revolting could lead to a loss of these privileges or even death. From King Ferdinand onwards, the monarchy was restricting the rights of wealthy feudalists, and allowing people to buy into once exclusive upper classes. As Spain turned its attention to its Atlantic empire in the sixteenth century, elite Sicilians saw opportunity in the two things that Spain still needed from Sicily; its agricultural goods and its position on the contested edge of the Christian Mediterranean. They provided military support and in turn received funding to build walls and towers to protect their own lands and investments. They diversified their interests in agriculture on the island, and increased their production of wheat and sugar for the export market. A new urban elite developed, that was competing with a large foreign merchant presence.

Spain's interest in Sicily's slave markets was primarily as a market for slave labor or ransom in Mediterranean corsair warfare. Those who were enslaved in Sicilian households were not of primary concern to the monarchy, other than for taxation purposes. There were diverse males and females enslaved in Palermo's households, but there tended to be a higher presence of

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[141] Testo sotto di Melchiora Spatafora, Redenzione dei Cattivi n97, f.27.

Black Africans, especially when compared to state ownership of slaves. This was likely a consequence of the growing trade from Barqa combined with the disinterest of West African labor on the galleys or in the ransom economy. In Sicily, some enslaved men were used in agricultural labor, with a preference for their use on vineyards. But ultimately, wage labor was more cost efficient and, as anthropologist Meillassoux wrote, enslaved men's' "fidelity was more important than their profits."[142] To be a domestic slave in Palermo, was to live in an often violent and highly competitive social environment. Elite slave-owners had weak allegiances to the monarchy and long-held feuds with other families. They were also facing increasing economic challenges from demands from the monarchy and a changing Mediterranean economy. Many pursued personal vendettas through violent means, and the enslaved men and women of their households were forced to take up arms for them. Elite woman, many of who were widowed, used enslaved members of their household as means of financial security that they could also pass down in their inheritance.

Beyond the demographic difference between state-owned enslaved populations and the privately owned communities in Palermo, there were suggestions that racialized distinctions were being made between enslaved men in Sicily. In an example from Trapani, Antonio Fardella revealed a preference for Black men for his personal militias because of their loyalty and strength. Another important Sicilian example that has not been mentioned yet was the bans on drinking wine for specifically Black Africans.[143] When both the production and consumption of wine was growing in Palermo, it is interesting that they would be restricting its consumption

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[142] Claude Meillassoux, *The anthropology of slavery: the womb of iron and gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 234.

[143] Bandu, Atti, Bandi e Provviste, 1476, n.l, X, f.5f, ASCP.

from specifically Black Africans.[144] Wine was often included in the expenses for workers; was it

another form of cutting costs for the enslaved laborers on their vineyards? This restriction on

wine appears again, in an act of manumission from Monreale in 1525. An enslaved man

belonging to the Cardinal Cardona, named Giovanni Nigro, was to be manumitted on the

condition that he abstained from wine for ten years.[145] Beyond the possible financial reasons,

could this be an example of connecting Blackness back to the Hamitic curse that was being

reactivated on the shores of the Mediterranean at this time? According to the story of Ham in the

Bible "the curse of slavery is somehow associated with the beginnings of husbandry and with

drunkenness induced by wine."[146] While this may be too far of a leap based on the available

evidence from commercial and state archives, in the next chapter, I will further explore what

ecclesiastical archives can reveal about the role of the church in shaping racialized practices of

slavery for both men and women in Sicily.

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[144] Cancila, 80.

[145] Millunzi, 28-29.

[146] Blackburn, 90-91.

Chapter 5: Between Subjugation and Inclusion: San Benedetto di San Fratello and the Catholic Black Africans of Palermo[1]

      As Spain and Portugal spread their empires across the Atlantic, they employed the works of Catholic theologians to define social hierarchies of people.[2] There were emerging categories across the Iberian peninsula, such as *indios* (native Americans)*, gentios* (heathens)*,* and *negros* (Blacks) that were forming in conversation with the Atlantic world. In the mid-sixteenth century Portuguese colonists defined native Brazilians against Black Africans from Guinea.[3] In addition, these social categories were also becoming considered hereditary. Recent scholarship has focused on this as an early development of racist thinking, one that did not coincidentally develop with the Atlantic slave trade.[4] There were discrepancies in how these social categories were applied in different local settings that impacted who was deemed suitable for conversion and enslavement. Popes themselves were often unclear and contradictory on their messages, where some promoted the enslavement of Africans in the hopes that it would lead to conversions - while other insisted that conversion under slavery was unjust.[5] The church's unclear and often

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[1] Today San Benedetto di San Fratello is referred to as San Benedetto il Moro. The timing and purpose of his transformation into a Moor deserves further exploration, especially in the context of the social and religious divisions discussed here, but for the purposes of this chapter I have chosen to use his name as it appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

[2] Giuseppe Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c.1450-1600," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 43, no. 2 (December 2016): 43. In the Portuguese context, Marcocci specifically considered how Blackness was being fit into the influential ideas of the fourteenth century theologian Thomas Aquinas and his construction of the categories of Heathens, Jews and Heretics.

[3] Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism," 50.

[4] Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 92; James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 54, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 154.

[5] Nelson H. Minnich, "The Catholic Church and the Pastoral Care of Black Africans in Renaissance Italy," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. T. F Earle and K. J. P Lowe (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge

contradictory message on both the enslavement and conversion of non-Christian communities was at least partially due to the larger impact their decisions would have on political control of both the Mediterranean and Atlantic. In the Mediterranean enslaved people had the potential to strengthen the Spanish monarchy by providing galley labor in warfare, creating financial gains through ransom and also, through their conversion, fulfilling the broader objective of an expansion of a Catholic empire.

To further complicate these dynamics, like in North Africa, there was often a gap between what religious officials decreed, and what was practiced on the ground. The categorization and social stratification of people based on physical traits and religious practices was applied differently in each region of the Iberian peninsula, and their Atlantic and Mediterranean territorial possessions. These hierarchies impacted a person's social status. On the Spanish Iberian peninsula, there were specific statutes in mid-fifteenth century that prevented Jewish and Muslim converts from entering public office.[6] Some non-Christian communities were more likely to be persecuted and expelled; with plenty of gray areas in between.[7] Like on the Iberian peninsula, in the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily from 1550 to 1700 traitors and Muslims were not persecuted as severely as Jews and Protestants.[8] Black Africans were often not the focus of legal or religious persecution; they were in the minority of those persecuted in the

University Press, 2005), 281-282. As Nelson Minnich cited in his chapter, in 1537, Pope Paul III issued a papal bull that "condemned the unjust enslavement of natives peoples (he made no distinction between Amerindians and black Africans), excommunicated anyone who enslaved them, and insisted that the only way to convert them was by preaching and good example, and not by severe treatment and forced labour." In June 1537, he went on to forbade any enslavement of Indians. Despite this Italians continued to own enslaved people.

[6] María Elena Martínez, David Nirenberg, and Max-Sebastián Hering Torres, eds. *Race and Blood in the Iberian World* (Zürich; Berlin: Lit, 2012), 1.

[7] Blackburn, "The Old World Background," 82. He wrote that "once the course was set for persecution and expulsion, the approach of the authorities was not to build on and encourage signs of conversion but rather to seize on any and every real or supposed proof of heresy and apostasy."

[8] Francesco Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia: i fatti, le persone* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1997), 19, 261-262.

Sicilian Inquisition and Kate Lowe points to laws in Portugal that often favored non-Muslim slaves, many of whom would have been Black Africans, as more trustworthy.[9] One of the apparent reasons Black Africans were not the subject of persecution was because, as Portuguese explorer Zurara wrote, they were "more easier to bring to salvation."[10]

This chapter examines the how the Catholic Church contributed to racial stereotypes of Black Africans that justified both their salvation and enslavement through the canonization records of San Benedetto di San Fratello, the son of two Black Africans living in sixteenth-century Sicily. It then explores how the church assisted enslaved Black Africans in navigating their social landscape at the same time that it upheld practices of slavery. Reconnecting San Benedetto's history with his contemporary fellow Black Africans in Palermo shows that the Catholic church played a conflicting role in the lives of enslaved Africans, deliberately subjugating Black Africans through theological rhetoric and practices of enslavement at the same time that it offered enslaved men and women the opportunities for inclusion in Sicilian society.

Describing San Benedetto

In 1461 there was a celebration of the Assumption in Palermo, which featured enslaved Black men and soldiers racing against each other.[11] Sicilian officials declared that the enslaved Black men who performed in this procession had to run nude, or without shirts, through the heart

[9] Kate Lowe, "Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation to, or Appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470-1520," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 31, no. 2 (2008): 69.

[10] Marcocci, 44.

[11] Francesco Paolo Tocco, "I Festeggiamenti Dell'Assunta Nella Palermo Quattrocentesca. La Corsa Di Schiavi Neri," in *Le Usate Leggiadrie. I Cortei, Le Cerimonie, Le Feste e Il Costume Nel Mediterraneo Tra Il XV e XVI*, ed. G.T. Colesanti, Atti Del Convegno (Napoli, 14-16 Dicembre 2006) (Montella: Centro Francescano di Studi sul Mediterraneo, 2010), 376–377.

of Palermo, in front of the households of the urban elite.[12] The procession created a public display of a dichotomy between the Spanish soldiers and nude, animalistic, Black Africans. In one description of the procession, a diarist wrote that the Black Africans in the procession were "more like demons than men."[13] Similar presentations of a subjugated group existed across medieval Europe; Robin Blackburn points to animalistic and monstrous depictions of Saracens and rebellious peasants.[14] James Sweet highlighted the medieval manuscript of Visão de Túndalo in which demons of the underworld were depicted as Black, savage, and animalistic.[15] Giuseppe Marcocci found these ideas in the Portuguese world as well, where Jesuit Nobrega described native Brazilians as *negros* that were beastly and descended from Ham.[16] These depictions served the purpose of justifying a group of peoples' subjugation because, as Blackburn wrote, "the evocation of threat itself justified the idea of restraint."[17] In the descriptions of San Benedetto from the canonization records, however, we also see an alternate set of physical traits that Sicilians seem to be associating with his Blackness; he was happy, illiterate, and humble. These gentler characteristics also fit with a stronger push of the Church to convert Black Africans in Sicily, by creating the image of an enslaveable other that could be saved instead of persecuted.

San Benedetto died in 1589, and the Sicilian merchant Domenico Rubbiano began his

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[12] Tocco, "I Festeggiamenti," 376, 383-384.

[13] Tocco, 378.

[14] Blackburn, 94.

[15] Sweet, "The Iberian Roots," 154.

[16] Marcocci 51.

[17] Blackburn, 94.

canonization process in 1591.[18] Rubbiano died in 1613 and larger events in the church, such as papal decrees and the attempt to control the spread of cults delayed the verification his sainthood.[19] It was not until 1790 that the pope approved, and proceeded with the canonization of Benedetto di San Fratello.[20] There were different testimonies collected at each point of the process; the original testimonies collected by Rubbiano and his fellow Franciscan friars, and the verification of testimonies that becomes increasingly formalized with the involvement of the Roman church.[21] The documents located in the Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo from 1591, 1594, and 1620 will be considered here. The accounts in the first collection of testimonies of Benedetto's miracles included 52 healings, 15 premonitory visions, and 3 examples of the multiplication of food.[22] Among these miracles, he healed babies that doctors had deemed on their deathbeds, had premonitory visions about the arrival of ships, brought crops back to life, and multiplied food.

What we know about the biography of San Benedetto is from these testimonials. Giovan Domenico Rubbiano personally knew him, and even assumed responsibility of his niece after his death. Most of the other people that testified to his miracles had known Benedetto as a friar in the Franciscan order, but were only able to give a second-hand account of his life prior to entering the order. He was born in San Fratello, near Messina around 1524.[23] His father's name

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[18] Giovanna Fiume and Marilena Modica, *San Benedetto il Moro: santità, agiografia e primi processi di canonizzazione* (Palermo: Città di Palermo, Assessorato alla Cultura : Biblioteca Comunale, 1998), 3.

[19] Fiume and Modica, *San Benedetto il Moro*, 4-5.

[20] Fiume and Modica, 5.

[21] Fiume and Modica, 11, 23, 39.

[22] Fiume and Modica, 11.

[23] Salvatore Bono, "Due Santi Negri: Benedetto Da San Fratello e Antonio Da Noto," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1966): 77.

was Cristofaro and his mother's name was Diana.[24] They were baptized and married to each other through the church. The father was always described as a slave, but his mother's status of being an enslaved or freed woman at the time of Benedetto's birth is unclear. Whether Benedetto was born into slavery is also debated by scholars, but there are two accounts in testimonials that suggest he was free at birth.[25] As a young adult, he began leading a hermitic life, and entered into a Franciscan religious order with Gerolamo Lanza, a member of an aristocratic family who forfeited his inherited wealth to join the church.[26] At around the age of twenty he moved from San Fratello to Western Sicily, eventually Carini, and became the head of the order after Lanza died. He was recruited in to the Santa Maria Church, where he served as a cook and eventually guardian of the church.[27] It was at this church that many wealthy Sicilians from Palermo visited him to perform miracles for their loved ones. While most of their testimonials focused on accounts of his miracles, they also present important biographical information about Benedetto.

In the first set of canonization records compiled by Rubbiano and his fellow Franciscan friars there was one biography of Benedetto presented in the beginning of the document, whereas the subsequent testimonials focused on accounts of his miracles. The description in this record

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[24] Primo Memoriale,1591, f.175, 3QQE40, Biblioteca Communale di Palermo. "Di la regola et habito di Santo Francisco di Assisa, fu di la terra di San Fradello di progenia nigra, cossi di prati comu di matri battizati liquali fora cristiani di bona vita et costumi, i caritati con il proximo lu patri si domanda cristofaro manaseri lu quali era subbito et la matri si chiama diana larean la quali era libera et ditto fra Beneditto nascio franco et essendo il detto patri benedicto di eta di anni vinti uno et libero."

[25] Processo, 1625, f.23f, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "Per haverlo sentito dire a persone degne di fede alli quali ancora ho sentito dire che non havendo voluto li padre et madre di detto servo di Dio, fra Benedetto consumato il matrimonio che fra loro vi era con pagura di non fari figli et restassiro schiavi come loro allora erano sapendo il padrone loro questa sua determinacione li ditti che senza timore alcuno potevano consumare il sancto matrimonio perche lui li dava parola che s'havissiro alcuni figli esso volia che fossero liberi et franchi et non schiavi con che animati si agiuntarano et procrearono detto serve di Dio fra Benedetto libero et non schiavo per la parola data per il detto loro Padrone doppo ha interdiri esso testimonio che il detto fra Benedetto prima d'esser religiosini andao a monte pellegrino a fare vita eremtica et ancora che sempre prima d'esser religioso fu stimato per persona di bona fama opinioni e vita per il che giudica senza dubio essera stato battizato ma esso testimonio non lo sa ne l'ha inteso dire ne manco come sia stato educato ne che arte habia essercitato."

[26] Fiume and Modica, 16. He joined the Conventuali Riformati di Monte Pellegrino.

[27] Bono, "Due Santi," 77-78.

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from 1591 was:

> Father Benedetto of the reformed lay order, not knowing how to read or write, in the convent of Santa Maria di Jesu in the city of Palermo of the rule and habit of Saint Francis of Assisi was from San Fratello and of Black lineage (*di progenia nigra)*, such that his mother was baptized, she was Christian of good will and generous character, and next the father was called Cristofaro Manaseri who was subjugated (*subbito)*, and the mother was called Diana Larean (unclear) who was free (*libera*) and friar Benedetto was born free (*nascio franco*).[28]

This was one of the most familiar accounts of Benedetto, offering names and short histories for both of his parents and localizing him as being from San Fratello. The statement that Benedetto's mother was free is disputed in other testimonies, and remains uncertain. That this is the most informative biography of Benedetto, suggest that it is likely she was indeed free. The reference to his Blackness was done through lineage and his skin color was rarely mentioned in the subsequent testimonies in this particular collection. It is interesting here that they use the terminology *di progenia nigra*, or of Black lineage, to describe Benedetto because it connects to a larger conversation across the Spanish monarchy on the connection between blood and religion. On the Iberian peninsula these ideas centered on purity of blood, in particular for the purpose of the expulsion of Jewish communities.[29] In Brazil, Marcocci noted that Jesuits were defining different lineages of heathenism that could be inherited. These were based on biblical genealogies, and differentiated between those descended from Ham and those from Shem and Japheth.[30] This also, however, had racial connotations as Black Africans were increasingly being

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[28] Primo Memoriale,1591, f.5r, 3QQE40, BCP. "Il Patre Benedetto dell'Ordine di Reformati Laico non sapendo legere ne scrivere nel convento di Santa Maria di Jesu della felice citta di Palermo di la regola et habito di Santo francisco di Assisi fu di la terra di San Fradello di progenia nigra cossi di pri comu di matri battizati li quali fora cristiani di bona vita et costumi caritatitivi (unclear) Con il proximo lu patri si domandao cristofaro manaseri lu quali era subbito et la matri si chimava Diane Larean la quali era libera et ditto fra Bendeditto nascio franco et essendo il detto patri benedicto di eta di anni vinti uno et libero."

[29] Martínez, Nirenberg, and Hering Torres, *Race and Blood*, 22.

[30] Marcocci, 51. He references the writing of Jesuit Manuel de Nóbrega from 1556.

associated with the Hamitic curse. In this description of Benedetto we see that Blackness was described as a trait inherited from his parents and could be an early Italian application of the concept of race as an inherited quality.

In the next two sets of records, from 1594 and 1620, there were more descriptions of Benedetto in each testimonial and they were more standardized. Two fellow Franciscan friars, Leonardus de Marsala and Bartolomeus de Saragusa gave almost identical descriptions of Benedetto: "Despite his being Black (*effigi nigra)* for his virtue and saintliness he was made guardian of the convent against his will, with his being a laymen, and illiterate."[31] There were more descriptions of Benedetto's skin color in this collection of testimonies, but instead of speaking about Black lineage, or blood, it focused on physical appearance using the Italian term *effigi nigra*. By the 1620 round of testimonials there was also a standard series of questions each witness had to answer. In many instances the personal questions about Benedetto were left unanswered, because the witness of the miracle claimed to know nothing of his life before entering the order. But when it was answered there was again a somewhat standardized response. Geronisma Grazzavento of Palermo described him as follows, "I remember San Benedetto of San Fratello well, he was Black, with a pleasant face, friendly in habit and of average stature and a well-proportioned and structured body."[32] This description appeared throughout such as from Friar Pietro d'Affinale who wrote that Benedetto was "Black, with a happy face, of good spirit

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[31] Ordinaria Inquisito, 1594, f. 95-97f, 3QQE42, BCP. Leonardus de Marsala wrote "con tutto che era di effigi nigra per la sua virtu et santita fu fatto guardiano del detto convento contra la sua voluna con tutto che era laico et homo ideota senza sapiri legiri ne scriveri nen nti dimino quando detto parti benedetto era domandato di alucna......si come havessi stato theologo et era per ordinario visitato." Bartolomeus de Saragusa wrote "Il quali con tutto che havessi stato di effigi nigra per la sua vertu et santita fu fatto guardiano del ditto convento contra sua voluna et con tutto che era alico et persona ideota."

[32] Processo, 1620, f.563, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. Geronisma Grazzavento wrote "io mi ricordo benissimo di fra Benedetto di san fratello et che era di color negro, gioconi nel volto affabile nelli costumi di mezana statura et di bona proportione et dispositione di corpo."

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and very pleasing habit, average height and of well-proportioned and structured body."[33]

By these last testimonials Benedetto's Blackness was accompanied by a standard set of mental and physical characteristics that included his jovial nature and his physical strength. Even when he was performing a miracle, in this case healing someone's head, Friar Benedetto happily and good naturedly put his hand on top of the head of the sick person to heal him.[34] This fit with a wider European perspective of Black Africans, such as the one historian Kate Lowe observed where "One Italian contrasted the grave demeanor of the Portuguese, always sad and melancholy aspect with the happy faces and actions of the Black Africans, always upbeat and laughing, and how loved to sing, dance, and get drunk in the public squares."[35] Marcocci noted a similar description of politeness in Francisco Alvares's report on the Ethiopian emperor Nagus Nagast Dawit II.[36] In addition, Benedetto was also described as a simple man in terms of his knowledge of the world, but exceptional in his knowledge of the sacred and divine scripture.[37] If we remove Benedetto's exceptional qualities than we are left with the stereotype of a Black African who had physical strength combined with a docile nature and lack of intelligence. It is a description that would have justified the uses of enslaved Africans in Sicily that we saw in the previous chapter,

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[33] Processo, 1620, f.556, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "Lui era di color negro di faccia allegra di boninimi et piacevolissimi costume di mediocre statura et di bona dispositione et propositione di corpo."

[34] Processo, 1620, f.776v, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "Fra Benedetto che scasse di buonanimo et allegramente mettendosi la mano sopra la tetta dove era il male et facendoli il segno della croce lui disse che sene andasse con dio perche era gia sana e guarita."

[35] Kate Lowe, "The Global Population of Renaissance Lisbon: Diversity and Its Entanglements," in *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, ed. Annemarie Jordan-Gschwend and K. J. P Lowe (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015): 61.

[36] Marcocci, 46. Francisco Alvares visited Ethiopia between 1520 and 1526.

[37] Processo, 1620, f.814r, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "D'haverlo conosciuto per hommo dotato di molto virtu particolarmente di santissima semplicita circa le cose del mondo ma sapientissimo delle cose divine e spirituali della quali quantu q fusse idiota et homo che ni sapesse leggere ne scrivero raionava tanto altamente che capiva ognuno che lo sentiva trattando et attestando molte cose della sacara et divini scrittura."

both in physical labor and domestic settings. It set up the image of an African who was both

capable of being saved by the church, at the same time that they needed to be subjugated.

In another example from the 1620 testimonials Benedetto was described as follows,

"Friar Benedetto was baptized like all other Christians, and I would say that he was of Black

color like slaves, but he had a beautiful and happy face, was average height, and a well-

composed body."[38] Here Blackness was directly tied to being a slave. This idea appeared again

in the 1620 documents, though less deliberately. Here, one priest wrote that:

> Fra Benedetto al seculo mentre era in eta puerile giocava una volta con alcuni altri figlioli et passando in quel tempo un certo padre fra germo Lanza homo che havia opinione di bona vita disse che di quello ~~schiavo~~ negro [written above schiavo] chiamato Benedetto che allora pare che alcuni villani si ni burlassiro et pigliassirao piacere con lui un giorno.[39]

> When friar Benedetto was still young, one time he was playing with other children and friar Girolamo Lanza , who had good judgement, passed by saying that this ~~slave~~ Black person [written above slave] called Benedetto that it seems there were a few peasants that were mocking him and making fun of him.

The crossing out of slave to be replaced with Black is a revealing mistake, that the priests, and

more likely the wider public, may have had difficulty distinguishing between a Black person and

an enslaved person.

Benedetto's humility was also an important aspect to emphasize in aligning him with the

Franciscan order. In numerous accounts he was described as being humble for not wanting to

accept higher responsibility in his church or receive acknowledgements for his work and putting

the needs of his fellow Franciscans before his own.[40] One account even quoted Benedetto as

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[38] Processo, 1620, f.377r, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "Fra benedetto fosse battesato come tutti l'altri Cristiani et dico che lui era di color negro come li schiavi pero di bella et allegra faccia di mediocre statura et ben composto di corpo."

[39] Processo, 1620, f.4v-5r, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP.

[40] Processo, 1620, f.814r, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP. "Che sa esser stato nelle sue azzioni molto humile ed di spregiatore di sostesso poiche essendo in quello tempo guardiano di convento non lascio pero di esercitare l'officio di cuciniere che

acknowledging that he should not be made guardian of the church because he was a Black slave. Benedetto was purported to have said "it is not appropriate to for a Black slave like he was to be made guardian of the church, and as a layman that was illiterate in this convent where there were plenty of master friars who were well read."[41] Why would Benedetto refer to himself as a Black slave, if in the first account it stated that he was born free? Perhaps the phrasing of this statement was an attempt of the church members to address the exceptionality of San Benedetto. This was also an indicator of the expected status and access to social services of an enslaved person. It was not appropriate for an enslaved person to ascend to a position of authority in the church, and one of the reasons was because he did not have access to an education that would have allowed him to read and write. Who were the enslaved Black Africans to which these Sicilians were comparing Benedetto? While some of it was based on theological teachings, in actuality, many of the parishioners and the priests would have either been slaveholders, or lived next to them, and they were likely indirectly referencing enslaved Africans in their descriptions of Benedetto's Black qualities.

The Church and its Slaveholders

Benedetto interacted with many urban Sicilian and Spanish elite that included inquisitors,

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teneva prima d'esser guardiano, cercava d'occuparsi continuamente inessercitii bassi, et humili procurava d'assistere al essercito dell infermi et fuggiva et aborriva ogni sorte d'honoraza…che fu sempre tenuto per homo penitente et astinente et quanti per facesse la vita comune e codria con tutto cio scorgevano che delli cibi remangiava in poca quantita et a pena li mangiava."

[41] Ordinaria Inquisito, 1594, f. 92v, 3QQE42, BCP. "Dicendo che non convenia fari guardion ad uno scavo nigro come era ipso laico che non sapia leggiri ne scriviri maxime in detto convento esserici tanti patri maiisti et letturi et con tutto questo che era guardiano aiutava alla cuchina di detto convento il quali procurava sempri fari tutti li servici basi di supari et di altri servici et vinendo esso testimonio in compagnia del deitto patri benedetto nella citta molti in primi si ci incrtovano alli quali imponendoci la mano il detto patri."

viceroys, wealthy barons and merchants – many of whom were slave owners.[42] Lo Magnifico

Anton Vignes Catalano was one of ninety-eight people who testified of his experiences with

Benedetto. A Catalan merchant waiting for his shipment of fabrics from Barcelona for forty

days, Vignes Catalano reached out to the young friar at the Convent of Santa Maria di Jesu so

ask if his ship had been lost at sea. Benedetto assured him that his ship had not yet come because

it had been detained for fifteen days in a different port and would soon arrive safely to port.

Shortly after, his boat arrived, and Vignes Catalano learned that it had indeed been held up in

Mallorca.[43] As a Catalan merchant, it is also likely that he would have participated in some

aspect of the slave trade in Palermo. But throughout the descriptions of Benedetto's home visits

to Palermo's urban elite and merchants, the city's most prominent slave owners, there was never

any mention of another enslaved Black African in the household. Despite the canonization

record's silences on the larger enslaved communities of Palermo, both the church and its

parishioners would have been familiar with enslaved Black Africans.

Many of the wealthy people that Benedetto interacted with were slave owners mentioned

in the previous chapter. Benedetto traveled to the Palazzo Aiutamicristo, to heal the sick.[44] The

Aiutomicristo family were multi-generational slave owners.[45] The Baressi family saved their ten-

year old daughter and five-year-old son with the tonic of San Benedetto.[46] In the previous

chapter they were shown to be slave-owners that employed their men in violent crimes. The

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[42] Ordinaria Inquisito, 1594, f.102v, 3QQE42, BCP.

[43] Primo Memoriale,1591, f.9v, 3QQE40, BCP.

[44] Processo, 1620, f.769, 772v, 3QQE40 BIS.

[45] Armando Di Pasquale. *Aspetti storico-demografici di Sicilia* (Palermo: Ediprint, 1994), 190; Numerazione, 1501, Vol III, Ind VI, f. 66r, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum, ASCP.

[46] Primo Memoriale, 1591, f.20v, 3QQE40.

barons of Solantu had Benedetto help with the success of their tuna fishery.[47] They were also

listed as slave owners from the census in Albergheria.[48] Many of the testimonials come from

people that worshiped at Albergheria; a neighborhood that had a high percentage of both

enslaved and manumitted Africans living in its households. But there is almost a complete

silence on these owners' relationship to the enslaved Black Africans in their house and their

communities.

Similar to Northern Italy, priests were also active participants in slaveholding in Sicily.[49]

This included high ranking ecclesiastical figures such as the Archbishop of Monreale who

manumitted his slave Giovanni Nigro May 27, 1525, as well as the poor priests in rural zones.[50]

Because churches were exempt from listing their holdings in the Palermo censuses that I have

cited earlier, we do not have the information on the enslaved people that were likely held in

urban churches. But the *riveli* from Gangi, a rural area outside of Palermo, do show a higher

percentage of slave ownership among priests. 17% percent of priests had slaves in their

household. Presti Antoni Salerno had a 60 year old enslaved woman living with him, along with

two enslaved men who were aged 30 and 25.[51] Presti Nicola Dentara aged 55 had an enslaved

olive-skinned woman who was 35 and an enslaved male who was 24.[52] Presti Simon Lasila, aged

30, had an enslaved Black female in his house, aged 26.[53] Presti Simoni di Virgi, 40, had a moor

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[47] Ordinaria Inquisito, 1594, f.89r, 3QQE42.

[48] Numerazione, 1501, Vol III, Ind VI, f. 101r, Albergheria, Fondo Sancta Sanctorum.

[49] Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 319.

[50] Gaetano Millunzi, "Antonio Veneziano," *Archivio Storico Siciliano* XIX (1894): 28.

[51] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 225, T.R.P. Riveli, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, La Catena.

[52] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 225, T.R.P. Riveli, ASP, La Catena.

[53] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 225.

woman in his house aged 35.[54] Presti Berna Canozi, aged 40, had an enslaved Black male, aged

15 and an enslaved Black female aged 30.[55] While little is known of the roles these women

performed in their households, the prevalence of young women suggests there may have been

sexual labor involved. There is evidence that these relationships extended post manumission,

with one example of a priest from Salemi who had two children with a manumitted woman.[56]

This was another parallel trend to Northern Italy, where male owners often had children with

their enslaved women.[57] This is also an important example to contrast where Benedetto had the

choice as an adult to join the church, for the children of enslaved women and their masters, they

would have been baptized regardless of their mother's preferences.

Conversion and Social Support Through the Church

        While in many cases the choice of baptism was in the hands of the master, the Catholic

church also played a large role in converting enslaved adults. In late sixteenth-century Naples,

Historian Mazur argued that there was a push to baptize enslaved Muslims because their low

social status made them an easy target for the church's goals of conversion.[58] With even more

limited social mobility in Palermo compared to their Muslim and Jewish counterparts, Black

Africans would have also been a likely target community for the church. Nelson Minnich, in fact,

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[54] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 225.

[55] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 226.

[56] Carmelo Trasselli, Maurice Aymard, and Monique Aymard, "Du Fait Divers," 229.

[57] Lowe, "Black Africans," 73.

[58] Peter Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563-1667," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 1 (2009): 40.

showed that the Jesuits had a preference for converting Black Africans in sixteenth century Southern Italy.[59] For Africans, there were social benefits to conversion even though it did not necessarily imply access to freedom.[60] Kate Lowe has proposed that conversion to Catholicism was one step towards assimilation into Italian society, but that it did not prevent Africans from facing constant contestation of their belonging in secular society.[61] Minnich showed that the Jesuit's role in working with enslaved Africans provided social, and even sometimes legal support. For enslaved Africans in Sicily, the church could present an opportunity for assimilation and social support, though this was limited because of the church's social reach and sometimes adversarial relationship with those in power.[62] It ultimately did not protect them from the hardships of enslavement.

There were six examples from the canonization records of Benedetto of baptized Black Africans; four were Benedetto's relatives and there was one freed man with a son. The first example has already been noted, Benedetto's parents. We know that there is a good chance Benedetto's father was from Borno because his Christian name was Cristofaro.[63] In the 1565 census from Palermo, this name was exclusively given to enslaved men from Borno. In one of the accounts from the 1620 canonization records, it seems like his parents were able to negotiate freedom for their children; their master gave them his word that any children they had would be

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[59] Minnich, "The Catholic Church," 286.

[60] Marcocci, 49; Minnich 291. Minnich cited an example in Naples in 1565, where two black Christian slaves sought manumission or payment from their masters from the Cardinal Alfonso Carafa, who ultimately denied their request because "baptism does not free one from servitude of the body."

[61] Lowe, "Black Africans," 79.

[62] Carmelo Trasselli, Maurice Aymard, and Monique Aymard, "Du Fait Divers à l'histoire Sociale: Criminalité et Moralité En Sicile Au Début de l'époque Moderne," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 28, no. 1 (1973): 238; Lowe, "Black Africans," 68. The Aymards and Trasselli note that priests were often anti-feudalists and in dispute with the urban elite and secular authorities.

[63] Primo Memoriale,1591, f.175, 3QQE40.

free.[64] While it was not explicitly stated, this negotiation may have also been contingent that

their children stay within the church, which would explain Benedetto's early entrance into a

hermitic order. Stipulations such as these were not uncommon, Minnich notes that in Sicilian

civil law an enslaved person needed their master's permission to enter a religious order, or

alternatively, the master could be paid the price of the enslaved person to release them into the

religious order. As a member of the order, the enslaved person received their freedom. But, if

that person left the monastery they would revert back to slavery.[65] If this was the case for

Benedetto, his entrance into the religious order may not have been as voluntary as it was

depicted in the canonization records. At the same time, Benedetto gained certain privileges from

this status because he was able to move across the island, and interact with some of the

wealthiest and most powerful families in Sicily.

Through the church, Benedetto was also able to provide for and keep track of his

relatives. He had a niece, that was orphaned after his death and given to Rubbiano who took care

of her alongside his own grandchild.[66] Benedetta la Cavella was also described as a relative of

Benedetto. She was a nun in a convent, and had access to the relics of Benedetto.[67] The name

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[64] Processo, 1625, f.23f, 3QQE40 BIS. "Per haverlo sentito dire a persone degne di fede alli quali ancora ho sentito dire che non havendo voluto li padre et madre di detto servo di Dio, fra Benedetto consumato il matrimonio che fra loro vi era con pagura di non fari figli et restassiro schiavi come loro allora erano sapendo il padrone loro questa sua determinacione li ditti che senza timore alcuno potevano consumare il sancto matrimonio perche lui li dava parola che s'havissiro alcuni figli esso volia che fossero liberi et franchi et non schiavi con che animati si agiuntarano et procrearono detto serve di Dio fra Benedetto libero et non schiavo per la parola data per il detto loro Padrone doppo ha interdiri esso testimonio che il detto fra Benedetto prima d'esser religiosini andao a monte pellegrino a fare vita eremtica et ancora che sempre prima d'esser religioso fu stimato per persona di bona fama opinioni e vita per il che giudica senza dubio essera stato battizato ma esso testimonio non lo sa ne l'ha inteso dire ne manco come sia stato educato ne che arte habia essercitato."

[65] Minnich, 297.

[66] Fiume and Modica, San Benedetto, 9.

[67] Processo, 1620, f.565r, 3QQE40 BIS. "…con una monica tertieria nomine soro Benedetta la Cavella la quale e' parente del padre fra Benedetto di San Fratello…"

Benedetta recalls some of the naming practices mentioned in the second chapter, in which numerous enslaved men appeared in the same household with the same name. That Benedetta was a relative of Benedetto and had the female version of his name further suggests that baptized names may have been used to show family ties. The presence of these two family members, who were barely mentioned in the records, also gives a sense of the larger family network of San Benedetto in Sicily and how the church allowed them to remain in communication.

The one example of an enslaved African in the canonization records who was not a relative of Benedetto was Marco Machinghi. In the first account he was not listed as Black, but only by his name.[68] In the subsequent accounts Macinghi is described as a "scavo nigro" and in another as "Libertinus" or freed.[69] Macinghi also appeared in the 1565 census from Palermo, as Marco Nigro, a seven year old born in the house of Anton Macinghi.[70] The various ways Marco was described across different registers might reveal the tensions in identifying a free Black person; in two different descriptions the same man is referred to as a "Black slave" and in the other as manumitted. Another interpretation could be that while Marco was born a slave in the house of Anton Macinghi in 1558, it is possible that he was freed by the time of the second account in the canonization records. In the account of the miracle, Macinghi had an eleven-year old son who had a problem with his knee. The wife of the doctor visiting him had the relic of San Benedetto and put it on the son's knee to cure him. Macinghi had access to both doctors, and even the relic of a saint. Assuming he had been baptized because of his given name, his being Catholic gave him access to certain privileges, such as relics of Saint, that he would not have had

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[68] Primo Memoriale,1591, f.17v, 3QQE40. This fits with the larger trend in that series that also rarely mentioned Benedetto's blackness.

[69] Ordinaria Inquisito, 1594, f. 5v, 3QQE42; Processo, 1620, f.30v, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP.

[70] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 411. Macinghi appeared in the census record from Franchina, as Marco Nigro 7 year old born in the house of Anton Macinghi.

if was not Catholic.[71] These few examples suggest enslaved men and women were able to find some form of care for through the church system.

Conversion to Catholicism did not protect many enslaved Africans from performing forced physical, violent, or sexual labor. Burial records from the San Giacomo church in Palermo show that both men and women faced a difficult life in their households.[72] With the exception of 1492-1495, there was a steady increase in the amount of enslaved men and women buried in the church records from 1486 to 1513. From 1486-1492, there were 76 slaves, in 1511-1513 there were 212. The gender ratio tended to stay close to each other, with some years favoring men - 1486-1492 it was 45 to 28, in 1511-1513 it was 113 to 99.[73] The number of enslaved children increased from 6 in 1486-1492, to 20 in 1511-1513. The number of enslaved young people increased from 10 in 1486-1492, to 49 in 1511-1513. Burials were the majority of the action being performed by the church. After 1486-1492, it was consistently above 90% of the actions performed on enslaved people in the church. In terms of a racial divide, those listed as moors were in the minority, never above 5% of the entire enslaved population in the records.

Table 19: Enslaved People Buried or Baptized in the San Giacomo Church 1486-1513

	1486-1492	1511-1513
Enslaved Males	45	113
Enslaved Females	28	99

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[71] Minnich, 285

[72] This is based on my original analysis of burials and baptism recorded in libro 1, 1486-1492, libro 2, 1490-1492, libro 3,1492-1495, libro 4, 1499-1503, libro 8, 1510-1514, and libro 9, 1511-1513 in Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina, Archivio Storico Diocesano di Palermo. All data presented in the tables is from this analysis.

[73] Other years favored women in 1490-1492 it was 62 to 44, and 1492-1495 it was 43 to 33.

Unknown Sex	3	0
Total	76	212

Table 20: Enslaved Youth Buried or Baptized in the San Giacomo Church 1486-1513

	1486-1492	1511-1513
Enslaved Children	6	20
Enslaved Young Adults	10	49
Total	16	69

In one household it was possible to see multiple deaths over the course of fifteen years. This was particularly true for wealthy owners such as Cola Sabia who was a civil authority in 1503.[74] In the church records from San Giacomo la Marina covering 1486-1495 and 1499-1503 Cola Sabia buried an enslaved female and her daughter, four enslaved males, and two enslaved females.[75] From 1486 to 1492, Antonino Agliata buried three male slaves and one female slave.[76] Between 1499 and 1514 the Agliata family buried numerous slaves. Pietru Agliata buried a female slave.[77] Androtta Agliata buried three male slaves and two enslaved females.[78] From 1510-1514 Francesco Agliata buried 3 male slaves, including two young ones, and Leonora

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[74] Luigi Natoli, *Prosa e prosatori siciliani del secolo XVI.* (R. Sandron, 1904), 12.

[75] libro 1, 1486-1492, f. 105 Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina, Archivio Storico Diocesano di Palermo; libro 3, 1492-1495, f.19; libro 4, 1499-1503, f. 34, 55, 80, 116.

[76] libro 1, 1486-1492, f. 118 Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina, ASDP; libro 2, 1490-1492, f33, f74.

[77] libro 4, 1499-1503, f. 32 Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti.

[78] libro 4, 1499-1503, f. 91 Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti; libro 8, 1510-1514, 40b.

Aglata buried a young male and female slave.[79] In the Bologna family, Pietru and Pitruzu, buried one young male slave, three male slaves, and one female slave between 1486 and 1513.[80] Between Jacobo and Girardu Bonnano from 1486 and 1513 they buried an enslaved woman and her child, two young females, two females, and an enslaved Moor.[81]

There are limited examples of the roles enslaved women performed in Sicilian households, and most come from male-run households. As aforementioned in the discussion of priest owners, in many cases they allude to sexual labor.[82] There was also an example in which a manumitted woman was involved in a violent feud.[83] Church burial records show that some women were buried with their children. Between 1510 and 1514, an aborted child of enslaved woman was buried. From 1486 to 1492 an enslaved pregnant woman and three small female children of an enslaved women were buried. Perhaps the clearest action we see directly from enslaved women that suggests the hardships of being enslaved in Sicilian households were announcements of female runaways.[84]

The physical description of enslaved men also reflected a life of physical labor, violence, or serious illness. In the census from 1565, there were numerous men who were blind, or crippled in some way. Many of these men were second-generation, so these conditions were a reflection of life in Sicily rather than hardships from their being trafficked across the

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[79] libro 8, 1510-1514, f.22r, f. 33v, f.105r, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti; libro 9, 1511-1513, f. 44r, f. 146r.

[80] libro 1, 1486-1492, f. 117 Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti; libro 2, 1490-1492, f. 32; libro 4, 1499-1503, f.117; libro 9, 1511-1513, f.9.

[81] libro 1, 1486-1492, f.53; libro 2, 1490-1492, f. 2; libro 8, 1510-1514, 49v, 40r, libro 9, 1511-1513, f. 55r, 68r, 113v.

[82] Trasselli, Aymard, and Aymard, "Du Fait Divers," 233.

[83] Trasselli, Aymard, and Aymard, 237.

[84] Bando, 1480-1481, f8v, f16v Atti Bandi e Provviste, ASCP; Bando, 1481-82, f6v; Bando, 1501-1502, f. 5r.

Mediterranean. In the household of Antonino Drago, 40-year old Gaspano Nigro had a crippled foot and in the household of Heumilio Imperaturi, 50-year old Georgi Imperaturi nigro had a defective shoulder.[85] In the house of Peri Marrchio, Pasquali Nigro was crippled in both his legs at the age of 35 years old. It was not necessarily different in the households of women, Contissa di Raccuya owned a fifty-year old Black male who was blind in one eye.[86] At the same time, other men lived to old age with no known ailments; Joanni Nigro di Burno was a 70-year old man living in the house of Geronimo Mella, as was Luca Nigro in the house of Helisabetta Sanches.[87] Whether some lived to be old or others had major physical ailments seemed to vary widely by the owner.

Life in Manumission

All religious minorities faced social restrictions in Sicily. This was true for Moors, who Minnich suggested were more targeted by legal restrictions.[88] But Moors cound also more easily find free compatriots living in Sicily, and return to North Africa.[89] For Black Africans the growing equation between slavery and Blackness, that we even saw in the descriptions of Benedetto, would have created obstacles for those who lived in Sicily post-manumission. In a particularly illuminating example, historian Blumenthal cited an example in which a freed Black African fishing in Sicily was re-enslaved based on his skin color, despite having on his person

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[85] Antonio Franchina, "Un Censimento Di Schiavi Nel 1565," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, Nuova Serie, XXXII (1907): 404.

[86] Franchina, "Un Censimento," 403.

[87] Franchina, 404, 409.

[88] Minnich, 285.

[89] Renda, 363.

safe conduct papers for a freed person.[90] Even if laws granted more rights to a freed person, were these followed if the general public assumed a Black person was a slave? It is difficult to ascertain, but for this reason it is important to consider the legal restrictions placed on both freed and manumitted enslaved people when considering the social lives of Black Africans in Sicily.

The economic and social activities of both enslaved and freed people were legally restricted in Palermo. It was forbidden to buy or acquire loans from slaves.[91] As early as 1475 there was a proclamation that people could not buy cloth or fruit from Black slaves in particular.[92] By 1630, it was prohibited to sell or pawn objects to slaves, whether infidels or Christians, thereby reducing the economic impact of a conversion to Catholicism.[93] While there were restrictions on buying from enslaved people, there was no law against slaves acquiring objects, or selling amongst each other. Historian Gaudioso points to hints of a large-scale black market run by enslaved people, that included cloth, animals, gold, silver, copper and tin.[94] There were also limitations placed on a Black person post-manumission. While San Benedetto was multiplying wine for his friars, for many Africans there were bans on the consumption of wine.[95] In Monreale, Cardinal Cardona granted freedom to his slave, on the condition that he did not drink wine for ten years.[96] In contrast, many North African Muslims living in Italy were able to

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[90] Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars,* 250.

[91] Matteo Gaudioso, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926), 57.

[92] Bandu, 1475-1476, f. 83, Atti Bandi e Provviste, ASCP.

[93] Gaudioso, *La schiavitù,* 59.

[94] Gaudioso, *La schiavitù, 57,* 59.

[95] Primo Memoriale,1591, f. 24f, 3QQE40, BCP; Bandu, 1476-1477, f. 5f Atti Bandi e Provviste, ASCP.

[96] Millunzi, "Antonio Veneziano," 28-29.

run cafes, sell wine, tobacco, meat and cheese, and be barbers.[97] There are very few clues as to

businesses that freed Black people owned, though it is possible that they found economic

freedom in the slave trade itself. Historian Giuffrida pointed to an example from 1535 in which

the freed Margarita Cigala sold a 26-year old Tunisian Moor named Fatima and her eight-month

old child named Catharinella to Lucio de Recio, another freed woman.[98]

Despite these limitations, a small ratio of manumitted people were able to find economic

independence. In Albergheria in 1501, there were 47 manumitted people, of which forty six were

female and only one was male. They were in 33 households out of 801. In Kalsa there were up to

thirty nine freed females to only eight freed males. In the majority of cases, manumitted people

remained in the households of their owners. But there were a few cases of home ownership, that

suggest some freed people found economic independence. In the rural zone of Gangi in 1548

there were three manumitted women who did not live with their former masters, whose skin

color is unclear. Jama di Mundo was a freed woman living in her own house.[99] Violanza Rapisi

and Jama La Maurina lived in a casa amore dei, which may have been a communal house owned

by the church.[100] In Kalsa in 1480, a Cristofaru Nigru and his wife lived in their own house.[101]

Luchia La Nigra Liberta lived in her own house.[102] Madalena di Maurichi was a freed widow

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[97] Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1993), 200. "A genova, livorno, civitavecchia i musulmani gestivano spacci di caffe, vino, tabacco, carni e formaggi, o esercitavano vari mestieri, come quello del barbiere e di tanto in tanto nascevano attriti con i negozianti locali."

[98] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitù e Mercato Del Lavoro Nella Sicilia Rinascimentale," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, 54, no. Anno XIV (2001): 7.

[99] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 211, T.R.P. Riveli, ASP, La Catena.

[100] Riveli, Ganci 1548, f. 215.

[101] Armando Di Pasquale, *Aspetti storico-demografici di Sicilia* (Palermo: Ediprint, 1994), 161.

[102] Di Pasquale, *Aspetti,* 184**.**

who lived in her own house.[103] Sichilia di Mule lived in a household with her freed husband.[104] Allegru lived with his freed wife and a two-year old daughter.[105]

One way Africans participated in the social rituals of life in Sicily was through the church. While most of the records from San Giacomo during the time period for which I collected showed burials, Maurice Aymard found that in the same church after 1520 there were many baptisms of enslaved people.[106] I also found one instance of a baptism of a freed man in San Giacomo.[107] In most cases, second-generation enslaved children would have been baptized within eight days of their birth.[108] There were also two examples of marriage. In 1486-1492 records, a freed female was married, recorded as living in the household of someone else.[109] Later, in the 1510-1514 records, a freed male listed as belonging to Cola di Magda, was married.[110] That the names of the spouses were not entered could signify they were marrying other enslaved or freed people, such as was the case with Benedetto's parents. Names of free white Sicilian men were written when they married freed Black African women; in the records of another church in the urban center, Santa Margherita, Cusimano Birtola married a freed Black woman.[111] In addition children were baptized from relationships between unmarried freed

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[103] Di Pasquale, 201.

[104] Di Pasquale, 203.

[105] Di Pasquale, 206.

[106] Giuffrida, "Schiavitù," 38.

[107] libro 8, f. 104b, 1510-1514, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina, ASDP.

[108] Minnich, 291.

[109] libro 1, f. 31, 1486-1492, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina.

[110] libro 8, f. 36, 1510-1514, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina.

[111] libro 4360, f. 36, 1548-1556, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Margherita.

women and Sicilians; Corrado Spatafora of Messina had three children with a freed woman[112]

Mattia Nigra, a manumitted Black woman, is interesting because she was not affiliated with her

prior owner, and seems to have lived in her own household. While she was able to have a family,

she had an unsettling amount of loss. In the church records of San Giacomo, she buried a small

son and daughter in January 1513.[113] She then buried her free daughter in March of 1514.[114]

There was one other example in which an unnamed freed woman buried her young daughter in

San Giacomo.[115]

Life as a freed person in Palermo presented challenges for Black Africans, and two

options to mitigate some of these risks were to stay in their former masters' households - where

they were provided with a room, a few possessions and a small stipend - or to enter the church.

The opportunity of entering the church was more common for women. In some cases it was not a

choice, but a directive, assigned in the wills of their owners. In Kalsa one enslaved Black African

lived with his sister who was a nun.[116] In another example the child of an enslaved women was

promised to the church. San Benedetto's relative became part of a convent.[117] This may have

been the best way to protect family members. As members of the church, Black Africans still

faced social ridicule. As we saw earlier in this chapter, when Benedetto was young, Girolamo

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[112] Aymards and Trasselli, 230.

[113] libro 9, f. 103v, January 1513, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina. "Per seppellire uno pichirillo figlo e la figla di mattia nigra sepulto in sto Jaco amore dei."

[114] libro 8, f. 107v, March 1514, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina. "Per sepelliri afrancisca figla di Mattia Nigra Amore dei."

[115] libro 8, f. 87v, 1510-1514, Battesimi, matrimoni e defunti, San Giacomo La Marina. "Per S una mochella figlia di una liberta."

[116] Dipasquale, Aspetti, 202, 212.

[117] Processo, 1625, f.565r, 3QQE40 BIS.

Lanza encountered him in the countryside being mocked by other young children.[118] There were two known Black confraternities, one in Palermo in the early 1570s named Santa Maria Gesù dei negri, and one in Messina from 1584 until the seventeenth century.[119] Little is known about the one from Palermo, but the confraternity in Messina was victim to practical jokes, and agression from neighboring Spanish friars that led to the abolishment of the fraternity due to the friars' accusations of sacrilegious practices.[120]

These confraternities likely served an economic objective for enslaved Africans; there were examples in Messina and Valencia of Black Africans forming confraternities that helped crowdsource funds for the manumission of other enslaved Africans.[121] There are also interesting examples where Africans seem to be using the Catholic church to practice their own religious beliefs, which for those from Borno would likely have been mixed with Islam and local indigenous beliefs. In Sicily, Minnich noted that Jesuits would target Black Africans on their days off and in their places of celebration to preach the bible and promote conversion.[122] These were adults that had not yet been baptized, and were celebrating together on their days off. This suggests that they shared their own cultural and spiritual beliefs, and maintained a community prior to building one in the Catholic church. It is possible that the accusations of the Spanish friars in Messina, were in fact a reaction to a creolization of indigenous African beliefs and Catholic practices. This seems even more likely because Giovanna Fiume found evidence of a

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[118] Processo, 1625, f.4v-5r, 3QQE40 BIS.

[119] Minnich, 296.

[120] Minnich, 296.

[121] Debra Blumenthal, "'La Casa Dels Negres': Black African Solidarity in Late Medieval Valencia," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Kate Lowe and T. F Earle (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 231; G. Anastasi Motta, "La Schiavitu a Messina Nel Primo Cinquecento," *Archivio Storico per La Sicilia Orientale* 1 (1974): 335.

[122] Minnich, 286.

procession of Black Africans in Trapani in which there was a king and queen, and elections were

held to choose their protector saint.[123] These small hints suggest that what enslaved Africans

carried with them in terms of cultural and spiritual practices, was likely much more than what

was recorded in the existant written archives of Sicily.

Concluding Remarks

    Papal decrees on slavery and conversion traveled across the Atlantic and Mediterranean,

but impacted local communities in different ways. In Sicily, the distinction between a Moor and

Black African had an impact on both a person's treatment in the church and their opportunities

for social inclusion. A Moor was more likely to be persecuted in the Inquisition, but also had

more opportunities for social inclusion through economic opportunities and the help of a larger

Sicilian Moor community. They had less incentive to convert to Catholicism because retaining

their Muslim faith let them rejoin their own communities more easily, whether that be in Sicily

or back on the North African coast. Their owners also had less incentive for forced conversions,

because it would have been more lucrative to ransom a Muslim North African. Alternately,

Black Africans in Sicily were a minority in the Sicilian Inquisition, and the majority tended to be

converted to Catholicism. In most cases, this was not a choice, though there were some

conversions of adults. For Black Africans, conversion offered an opportunity to assimilate to the

their new world, that they were more likely to reside in for the rest of their lives. Being part of

the church gave them access to doctors, social networks, and a means of negotiating disputes.

But even after conversion and manumission they had limited economic opportunities, and many

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[123] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee: corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 191-194. Fiume suggests links to processions in the Congo.

had physically, and emotionally, difficult lives.

The depiction of mental and physical characteristics associated with Black Africans and Moors developed in this particular social, religious, and economic context. The Catholic Church and its theologians presented a concept of an animalistic, barbaric Black African in opposition to Christianity. In the canonization records of San Benedetto we saw that Sicilians negotiated this Black stereotype into a docile, illiterate, but physically strong Black African. These characteristics not only justified Black Africans Catholic salvation but also their role of domestic subjugation in Sicilian households. This was opposed to depictions of the Moor who was an enemy to be fought with the sword, at sea, and who resisted conversion. These distinctions arose even in the descriptions of Jesuits' conversion attempts; where Black Africans willingly sought out conversion while Moors more actively, and violently, resisted.[124] These descriptions of behavior and mental characteristics of Black Africans suggest a growing racial discourse developing alongside existing religious hierarchies.

Finally, there were also intermittent glimpses of social and spiritual lives that Black Africans possessed beyond the documentation of Sicilian ecclesiastical records. In San Benedetto's canonization records, Sicilian Andrea Ortulano described the following procession he witnessed in the Spanish court of Lisbon in 1618:

> Una sollennissima processione passar per le strade publice et alla presenza dell'istesso Re il quale come lo viddi da un balcone la stava mirando, era la processione sollennissima et insieme insieme (sic) devotissima fatta ai honore del Beato Benedetto di Palermo conforme lordicevano era accompagnata da molti schiavi neri con migliaia di tocie et lumi accesi, divisata con stendardi e cose appareti et inessa si vedeva depinta l'imagine di un frate zocculante[125] di viso negro chiamato fra Benedetto di Palermo il qualo io non ho dubbio esser quell istesso che noi chiamiamo fra Benedetto di San

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[124] Minnich, 288.

[125] This term refers to the sandals worn by Franciscans.

Fradello.[126]

> A very solemn procession passed on the public roads in the presence of the same King (Phillip III), as I saw him watching from the balcony, it was a very solemn and devotional procession in honor of the blessed Benedetto of Palermo, how they were saying it, he was accompanied by many Black slaves with thousands of torches and lamps lit, divided by banners in which one could see the painted image of a Franciscan brother with a Black face called friar Benedetto of Palermo, who I have no doubt was the same that we call friar Benedetto of San Fradello.

Benedetto has always had more than one face – in the sixteenth century he was a freed Black African trying to provide for his own family through the Catholic Church and an exceptional humble and happy Black African that performed miracles for Sicilian elite. By the early seventeenth century, before the Catholic church had canonized him, he had become an icon for the growing displaced communities of enslaved and freed Black Africans across Europe. This continued into the Americas, where a seventeenth century Brazilian procession featured Benedetto as a Black sea captain in a white uniform sitting at the stern of a ship called the Palermo.[127] That his image and story traveled so quickly across the Atlantic is a testament to the global networks of enslaved Black Africans. Today, a sixteen-meter mural of San Benedetto overlooks the neighborhood of Albergheria; the same neighborhood where, in the sixteenth century, he performed numerous miracles for some of Palermo's wealthiest citizens. Benedetto has become one of Palermo's patron saints, and a symbol of the local anti-racist movement. He still has a complicated backdrop. Palermo is a city that is home to thousands of migrants, many of whom find support through the church. At the same time, Italy's laws contribute to hundreds of thousands of deaths of migrants at sea and restrict migrants' and their Italian born children access to citizenship.

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[126] Processo, 1625, f.896r-897v, 3QQE40 BIS, BCP.

[127] Giovanne Fiume, "St. Benedict the Moor: From Sicily to the New World" in Margaret Cormack, ed. *Saints and Their Cults in the Atlantic World*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 38.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Across the two seas that connected Sicily and the Central Sahel there were uneven flows of influences. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century Borno's rulers benefited from the slave trade, and established alliances with both Ottoman and Spanish officials.[1] The export of enslaved West Africans provided an important source of income and military strength for Borno, and was likely one of the reasons they could maintain control of the trans-Saharan route through the Fezzan and solidify the unification of Kanem and Borno. On the other hand, enslaved West Africans trafficked into North African hubs of Tripoli and Tunis were not particularly transformative in an economic sense for the Spanish Monarchy. This trade was smaller in scale than that of the growing Portuguese-controlled one along the Atlantic coast of Africa, and seemingly overlooked by the merchant diasporas in Mediterranean port cities. Once in Sicily, enslaved Africans were not used in large-scale plantations or armies, and they did not entirely replace the Moors, Jews, and Eastern Europeans who were already part of Sicily's enslaved communities. In the divisive and competitive urban environment of Palermo, they did however strengthen individual wealth and power through agricultural and criminal labor, and as financial assets. If slavery was not an essential part of the Sicilian economy, then why is it important to study when there were larger, and more destructive, slavery systems developing in the Atlantic?

A history that focuses on the enslaved Black Africans in Sicily highlights both the fragile and violent nature of the boundaries between the interconnected worlds of the early Modern Mediterranean. Geraldine Heng wrote that "race is a response to ambiguity, especially the ambiguity of identity" and it answers "to the ambitions and exigencies of the historical

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[1] Rémi Dewière, *Du Lac Tchad à La Mecque : Le Sultanat Du Borno et Son Monde (XVIe-XVIIe Siècle)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017), 6. Dewiere suggests there may have been less traffic under Spanish control.

moment."[2] In the late fifteenth-century there was an increase of enslaved Black Africans living in Europe. Across the shores of the Mediterranean, religion, race, and slavery informed each other in shaping new social identities and hierarchies that included these Black Africans. The construction of Blackness and practices of slavery in Palermo were a product of both the particular local dynamics of the city and larger historical moments occurring across the Saharan-Mediterranean region.

In the sixteenth century there was a racialized reinvention of the Greek fourth climatic zone, in which there was both religious animosity and shared cultural and economic institutions along the shores of a white Mediterranean. At the edges of this Mediterranean region, the Islamic Sahel played a dynamic, and conflicting role. An institutional adoption of Islam strengthened Borno and Hausaland's economic networks to the North and justified raiding of "pagan" communities in the South. For Sahelians, establishing an Arab lineage would have also allowed for a reinterpretation of skin color, with people having a lighter skin complexion being connected to Arab lineages. More work stands to be done to determine how whiteness interacted with local interpretations, and hierarchies, of skin color in the Sahel. In dialogues between North African and Sahelian clerics, the context of enslaveability was reframed in terms of skin color, with the border of the Bilad al-Sudan marking the distinction between a white and Black Africa. The tension in defining this border was exacerbated by a growing Islamification of the Sahel at the same time that North African rulers and merchants were treating Black Africans as slaves, regardless of their religion.

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[2] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 33.

Historian Giovanna Fiume considered the origin of the idea of a white, Christian Europe as being born from the conflicts in the early modern Mediterranean.[3] In the first half of the sixteenth century in southern Europe, Blackness was not yet in dialectic opposition to this white Christian identity. In his analysis of the late fifteenth-century Iberian peninsula, David Nirenberg showed that Islam, Christianity and Judaism were both in direct conflict and intimately connected in a dialogic process of redefining themselves.[4] The construction of a Black social category developed both alongside, and outside of, these religious conflicts. As enslaved Black populations grew in Iberian cities, and Spain and Portugal expanded their empires across the Atlantic, religious social hierarchies were reinvented in order to fit new marginalized communities into their world. In the sixteenth century, Catholic theologians were defining different lineages of heathenism that were inconsistently applied to marginalized communities across the growing Spanish and Portuguese worlds.[5] By the end of the sixteenth century, these genealogies of heathenism had assumed a broader racialized significance. In a particularly telling example from the Iberian Peninsula, Historian Kate Lowe points to a segregated fountain in Lisbon. In 1551 this fountain was segregated by skin color, gender, and ethnicity, with categories that grouped Black, Indian, and mixed ancestry people together. By 1592, the groups had been simplified to distinguish between only two groups; black and white.[6]

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[3] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee: corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009), XIII.

[4] David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 134.

[5] Giuseppe Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c.1450-1600," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 43, no. 2 (December 2016): 51.

[6] Kate Lowe, "The Global Population of Renaissance Lisbon: Diversity and Its Entanglements," in *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, eds. Annemarie Jordan-Gschwend and K. J. P Lowe. (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015), 66.

In Sicily, there was a dialectic relationship between practices of slavery and formation of racial identities; and this is most clearly seen in how Black Africans moved into slavery differently than their North African counterparts, and had less mobility once enslaved. Moors were more likely to be enslaved as a result of direct imperial conflict – whether from Spanish conquests in North Africa, or corsair activity in the Mediterranean. Once in Sicily, they were less likely to stay. They became part of a high-demand export market where they were sold for galley labor or ransomed through redemption agencies. When they did stay in Sicily, most retained their Muslim names, and faith, which also meant they remained a religious threat to the Christian communities. As such, they were persecuted in the Spanish Inquisition with Jews and Protestants and European travelers' accounts depicted them as having dangerous and untrustworthy character traits that would have been undesirable for domestic servitude. At the same time, they had more mobility in freedom. White captives could conform more easily in their host societies; Europeans could convert to Islam and *farsi turco*, and Moors in Sicily and Valencia could find neighborhoods of long-standing Muslim communities, places to worship and opportunities for economic independence.

Conversely, enslaved Black Africans did not enter Sicily through religious corsair warfare and were more likely to be absorbed into Sicilian households and the Catholic Church in a form of subjugated inclusion. The majority of enslaved Black Africans seemed to have entered Palermo as a result of trade in North African markets such as Barqa. They were not valuable in the growing captive export markets or as ransom, so were also more likely to remain in Sicily. Whereas North Africans were considered dangerous, Black Africans were described as happy, loyal, and physically strong. They were not a threat – and this is reflected in the high number of Black Africans living in Palermo's households in the sixteenth century, including those of

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widowed women. Their loyalty and strength made them desirable for use as both personal militias of the wealthy urban elite and agricultural laborers. Almost all Black Africans in Sicilian records appeared with baptized names. Even in the process of conversion, Jesuits made a contrast between Black Africans, who willingly came to the church, and Moors, who more actively resisted. Black Africans absorption into a subjugated role in society was not the equivalent of social belonging nor was domestic slavery a gentler form of servitude than others.[7] There was a violent nature to practices of slavery in Sicily that included warehouse sales that mimicked that of livestock and humiliating punishment such as bells around the necks of those who ran away. Enslaved populations had a high presence of physical ailments and high death rates. *Gucta*, the phrase used to described enslaved people who had a severe depression from their loss of liberty, is the one hint from the archives we have of their psychological hardship.[8]

In the sixteenth century the large enslaved and freed communities of Black Africans would have been part of Palermo's diverse population - Africans, Eastern Europeans, Northern Italians and Spanish. Historian Francesco Benigno referred to early modern Palermo as an "open city," but there were limitations to its openness.[9] Dauverd pointed to how the Genoese and Catalan merchant diasporas living in the city blurred the lines between foreign and local.[10] Legally, Spaniards could become naturalized citizens through residency or marriage.[11] These

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[7] John O Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), X. Hunwick notes a tendency to also view Arab slavery as milder than other forms.

[8] Matteo Gaudioso, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni.* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926). 85

[9] Francesco Benigno, "Integration and Conflict in Spanish Sicily," in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion 1500-1700*, ed. Thomas James Dandelet and John A. Marino (Rome: Brill, 2007), 26.

[10] Céline Dauverd, *Imperial Ambition in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Genoese Merchants and the Spanish Crown* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 5.

[11] Benigno, "Integration and Conflict," 26.

options were not available for Black Africans. Even in freedom, there were legal bans that

limited their economic and social opportunities in the city, and the reality that, contrary to their

Jewish and North African counterparts, most would have to stay in the master's household even

post manumission. Paul Lovejoy wrote that "frontiers and boundaries are internal and external,

they are what people cross in establishing an identity with a community, and the means of

conforming to the strictures of belonging requires recognition of boundaries between what is

acceptable and what is not."[12] But conforming to the strictures of belonging in sixteenth century

Palermo was not dependent on an individual choice or a recognition of what was acceptable.

Many Black Africans who were born in Sicily in the sixteenth century and converted to

Catholicism were not able to cross the boundary of belonging in Palermo because of their skin

color.

There was not a formal end to slavery in Sicily.[13] Spain attempted to pass the New Laws

in 1542 that would have forbidden slavery, but this was primarily aimed at its Atlantic

possessions, and was strongly resisted on the ground.[14] Slavery in Sicily continued after these

laws were issued, as is evident from the 1565 census of enslaved men in Palermo. Maurice

Aymard proposed that there was a decline of enslaved Black Africans in Sicily due to the

Ottoman takeover of Tripoli, and an overall decline in the economy of Sicily after 1551.[15] This

was accompanied by a steady rise in prices of enslaved people, that would have put ownership

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[12] Paul E Lovejoy, *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 7.

[13] Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 101.

[14] Giuseppe Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c.1450-1600," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 43, no. 2 (December 2016): 38.

[15] Maurice Aymard, "De La Traite Aux Chiourmes: La Fin de l'esclavage Dans La Sicile Moderne," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, vol. XLIV, (1974): 14.

out of reach of most Sicilians.[16] There was not an official abolition of slavery in Italy. While

certain Popes condemned slavery in the sixteenth century, it was not until the nineteenth century

that the Catholic church led an antislavery "crusade," but this was in reaction to North African

slave trades and tied to the growing European interests in the occupation of Africa.[17] Geraldine

Heng wrote:

> The refusal of race de-stigmatizes the impacts and consequences of certain laws, acts,
> practices, and institutions in the medieval period, so that we cannot name them for what
> they are, nor can we bear adequate witness to the full meaning of the manifestations and
> phenomena they install.[18]

The lack of a formal abolition of slavery in Italy is also reflected in a larger dismissal of the

history of slavery in Sicily both in popular knowledge and in scholarship. This silence denies

both the role slavery played in shaping early modern Sicily, and Sicilians' moral, social, and

financial responsibilities as slaveholders. It also silences the history of the thousands of Africans

who were active members, if not citizens, of early modern Palermo. Perhaps most importantly, it

denies the legacies of race that are still active now.

Today "Fortress Europe" defends the same borders that were being constructed in the

sixteenth century, and Sicily is an important point of entrance for West Africans fleeing the

Libyan coast. There are still different frontiers that people need to cross to enter Europe, and they

often differ along racialized lines. The European Union has open borders for its citizens. At the

same time, Shelleen Greene writes that the increase of black migrants from Libya reaching the

shores of Sicily has led to "increased border surveillance, detention facilities, and racial

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[16] Antonino Giuffrida, "Schiavitu e Mercato Del Lavoro Nella Sicilia Rinascimentale," *Nuove Effermeridi*, Schiavi, corsari, rinnegati, 54, no. Anno XIV (2001): 34.

[17] Peter C. Hogg, *The African Slave Trade and Its Suppression: A Classified and Annotated Bibliography of Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Articles* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1973), xi.

[18] Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 266.

violence."[19] Internal frontiers of belonging also remain in Italy. For many Black Italians that

have grown up in Italy, speak a regional dialect and know all the inside local jokes, foods and

customs that it entails, neither legal citizenship nor a sense of belonging is an option because of

the strict, and often racist implications of citizenship laws based on *jure sanguinis* and the

psychological effects of Italian racism.[20] In order to address the myriad roles of racism in Italy

today, recent scholarship and literature has begun to explore Italy's complex history with Africa,

primarily focusing on the post-unification period and the colonial past.[21] This dissertation is an

extension of that approach; a confrontation of Sicily's history of race and slavery, and the

challenging of the borders that have denied this topic space in Italian history.

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[19] Shelleen Greene, *Equivocal Subjects: Between Italy and Africa : Constructions of Racial and National Identity in the Italian Cinema* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury, 2012),1.

[20] Filippo Ivardi Ganapini, "Svegliamo la ragione con la passione," *Nigrizia*, Settembre 2020; Angelica Pesarini and Guido Tintori, "Mixed Identities in Italy: A Country in Denial," in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Classification*, ed. Zarine L Rocha and P. J Aspinall (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland : Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 973-979. In Ganapini's article Ghanaian-Italian Theophilus Marboah discusses the psychological projection of a "feared other" onto Black Italians.

[21] Greene, *Equivocal Subjects*; Maaza Mengiste, *The Shadow King* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020); Igiaba Scego, "Cosa fare con le tracce scomode del nostro passato," *Internazionale* (June 9 2017), https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2020/06/09/tracce-passato-colonialismo-razzismo-fascismo

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