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# The Children of the Desert and the Laws of the Sea: Austria, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century

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MATTEO DRUSCOVICH WAS A SHIP'S CAPTAIN in the Austrian merchant marine, not a lawyer, but he knew something about Austrian law. "There can be no slaves on an Austrian ship," he declared, referring to §95 of the 1852 penal code, which stated that anyone who set foot on Austrian soil or on board an Austrian ship would become instantly free.<sup>1</sup> The occasion for his statement was a proposed search of his steamship, the *Mars*, on June 3, 1870, while it was docked at Smyrna (today's Izmir) en route from Alexandria to Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> Druscovich attempted to forestall the search, which would have been conducted by representatives of the British consulate in Smyrna looking for slaves on board, "in order," he explained, "to protect the rights and honor of our [Austrian] flag."<sup>3</sup> In due course, the British were allowed to search the ship in the presence of the Austro-Hungarian consul. What they found showed that more than Druscovich's personal honor or even Austria's sovereignty over its own ships was at risk. The search of the *Mars*, like countless other such searches that

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<sup>1</sup> "Neither slavery nor the exercise of power pertaining to it is permitted in the Austrian Empire, and . . . every slave becomes free in the very moment when he sets foot on imperial Austrian soil or even only on board an Austrian ship." *Strafgesetz über Verbrechen, Vergehen und Uebertretungen* (May 27, 1852), Neuntes Hauptstück, Von öffentlichen Gewaltthätigkeit, §95, durch Behandlung eines Menschen als Sklaven. The 1811 *Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (Austrian Civil Code) prohibited "slavery or serfdom" in the hereditary lands (significantly, excluding Galicia). Amendments decreed in 1826 already stated that any slave became free the instant he or she set foot on Austrian soil or an Austrian ship, or was sold to a subject of the Austrian monarch. *Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (1811), Erster Theil, Erstes Hauptstück, §16; 19ter Hofdecret vom 19. August 1826, Beylage, §1.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of consistency with sources used and quoted, this article will use the conventional nineteenth-century English equivalents of town names such as Constantinople, Vienna, Trieste, Smyrna, and Alexandria. It will also refer to the "Austrian Empire" and "Habsburg Monarchy" without regard to the transition from Austria to Austria-Hungary in 1867 in contexts in which both the pre-*Ausgleich* and post-*Ausgleich* state are meant.

<sup>3</sup> Gödel-Lannoy, President of the Maritime Administration in Trieste [Seebehörde or Governo Marittimo], to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna [Ministerium des Äußern], July 16, 1870, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv [hereafter HHStA], Ministerium des Äußern [hereafter MdA], Administrative Registratur [hereafter AR], Fach 34, Sonderreihe 90, Handelspolitische Akten Rubrik 48: Sklavenhandel [hereafter F34SR90], Z. 2482/HP.

occurred in the Mediterranean between the 1840s and the 1870s, exposed the fundamental misalignment of Austria's imperial and commercial interests, European ideologies of civilization and freedom notwithstanding.

The architects of Austria's maritime expansion eschewed traditional colonialism—both voluntarily and because the nominal empire's few attempts at overseas conquest ended in failure.<sup>4</sup> The insistence that Austria's maritime trade was benevolent did not, however, prevent Austria from encountering the same complicated moral, legal, and commercial paradoxes that affected any Europeans who claimed to bring civilization, in the form of commerce, to slave societies. The diplomatic scuffle over the presence of slaves on the *Mars* in 1870 exposed this larger tangle of imperial and commercial interests, for behind the zealous British consul in Smyrna, who was determined to end slaving in and through “his” port, and the Austrian captain, who was determined to protect the honor of “his” flag, stood the administration of the Austrian Lloyd, the empire's largest shipping company, and diplomats and politicians representing Britain, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire. At stake was not only Austria's dominance of Eastern Mediterranean trade routes, but the project of abolishing the slave trade and the nature of its connection to “free” commerce. Was Austria-Hungary meeting the standards of European civilization and its treaty obligations to Britain? Or was it turning a blind eye to—or, more than that, actually enabling—the most despicable aspect of so-called oriental despotism: the enslavement of African women, children, and men in the waning decades of the nineteenth century?

The answer to both questions, as it turned out, was yes. To say so is not to single out Austria for special blame. There is no evidence that the Austrian state knowingly profited from slaving, or that Austrian diplomats' abhorrence of the Atlantic slave trade, or slavery in Africa, was any less sincere than anyone else's. Austria did fulfill its treaty obligations to Britain (which explicitly excluded the Mediterranean); neither Austrian nor British diplomats considered trade with a slaveholding society to be compromising in and of itself. On the contrary, both believed that consuls, missionaries, and tradesmen—and in the British case, colonial administrators—were natural allies in the project to replace slavery with what they considered to be civ-

<sup>4</sup> Austria's experience of maritime trade in the nineteenth century is the subject of my current book project, *Invisible Empire: A New Global History of Austria*, which will be published by Princeton University Press. Pieter Judson has asked whether Austria-Hungary was an empire in the formal sense. The question was framed, as the historiographical debate that inspired it demanded, in the context of the Habsburg domestic sphere: Did certain allegedly dominant “nations” hegemonically rule over other, allegedly subordinate “nations” within a fundamentally imperial, if geographically European, system? Judson's conclusion, with which I agree, is that the constitutional rights and legal institutions available to Habsburg subjects created a political culture dominated by institutionalized pluralism, not national hegemony; the emergence of putative nation-states from the ashes of the empire in 1918 is not comparable to the decolonization of Britain or France. Judson, “L'Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empire?” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales* 63, no. 3 (2008): 563–596. The relevance of the concept of “empire” to this article is different—it presupposes that Austria hoped to benefit from an asymmetric power relationship with the Ottoman Empire and its North African dependencies in order to provide basic services (such as passenger and freight transportation and mail service) that would prove lucrative to its own commercial interests. It neither requires nor asserts that Austria was a colonial power in the sense of the British or French empires. Within this context, what matters is that the Habsburgs chose to call their dominions an empire, and that Austrians thought of their empire as a Great Power and aspired to belong to the club of imperial powers that exported their goods, their culture, and their civilization to the rest of the world.

ilization. But if contemporary European wisdom held that civilization spread inevitably, it also expected it to proceed gradually, not all in a piece. And so Robert Cumberbatch, the British consul in Smyrna whose whistle-blowing caused Austria so much trouble, was scolded, not commended, by his superiors in the Foreign Service for trying to rescue slaves. His Austrian counterparts were embarrassed by the incident, but they could not imagine what “reasonable” (to their minds) steps could be taken to prevent its recurrence. With a few notable exceptions (including consuls such as Cumberbatch), European diplomats chose to ignore the problem of Ottoman domestic slavery because they felt powerless to solve it.<sup>5</sup> Even after anti-slave trade conventions were signed in the 1880s, the practice of slaveholding within the Ottoman realm continued until the very end of the empire in 1918 and Turkey’s subsequent repudiation of all Islamic law, including those laws that underpinned slavery.

There are some surprises here. That Austrian ships played any role in the transportation of African slaves is largely unknown. Austria’s pivotal role in expanding maritime traffic in the Eastern Mediterranean in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century is usually forgotten. The glaring exclusion of the entire Mediterranean from diplomatic agreements to eradicate the slave trade elsewhere has made it easy to imagine that human trafficking had largely been eliminated from European experience by mid-century; indeed, the abolition of the slave trade in the northern Atlantic is conventionally viewed as a core event of the Age of Revolution. But the purpose of this investigation is not to surprise—it is to connect. Thinking about how slaves were transported by European powers that were formally (and by conviction) against slavery helps reveal how difficult abolition was and further exposes the linkages between smuggling, the semi-official slave trade, and the domestic institution of slavery. To appreciate the significance of the discovery that slaves were being smuggled on Austrian ships requires a reexamination of the history of Austria’s role in Mediterranean commerce; the evolution of European diplomatic agreements aimed at ending the slave trade; the alleged distinctiveness, whether real or imagined, of Ottoman slavery; the permeability of the legal and conceptual boundaries that were supposed to separate the slave trade as a matter of international law from the domestic institution of slavery; and the complex history of slavery and abolitionism in Britain and Austria. Ultimately, it reveals that it was impossible for imperial commercial interests to be truly aligned with the emergent ideologies of civilization and freedom, despite the Great Powers’ claim that they were mutually reinforcing.<sup>6</sup> As case after case of slave transportation by the Austrian Lloyd was brought to light, the Austrian government was forced to acknowledge that the only way to guarantee that its ships would not be used by slave traders would be to refuse to maintain its Ottoman routes and repudiate its commercial ambitions in the region.

<sup>5</sup> Madeline Zilfi has suggested that the predominance of female slaves in the Ottoman Empire and of the imperial harem in the Ottoman imagination of slavery made the empire’s particular form of “mild” slavery less offensive to even those diplomats who were committed in principle to ending slavery: “In nineteenth-century male relationships, the idea of men’s having a master was shedding its positive connotations. Where women were concerned, however, the staying power of female slavery and the patriarchal household argued for the normalcy of women’s being mastered.” Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (Cambridge, 2010), 231.

<sup>6</sup> I am particularly indebted to the *AHR*’s anonymous “Reader 1” for suggesting this particular breakdown of the thematic elements in this article.

When it came to servicing the Eastern Mediterranean maritime trade, some slaving, officials feared, was the price of admission.

The story of the Mediterranean slave trade—and Austria's involvement in it—forces an extension of the chronology of abolition to include the late nineteenth century, a reorientation of the geography of slaving from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to include the Mediterranean, and a broadening of the profiles of slavers and complicit powers to include non-colonial states. It also provides a missing link between the historiographies of slavery in the Ottoman Empire, slavery in Africa, and European abolitionism in the nineteenth century. While historians have long looked skeptically at claims that African slavery called for European colonialism on the continent—a colonialism conveniently justified in part by the stated need to abolish the slave trade at its source—Austria's predicament suggests that there was more to Europe's involvement in the slave trade than either humanitarian abolitionism or the imperialist expansion it was used to defend. The very structures that made international trade generally safe and profitable facilitated the continuation of slaving across the Mediterranean long after the project of abolition began—no matter the intentions of any number of lawmakers, diplomats, mercantile capitalists, or ships' captains.

THE HABSBURG MONARCHY FACED considerable obstacles to developing and exercising an interventionist anti-slavery policy—obstacles that had less to do with Austria's public "morality" than with the particular form of slaving that its commerce unwittingly facilitated. Austria was forced to confront the intertwining of commerce and slaving in the Mediterranean, where the slave trade crossed the frontiers of the private and the public, where the border between freedom and coercion was often unclear, and where power often operated along indirect channels and took hidden forms.<sup>7</sup> Scholars of the Mediterranean have long known that from antiquity through the Renaissance, the "connectivity" of the "corrupting sea" made slavery "a structural feature of Mediterranean society."<sup>8</sup> One scholar has estimated that between 4.5 and 9 million slaves—Christian and Muslim, European, Arab, Berber, Turkic,

<sup>7</sup> It is no longer necessary to include the formerly omnipresent apology for the paucity of literature on slavery under Islam or in the Ottoman Empire or in Africa. There are references to excellent scholarship on every page of this article. Ehud Toledano claimed in 2009 that "we have covered the traffic from Africa and the Caucasus, described the main routes, determined the types of slaves, their prices, the customs duties levied on them, the jobs they performed, and the social roles they played. Scholars have explained the project of the Tanzimat reforms, the impact of foreign pressures, the mechanisms of homegrown manumission, the attitudes towards slavery, and the problems of suppression and abolition." Toledano, "Bringing the Slaves Back In," in Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ismael Musah Montana, and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora* (Trenton, N.J., 2009), 7. While much remains to be done, it is important to recognize how very much has been accomplished since the inaugural issue of *Slavery and Abolition*, in which Alan Fisher complained that "Scholars have not only avoided investigating slavery in [the Ottoman Empire], the largest of all Islamic states in [the early modern and modern] periods, they have not admitted its existence." Fisher, "Chattel Slavery in the Ottoman Empire," *Slavery and Abolition* 1 (1980): 25.

<sup>8</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols. (New York, 1973), 2: 755; Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden, Mass., 2000), 388. On Mediterranean slaving in the Carolingian period (once thought to mark a caesura between ancient and Renaissance slaving), see Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," *Past and Present*

and African—were kept on the Mediterranean littoral between 1450 and 1850.<sup>9</sup> In the nineteenth century, human trafficking had become inseparable from the most modern forms of Mediterranean exchange, facilitated by the newest technologies (steamships), and intrinsically connected to “legitimate” commerce.<sup>10</sup> It affected even those European powers—including Austria—whose commerce was largely continental, whose borders were mostly inland, and whose attitude toward the slave trade combined professions of innocence with practiced indifference.

At the center of this story were thousands of African children and young women (and less frequently men) who were purchased in the slave markets of Cairo and East Africa—many of them after a forced march across the Sahara—and taken by slave traders to the port city of Alexandria, where they embarked on steamships headed for Constantinople.<sup>11</sup> If the slave traders could pass their human wares off as their own children, wives, paid servants, or personal slaves, rather than as newly acquired slaves bound for resale in Constantinople, they could travel unmolested to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, where slavery remained legal even after the piecemeal abolition of the slave trade had been accepted as an ideal. There, as one American traveler observed, “Black slaves are sold freely and white Circassian girls can be had by all who are able to purchase them.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the slave dealers knew that their trade was under attack and that their dearly purchased property was likely to be seized by any signatories to the various treaties to that effect (including Great

177 (2002): 47–49, here 53: “In some not unimportant measure, Europe financed the early growth of its commercial economy by selling Europeans as slaves to the Arab world.”

<sup>9</sup> “Personalmente ho ‘osato’ affermare che se consideriamo le diverse componenti della schiavitù mediterranea: cristiano-europei schiavi nel mondo islamico, musulmani (arabo-berberi, turchi, slavi ed altri) nel mondo europeo, negri africani e altri da una parte e dall’altra, e se facciamo un calcolo per l’intero periodo 1450–1850 ‘si arriva, con verosimile sorpresa e probabile incredulità di molti, a un totale da 4 milioni e mezzo a nove milioni di individui coinvolti.’” Salvatore Bono, “La schiavitù nel mediterraneo moderno: Storia di una storia,” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 65 (2002), <http://cdlm.revues.org/index28.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Lovejoy eschews the phrase “legitimate trade,” used to distinguish between slaving and other trades (in, for example, ivory, palm oil, or ostrich feathers). “Many of the ‘legitimate goods’ destined for world markets were grown or transported by slaves, for slavery had become an integral part of the African economy . . . The transition from exporting slaves to exporting other commodities resulted in the increased use of slaves in Africa.” Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 2000), 141; Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “From Slaves to Palm Oil: Afro-European Commercial Relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1741–1841,” in David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby, eds., *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Boydell, 2004), 14.

<sup>11</sup> “Slaves exported [from the Central Sudan] to the Orient were marched an average of some 600 kilometers to the desert edge, and then made the long trek across the Sahara.” Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990), 75. Suzanne Miers listed some of the many origins of slaves destined for the Mediterranean world: “From the western and central Sudan they crossed the Sahara on the great caravan routes to Northern Africa, and many were sent on to the markets of the Ottoman Empire and beyond. From the Sudan and Ethiopia, they came northwards, overland or down the Nile to the North African littoral or were shipped eastwards, as were Somalis, to Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and India. From eastern Africa even beyond the great lakes they were carried away to Persian and Arabian markets. Many were dispersed through the Muslim world by pilgrims going to or returning from Mecca and their destinies were as varied as their origins.” Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), 56.

<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Clark Burt, *The Far East; or, Letters from Egypt, Palestine, and Other Lands of the Orient* (Cincinnati, 1868), 197. This particular letter was written from on board the *Arciduchessa Carlotta*, an Austrian Lloyd steamer accused of transporting slaves in 1871, bound from Alexandria to Jaffa and Beirut.



Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and France) if their commercial intentions were discovered. They also knew that there was a greater likelihood of discovery on board steamships, which drew more attention from consulates and customs agencies, than on sailing ships. Yet the comforts and convenience of steamship travel were so great as to convince many slave traders to take the risk. And on the waters of the Mediterranean, no steamship service was more reliable, more comfortable, more regular, and more reasonably priced than the service provided by the Austrian Lloyd, the largest steamship company in the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>13</sup>

The Lloyd had been founded by a group of merchants and investors in the empire's largest port city, Trieste, in 1833. It was supposed to encourage the blossoming of the empire's maritime commerce by speeding up the movement of goods—and, just as importantly, the information about goods upon which insurers desperately relied. The Austrian Lloyd, its founders hoped, would reorient Austrian trade toward the seas: "If we escape from the narrow circles into which Austrian traffic is now banished," wrote the Triestine merchant-philanthropist Pasquale Revoltella in 1863, "a wide, boundless horizon opens up—a world lies before us which until now has only been known in Austrian schoolrooms and scholars' studies—a world full of the liveliest activity, the playground of all other civilized peoples—where the spirit of commerce daily celebrates unheard-of triumphs."<sup>14</sup> The Lloyd's very first steamer, the *Arciduca Lodovico*, departed on its maiden voyage on May 16, 1837, leaving Trieste for its most important destination, Constantinople.<sup>15</sup> The Levant proved so central to the company's profits that the Lloyd soon developed two main routes that serviced Ottoman ports without including any Austrian ports at all: one that went directly from Alexandria to Constantinople, with stops only at Smyrna and a few intermediate islands, and a second that went from Alexandria to Constantinople via the Levantine coastal cities. In 1851, Austrian Lloyd steamers transported 222,000 passengers, 522,000 letters, and 280 packages, "nearly all of them engaged in carrying on a commerce with various ports of Turkey," according to the *New York Times*. The Lloyd's income for 1851 was \$1.4 million, of which \$900,000, or fully 64 percent, derived from the "Turkish trade."<sup>16</sup> By 1869, the Ottoman Empire was Austria-Hungary's second most important trade partner, after Germany—followed only at a great

<sup>13</sup> In 1870, there were seventy-four steamers registered in Austria; seventy of them belonged to the Austrian Lloyd. Frederick Martin, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book*, 7th ed. (London, 1870), 25–26. In 1872, the French steamer service Messageries Maritimes and the Russian Steam and Navigation and Commercial Company each plied the Alexandria-Constantinople route fortnightly; the Peninsular & Oriental (Britain) and Rubattino (Italy) did not cover the route; the Austrian Lloyd sent ships from Alexandria to Constantinople weekly (alternating between a direct route and a route via Syria); the Egyptian Khedivial Mail Line sent steamers weekly. But whereas the Messageries Maritimes charged 182 French francs for a third-class ticket from Alexandria to Constantinople, the Lloyd charged 50 francs for the same trip on its direct route, and 95 for the trip via Syria. Routes and tariffs taken from an excerpt from François Leverney, *Guide et annuaire d'Égypte* (1872), as printed in Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis, eds., *Alexandria, 1860–1960: The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community*, trans. Colin Clement (Alexandria, 1997), 211–218.

<sup>14</sup> Pasquale Revoltella, *Oesterreich's Betheiligung am Welthandel: Betrachtungen und Vorschläge* (Trieste, 1864), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Dieter Winkler and Georg Pawlik, *Die Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft Österreichischer Lloyd, 1836–1918* (Graz, 1986), 13.

<sup>16</sup> "Correspondence: The Levant," *New York Times*, October 11, 1852, 2.

distance by Italy and Russia.<sup>17</sup> There was no doubt that Austria stood to profit tremendously from its maritime commerce.

But the “playground of civilized peoples,” it turned out, was also a thriving slave market. From the 1830s, when the Austrian Lloyd was founded, until at least the 1870s, when the documentary evidence (but not the slave trade itself) ceased, the Lloyd’s “modern” steamships were chosen by dozens (or possibly hundreds) of slave traders to transport thousands (or possibly tens of thousands) of slaves to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>18</sup> The exact scale of Austrian participation is difficult to establish—as is the exact number of slaves transported from Africa across the Mediterranean to the territories of the Ottoman Empire. Ehud Toledano, using data compiled by Ralph Austen and others, has estimated that between 16,000 and 18,000 slaves were imported into the Ottoman Empire every year for the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century—which would have produced a total of 1.1 to 1.3 million enslaved people between 1800 and 1870 (a forced migration on an epochal scale)—with the nineteenth-century trade peaking between 1850 and 1875.<sup>19</sup>

That a slave trade on this scale (or any other) persisted into the 1860s and 1870s requires an adjustment of the traditional chronology of abolition in the Atlantic-centered historiography of European slave-trading. When Captain Druscovich’s ship was stopped at Smyrna, more than six decades had passed since the declared end of the British and American slave trades, in 1807 and 1808, respectively.<sup>20</sup> Nearly sixty

<sup>17</sup> Frederick Martin, ed., *The Statesman’s Year-Book*, 6th ed. (London, 1869), 25.

<sup>18</sup> The slave trade did not stop in the 1870s, but a few developments made it substantially smaller. The Anglo-Egyptian anti-slave trade convention of 1877 “marked the start of a more determined effort to prevent the import of slaves.” Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 81. The British occupation of Egypt, starting in 1882, gave the British more control over embarkation procedures. The Berlin Conference of 1885 and the Brussels Conference of 1889 both involved the Ottoman Empire in international agreements prohibiting the slave trade.

<sup>19</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle, 1998), 8. Ralph Austen has estimated that 312,000 Africans were moved from sub-Saharan Africa to the Arab and Turkic lands surrounding the Mediterranean between 1830 and 1900—100,000 of them in the 1860s alone. Austen, “The Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa: A Tentative Census,” in Elizabeth Savage, ed., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 1992), 219.

<sup>20</sup> The British act was the Abolition Act, 47, Geo. III, Cap. 3, March 1807; the U.S. act was the Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves into Any Port or Place within the Jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the First Day of January, in the Year of Our Lord 1808, signed into law March 3, 1808. The United States outlawed the slave trade in 1808, but did not grant Great Britain the right to search American vessels at sea independently until the treaty carried out by an act of Congress on July 11, 1862; only that concession led to a more meaningful end to the northern Atlantic slave trade. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (New York, 1896), 192. Boyd Hilton has described the ambivalence of British celebrations of the March 2007 bicentenary of the act that outlawed Britain’s “central role in [the slave trade’s] Atlantic triangle.” Hilton, “1807 and All That: Why Britain Outlawed Her Slave Trade,” in Derek R. Peterson, ed., *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, Ohio, 2010), 63–65. Paul Lovejoy, echoing Eric Williams, argues that Europeans claim more credit for abolition than they are due: “If there was a passive agent in the history of slavery during the nineteenth century, it was Europe, not Africa. Africa struggled to reform slavery in a changing context. Europe did its best to avoid its commitment to abolition, reluctantly pursuing the fight whenever compromise proved impossible. Abolition was eventually achieved not so much because of the desire of one party to end slavery but because the modern industrial system and a slave-based social formation were incompatible . . . The demise of slavery was inevitable in the context of absorption into a capitalist world-economy.” Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 252–253. For Eric Williams’s original argument that economic interest, rather than selfless humanitarian impulse, motivated abolition at a time when industrial capitalism was making plantation slavery less profitable, see Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944). After a spirited debate between David Brion Davis, John Ashworth, and Thomas Haskell in the *American Historical Review*, reprinted in Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Prob-*

years had passed since the first ban on slavery in the Austrian lands in 1811. Over fifty years had passed since the participants at the Congress of Vienna had proclaimed the slave trade “repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality” and pledged to force its gradual abolition.<sup>21</sup> Thirty years had passed since Austria had signed the Quadripartite Treaty with Britain, Prussia, and Russia in December 1841, which granted the mutual right of inspection of one another’s vessels at sea.<sup>22</sup> Nearly twenty years had passed since the reigning penal code outlawing slavery within Austria had come into effect in 1852.

The Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted its correspondence with statesmen and diplomats representing Britain, the Sublime Porte, and France throughout the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century according to the letter of these laws, and with all the good conscience of a power that had nothing to hide. At the Congress of Vienna, Metternich said that as a “noncolonial” power, Austria was “sincerely opposed to the trade in slaves.”<sup>23</sup> From Britain’s perspective, the lack of direct involvement or interest in the slave trade on the part of Prussia, Russia, and Austria made them the most logical partners for cooperation—hence the 1841 treaty.<sup>24</sup> According to the traditional measure of willing compliance, Britain was correct: Austria was eager to cooperate. The archives of the Austrian Foreign Ministry are full of warrants granting Britain permission to search Austrian ships in the waters off the West Coast of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, the West Indies, and the Brazil Station, with confidence that no slaves would be found.<sup>25</sup> If Austria was involved in the Atlantic slave trade, no evidence of that involvement has ever been uncovered.

But Austria’s lack of direct complicity in or profit from the Atlantic slave trade

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*lem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), 107–311, Christopher Brown provided a synthesis of both positions in *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006).

<sup>21</sup> “Declaration of the Eight Powers, Relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade, February 8, 1815,” as quoted in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 11. The plenipotentiaries proclaimed “their wish of putting an end to a scourge which has so long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity.” Jerome Reich, “The Slave Trade at the Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion,” *Journal of Negro History* 53, no. 2 (April 1968): 139–140. The imperfections of the Vienna declaration were many: slaving was not declared illegal, nor was any time limit set for its eventual abolition; there was no commitment to take action against it or punish those who practiced it; and no mechanism was established for international cooperation to restrict it. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> The negotiations over the treaty continued from 1834 to 1841, and can be found in the folder “Verhandlungen wegen Abschluss eines gemeinschaftlichen Tractates wegen Abschaffung des Handels mit Negersclaven,” HHStA Fach 39/1, Sklavenhandel, Piraterie, etc., 1834–1847 [hereafter F39/1]. The entire treaty and its annexes are available in English in Lewis Hertslet, ed., *A Complete Collection of the Treaties and Conventions, and Reciprocal Regulations, at Present Subsisting between Great Britain and Foreign Powers*, vol. 6 (London, 1845), 3–20.

<sup>23</sup> Reich, “The Slave Trade at the Congress of Vienna,” 140.

<sup>24</sup> The three powers “had no direct interest in the slave trade” according to Suzanne Miers. Reich, “The Slave Trade at the Congress of Vienna,” 132; Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 10. The original overture to Prussia, Russia, and Austria was made by Viscount Castlereagh on May 31, 1814, and is reprinted in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1815–1816*, vol. 3 (London, 1838), 887. See also Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> A typical request for warrants, listing ships and captains organized into groups by the waters in which they patrolled, can be found in From His Britannic Majesty Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary to Prince Metternich Chancellor of Court and State, *præs.* 13/10 1843 p 1131 HHStA F39/1.



was only as relevant to the project of abolition as the slave trade was limited to the Atlantic. The proliferation of bilateral and multilateral treaties of which Britain was so proud—treaties that banned the trade, provided for joint cruising, granted the right of search of ships at sea, and in some cases defined slaving as piracy—shared a common omission: the Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> The Atlantic search zone defined by the Quadripartite Treaty was explicitly limited not only by delineating exactly what portions of the ocean were included, but also by excluding the Middle Sea entirely: “the said mutual right of search shall not be exercised within the Mediterranean Sea.”<sup>27</sup> But the West Coast of Africa was not where Austrian ships were likely to board slaves; 40 percent of the sub-Saharan Africans who were forced into external slavery in the nineteenth century were not taken across the Atlantic. According to Paul Lovejoy, approximately 2,134,000 Africans were transported into slavery across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century. Of those, 56 percent, or 1.2 million, were taken to slaveholding territories around the Mediterranean.<sup>28</sup>

The Ottoman Empire had not been party to the agreements signed at the Congress of Vienna, and had long refused to enter into any kind of treaty banning the slave trade.<sup>29</sup> Even when the British finally convinced the Ottomans to sign a convention for the suppression of the slave trade in 1880, Britain acquired the right to search Ottoman vessels “on the high seas, in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf”—but not in the Mediterranean.<sup>30</sup> This exclusion

<sup>26</sup> The Quadripartite Treaty described slaving as piracy but did not spell out the legal ramifications of such a definition. Britain tried, in 1864, to introduce an international act that would explicitly proclaim slave traders to be pirates and obligate signatories to pass laws allowing their subjects/citizens to be prosecuted in courts set up to combat piracy—that is, courts outside the jurisdiction of the “pirates” home state. Austria responded by reiterating its many regulations banning the slave trade (“Austria has in this regard neglected nothing and has in no measure fallen behind”) and noting that the result of the proposed act would be to place subjects of the signatory powers “under the power of courts recognized to prosecute piracy in the states whose cruisers secured the ship [accused of slaving]”—an abrogation of state sovereignty and duty toward subjects/citizens that Austria could not permit. The reference to piracy in the 1841 treaty had been made “with the goal of emphasizing the criminal nature and grave criminal liability of the enterprise using an expression that is both popular and generally perceived as infamous,” nothing more. Austria was willing to have British cruisers search its merchant vessels (again, outside the Mediterranean)—but was not willing to have British courts try its subjects. Justice Ministry to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vienna, January 23, 1865, JM 238 1123/J pr 23/1/1865, HHStA MdA AR Fach 39/3 Sklavenhandel, Piraterie, etc., 1857–1866.

<sup>27</sup> The Atlantic search zone would be bounded “on the north, by the 32nd parallel of north latitude, on the west, by the eastern coast of America, . . . on the south, by the 45th parallel of south latitude, from the point where that parallel strikes the eastern coast of America to the 80th degree of longitude east from the meridian of Greenwich; on the east, by the same degree of longitude, from the point where it is intersected by the 45th parallel of south latitude up to the coast of India.” Hertslet, *A Complete Collection of the Treaties and Conventions*, 4–5. On arguments about trying pirates in their states of origin as a way of circumventing the punishment of slavers altogether, see Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America*, especially 165, 184.

<sup>28</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 142. John Wright has asserted that “after they had crossed the Sahara, nearly all the black slaves exported from North Africa were sent by sea, on a Mediterranean ‘middle passage,’ to their final points of sale.” Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 2007), 127.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent account of the tension between British pressure and Ottoman internal reform, as well as the trajectory of negotiations and preliminary agreements leading up to the anti-slave trade treaty, see Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (London, 1996), 67–88.

<sup>30</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 85. The reports written by captains on board the British naval vessels that were charged with preventing the slave trade are heartrending. Many quo-

was not based solely on the intransigence of the Ottomans, however; it emerged directly from Britain's attempt to distinguish between the slave trade and slaveholding itself—and in making the distinction, to allow the latter to continue while the former was rooted out.<sup>31</sup> The hope of British abolitionists was that cutting off supply would ultimately force Ottoman slavery to wither away.<sup>32</sup> High rates of manumission made the enslaved population's reproduction over time particularly dependent upon the trade—but would a ban on the trade cause Ottoman slavery to collapse?<sup>33</sup> Or would ongoing demand make a mockery of a ban on the trade by forcing once-legal supply to continue, only now as criminalized smuggling? In the 1840s, the very idea of requesting the Ottoman sultan to abolish slavery in his domains was deemed so absurd that Lord Palmerston, foreign secretary at the time, rejected a draft letter to the ambassador in Constantinople suggesting that course of action: "This is all nonsense, slavery is so ingrained in the social habits of Mohammedans that no ambassador could with a grave face act upon the draft. It would have been much shorter to tell Lord Ponsonby [the ambassador] to ask the Sultan to become a Christian."<sup>34</sup> When the Austrian emperor's younger brothers, Ferdinand Maximilian and Karl Ludwig, took a tour of the Ottoman Empire in 1850, their visit to the slave market was one of the singular highlights that the court painter traveling with them chose to record. (See Figure 1.)

More consistent was Britain's conviction that pressing too hard, too fast on the

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tations of their descriptions of the East African trade can be found in Bernard Edwards, *Royal Navy versus the Slave Traders: Enforcing Abolition at Sea, 1808–1898* (Barnsley, 2007), 158–183.

<sup>31</sup> "Within the Ottoman Muslim elite, a general sense of moral and spiritual superiority toward Christian Europe prevailed. This feeling coexisted with the recognition of Ottoman military, technological, and economic inferiority. All this produced a clear disinclination in government circles to yield to British pressures regarding slavery and the slave trade." Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Miers argues that "inadequate naval power and consular vigilance" meant that even in the 1880s, "the smuggling traffic which still brought several thousand or more Africans" to the Middle East and North Africa annually could not be stopped. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 116. In the Mediterranean, consuls seemed duly vigilant, and the use of naval power was not permitted. By pointing out that "the [Atlantic] trade in enslaved Africans was demand driven," Andrew Lambert emphasizes a fundamental flaw in the idea that ending the trade would automatically and promptly end slavery. Lambert, "Slavery, Free Trade and Naval Strategy, 1840–1860," in Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807–1975* (Brighton, 2009), 67. On the opening of new areas of slavery in Africa as the trades in the Atlantic and Muslim worlds declined, see Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers, "The End of Slavery in Africa," in Miers and Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, Wis., 1988), 3–59.

<sup>33</sup> On the origins of slaves in the late Ottoman Empire and the most common means of their enslavement, see Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise*, 44–58.

<sup>34</sup> As quoted in A. Adu Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788–1861* (Oxford, 1964), 146. A similar attitude prevailed thirty years later, when the British ambassador to Constantinople wrote: "Till there is a complete revolution in the social organization of the country and in public opinion, and while the sovereign of the country and most of the principal personages in it possess slaves, who must be recruited from some quarter or other, it will be, as your Lordship says, vain to think of seeing the trade in them extinguished." Sir Henry Elliot to Earl Granville, Therapia, August 16, 1870, Slave Trade no. 5, National Archives (London), Foreign Office [hereafter NAFO] 84/1324, 109. For all his wisdom, Palmerston was far from an expert on Sharia law; the internal Muslim debate about the compatibility of Islam and slavery included opinions that differed across space, across time, and across sect. William Gervase Clarence-Smith has devoted an entire monograph to parsing these differences: *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford, 2006). See especially his overview, pp. 16–21. Amal Ghazal's essay "Debating Slavery and Abolition in the Arab Middle East," in Mirzai, Montana, and Lovejoy, *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora*, 139–154, is particularly helpful on the continuation of these debates in the twentieth century.



FIGURE 1: Peter Johann Nepomuk Geiger, *Archduke Maximilian of Austria Visiting the Slave Market of Smyrna*. Geiger traveled with the Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian during his 1850 trip to Smyrna. In this painting, he recorded the young archduke's visit to the infamous Smyrna slave market, where both enslaved Africans (front left) and Circassians (front right) were displayed for sale. His markedly orientalist version of the scene contrasted the irrepressible sexuality of Circassian women coyly peeking over their own shoulders with the listless and hopeless carriage of Africans for sale in the same market. The archdukes donned civilian attire in order to travel "incognito." Museo Storico del Castello di Miramare, Trieste, Italy. Alfredo Dagli Orti / Art Resource, N.Y.

matter of slavery would endanger the stability of the Ottoman Empire, and the fragile European peace that was under constant threat of blowing up over the so-called Eastern Question.<sup>35</sup> In the 1860s, the peculiarities of the Mediterranean slave trade were enough to stymie the British. The head of the Slave Trade Department of the Foreign Office, William H. Wylde, noted in 1869, "I would have long since proposed that we should endeavour to negotiate with Turkey a treaty for the suppression of the slave trade, had I not foreseen great difficulties in carrying out to any practical end any engagements we might make with Turkey giving us the right to act *in the*

<sup>35</sup> "Some diplomats and officials went so far as to manipulate Islamic beliefs and institutions to delay the imposition and enforcement of abolition, for they were fearful that tampering with servitude would cause rebellions and wars." William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "The British 'Official Mind' and Nineteenth-Century Islamic Debates over the Abolition of Slavery," in Hamilton and Salmon, *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire*, 125. The Sublime Porte, in contrast, may well have viewed slow progress as its surest form: "Although no policy of abolishing slavery was ever adopted by the Ottoman government, the administrative measures it in fact resorted to ensured that the result would ultimately be to severely curtail slavery in the empire." Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 111.

*Mediterranean.*"<sup>36</sup> And although Habsburg Austria was peripheral to Europe's engagement with the New World, it was central to Europe's engagement with the Levant. Since the eighteenth century, Austria had been one of the Ottoman Empire's most important trading partners—a position it did not begin to cede to Britain until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> As late as the early 1830s, Austria and Russia together accounted for more than 45 percent of foreign trade with the Ottoman Empire, and all of Western Europe together accounted for only 33 percent.<sup>38</sup> According to a *New York Times* correspondent, thanks to "a liberally developed system of steam communication in the Adriatic and Levantine Seas," Austria "almost monopoliz[ed] the trade there."<sup>39</sup> It was therefore no coincidence that Austria was also deeply, if reluctantly, involved in the transportation of slaves from North Africa to Constantinople and the Levant.

In September 1851, the British Foreign Office informed the embassy in Vienna that "Her Majesty's government have . . . learned with much surprise and regret . . . that it is notorious that slaves are frequently conveyed on the steamers belonging to the Austrian company of Lloyd."<sup>40</sup> After investigating the matter, the embassy's secretary, Arthur Magenis, reported back. "The packets of the Austrian Lloyd's company," he concluded, "are in the constant habit of carrying African slaves to Constantinople from Mytilene, to which island as a depot, these slaves are brought from Africa."<sup>41</sup> Taking up the matter with the Austrian Foreign Ministry again in December 1851, Magenis referred to unnamed sources who had confirmed that the Lloyd had recently transported 255 slaves from Mytilene to Constantinople.<sup>42</sup>

Sporadic accusations of the Austrian Lloyd's involvement in the slave trade continued through the 1850s and 1860s—but without the sort of evidence that would have forced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to acknowledge their merit formally. "It is notorious that the Lloyd trades in slaves"; "The Lloyd is reported to be in the constant habit of transporting slaves"—such complaints could be, and were, rebuffed with a simple "impossible." Impossible, that is, according to the logic that said that the empire was internally consistent, that its diplomacy, its laws, and its private in-

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan*, 157.

<sup>37</sup> Austria and France were the first European powers to establish regular steamship service in the Levant. "In 1853 the French consul [in Beirut] reported that the Austrians were more punctual and had 40 ships, many brand new, whereas the French had 18, many old and not working properly." Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent, 1800–1914: A Documentary Economic History* (Oxford, 1988), 205.

<sup>38</sup> Austria accounted for 26.2 percent of Ottoman imports in 1850–1852, compared to 25.5 percent for Britain; and 28 percent of Ottoman exports, compared to 29.1 percent for Britain. Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913: Trade, Investment and Production* (Cambridge, 1987), 26–27, 31, 32. At mid-century, France understood that its task in the Eastern Mediterranean was to cut into the commercial dominance of Austria and Great Britain: "En Méditerranée orientale, le commerce extérieur de la Grande Bretagne et de l'Autriche progresse plus vite que celui de la France." Marie-Françoise Berneron-Couvenhes, *Les Messageries Maritimes: L'essor d'une grande compagnie de navigation française, 1851–1894* (Paris, 2007), 77.

<sup>39</sup> "The Position of Austria," *New York Times*, December 11, 1870, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Foreign Office to Magenis, September 18, 1850, HHStA MdA AR Fach 39/2 [hereafter F39/2], Z. 11550/D.

<sup>41</sup> Magenis to Schwarzenberg, September 12, 1851, HHStA MdA AR F39/2, Z. 11065. The Austrian Lloyd was not the only shipping company involved in bringing slaves to and from the transit station of Mytilene, of course. The British vice-consul at Mytilene reported that 283 "negresses and young negroes" were disembarked there between April 15 and June 2, 1855, this time via "Ottoman vessels." Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan*, 154.

<sup>42</sup> Magenis to Schwarzenberg, December 7, 1851, HHStA MdA AR F39/2, Z. 14802.



dustry were aligned, that together they could be represented by the word “Austria.” If Austrian statesmen agreed that the slave trade was wrong, then Austria would not trade in slaves. No investigation was necessary.

As the complaints about the Lloyd mounted, defenses became more robust, varied, and contradictory. The Austro-Hungarian consul in Constantinople, Conrad von Wassitsch, said in 1869 that accusations of slave-trading—this time, that the Lloyd ship *Oreste* had transported sixty slaves through Smyrna—“can only be the spawn of the sick imagination of some English consular functionary.” The phrase “some English consular functionary” was disingenuous, for Wassitsch had a very specific functionary in mind: the British consul in Smyrna, Robert William Cumberbatch. Cumberbatch, born in Kent in 1821, had been serving in the Foreign Service for two decades—many of those years spent in the Ottoman Empire and Russia—first as secretary to his half-brother, Abraham Carlton Cumberbatch, the British consul general in Constantinople, and later as a consul himself. When Cumberbatch was still a young boy of 13, living in England, his father was reimbursed for the emancipation of 232 slaves he had held in the land of his birth, Barbados.<sup>43</sup> What impression the abolition of slavery on his father’s sugar plantation in the West Indies made upon young Robert can only be imagined. What is certain is that when Cumberbatch began his appointment as consul in Smyrna in April 1864, he brought with him a marked anti-slavery zeal. It escaped no one’s attention that the pace of complaints picked up dramatically once he took office. As another Lloyd captain, G. Remedelli (of the steamer *Arciduchessa Carlotta*), testified, “The English consul is well known throughout Smyrna to be a fantastical man, who is constantly dreaming up similar stories.”<sup>44</sup>

Cumberbatch’s zeal was only slightly less unwelcome to his British supervisors than it was to the Austrian Lloyd. His willingness to believe Sister Charlotte Pilz’s claim that as a passenger on board the Lloyd steamer *Vesta* she had seen sixty slaves stowed in the hold (“secreted in the forechains”) made him a laughingstock in certain circles: “no one who knows the circumstances of slavery in Turkey would think the transport of slaves in hidden rooms would be necessary,” noted the Austrian consul in Constantinople.<sup>45</sup> Cumberbatch’s earlier unproven accusations of slave-trading were, in turn, used to cast doubt on the veracity of later reports.<sup>46</sup> The British am-

<sup>43</sup> “Return of the Honourable John Rycroft Best of Slaves the Property of Abram P Cumberbatch to Whom He Is Attorney: Clelands,” PRO T 71/562, Barbados Slave Register 1834, vol. 10, 182–187, Clelands Plantation, St. Andrew, March 27, 1834. Made available to me by Bob Cumberbatch. Bob Cumberbatch maintains a rich and fascinating website (<http://www.Cumberbatch.org/>) about the genealogy of many branches of the Cumberbatch family, and his assistance in reconstructing Robert William Cumberbatch’s biography was priceless. The little I have learned about Robert William Cumberbatch forces me to disagree, strenuously, with the website’s epigraph: “The following pages contain the little which is known concerning a family of no social importance, and will consequently only be interesting to those connected with it.”

<sup>44</sup> “Del resto e conosciuto a Smirna il Signor Console Inglese per uomo fantastico, che di spesso sogna simile novita, ed il giornale del paese stesso se ne occupato salvotta per combattere simili fantasticherie.” Estratto di lettera del Comando del piroscafo Arciduchessa Carlotta diretta in dato Constantinopoli 7 Feb 1871 al Consiglio di Amministrazione, attached to letter from Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, February 16, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>45</sup> “Forechains”: Bloomfield to Beust, Vienna, September 20, 1869, attached to Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Maritime Administration, Vienna, September 23, 1869, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 2581/HP; “necessary”: Wassitsch to Maritime Administration, Constantinople, December 27, 1869, no. 6241, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, January 9, 1870, Z. 158/HP.

<sup>46</sup> “Since earlier charges of a similar nature—all arising from the same source, the English Consul



bassador at Constantinople, Sir Henry Elliot, tended to agree that Cumberbatch was an alarmist and needed to be restrained.<sup>47</sup> Britain's public stance—the stance from which it hoped to earn “moral capital”—depended upon an always untenable distinction between slave-trading and slaveholding.<sup>48</sup> The instructions issued to the British Navy in 1866 (two years after Cumberbatch took office and some months after the passage of the 13th Amendment in the United States) recognized “the distinction between the export of slaves to which Great Britain is determined to put an end and the system of Domestic Slavery with which she claims no right to interfere.”<sup>49</sup> Cumberbatch's energetic complaints threatened to draw too much attention to the limitations of this policy—he, it seems, was opposed not only to the slave trade, but to slavery itself.<sup>50</sup> He also was convinced that Ottoman law prohibited both—a position that both the Ottoman general of the province in which he was stationed and his colleagues in the British Foreign Service found not only naïve, but wrong.<sup>51</sup> In addition to spying on Austrian ships at harbor in Smyrna, he took into custody slaves who lodged complaints of cruel treatment or illegal enslavement, irritating both the Ottoman governor-general of the surrounding province and the British foreign secretary who ultimately had to deal with the governor-general's ire.

Henry Barron, secretary of the British embassy in Constantinople, cautioned Cumberbatch that Britain must not “allow the impression to gain ground that Her

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Cumberbatch in Smyrna—turned out to be unfounded, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes it can safely let the matter rest.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Maritime Administration, Vienna, December 30, 1870, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 3383. Sister Charlotte Pilz, German by birth, worked as a deaconess with the Lutheran Sisters of Charity in Jerusalem, which ran an orphanage, a diocesan school, an infirmary, and an evangelical hospice. The sisters had adopted an Abyssinian slave girl after purchasing her freedom. William Henry Bartlett, *Jerusalem Revisited* (London, 1863), 62; Jakob Eisler, “Charlotte Pilz (1819–1903),” in Adelheid von Hauff, ed., *Frauen gestalten Diakonie*, vol. 2: *Vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2007), 252–255. According to Florence Nightingale, she spoke “English and Arabic tolerably—not correctly” and was “an educated woman.” Nightingale, *Florence Nightingale's European Travels*, ed. Lynn McDonald (Waterloo, Ont., 2004), 596.

<sup>47</sup> T. G. Otte, “‘A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance’: British Diplomacy and the Suppression of the Slave Trade in the East, 1852–1898,” in Hamilton and Salmon, *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire*, 111.

<sup>48</sup> The reference, of course, is to Brown, *Moral Capital*.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 118. The instructions pertained explicitly to “the slavery practiced by Africans” in West Africa, but also aptly described Britain's position vis-à-vis the Sublime Porte. The ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Elliot, was instructed by the Foreign Office in 1873 to endeavor to enter into an agreement with the Porte that would ban “the export and import of slaves,” but added, “we think that however desirable it would be to suppress domestic slavery, it would not be expedient to press the point as an indispensable condition of the agreement.” Foreign Office to Sir H. Elliot, July 11, 1873, no. 8, enciphered telegram and following note, NAFO 84/1370, 13, 14, 15.

<sup>50</sup> For a more nuanced discussion of the internal dissension regarding the tenability of an anti-slaving policy that did not attack Ottoman slaveholding, see Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise*, 74–79.

<sup>51</sup> Elliot wrote to the Foreign Office in August 1870 that he was unable to take action against slavery in the Ottoman Empire because there were no legal grounds to do so: “Sir Philip Francis' statement of the Ottoman Law in respect to slavery, forwarded in another dispatch, sufficiently shows that I should not have been justified in representing the act as illegal; and the practice which has been sanctioned by immemorial usage having nothing in it revolting to Turkish feeling, no remonstrance could have been made against it, unless by taking up a ground which would have been regarded as in the highest degree offensive. With the knowledge that not only the wife of the Grand Vizir had been a Circassian slave, but that ladies in a still more exalted position had belonged to the same class, Your Lordship will understand that I should have been guilty of a gross impropriety if I had gone to Aali Pasha and insisted upon the debasing consequences of an institution, which nobody can think more hateful than I do.” H. Elliot to Earl Granville, Therapia, August 16, 1870, Slave Trade no. 5, NAFO 84/1324, 108–109.

Majesty's Consulates are to become asylums for runaway slaves."<sup>52</sup> Such an impression would unsettle the monarchy's relations with the Sublime Porte and embarrass local dignitaries and officials, whose slaves were often among those who sought asylum in the first place. Moreover, British officials believed that it could potentially cause political unrest.<sup>53</sup> Elliot saw fit to "recall" to Cumberbatch's attention the foreign secretary's orders "prescribing caution" and to restrict his attention to the slave trade.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, passage of Great Britain's trade-oriented Abolition Act had, from the very beginning, required that abolitionists step back from a ban on slavery as an institution; according to Boyd Hilton, abolitionists had "in many cases only managed to persuade MPs to vote for the abolition of the trade by promising they would leave the wider question alone."<sup>55</sup>

This, then, was the state of affairs in June 1870, when Druscovich and the *Mars* hove to in the harbor of Smyrna: most Western European powers had formally agreed to cooperate to outlaw and prevent the slave trade. In the Ottoman Empire, a January 1857 *firman* had banned the trade in African slaves, but it did not carry the full weight of a law, and it was never enforced; the acting British consul general in Tripoli and the consul general who replaced him called it "a mere fiction" and "a solemn mockery," respectively.<sup>56</sup> Slavery itself continued without pretense of prohibition. The Austrian Lloyd had rebuffed dozens of accusations of slave-trading by pointing to a complete lack of evidence. Cumberbatch had a reputation for overdeveloped fantasy, and he had been instructed to limit his anti-slavery zeal to reporting on the slave trade, not helping enslaved persons in Smyrna file suit against their erstwhile masters.

The search of the *Mars*, to the dismay of Druscovich, revealed that there were indeed enslaved children on board. This was, as even the Austrian foreign minister had to admit, "a positive case of slave transport"—significant not for the quantity of people involved, but because it could not be denied. The first of the children was an 18-year-old boy, purchased in Egypt on behalf of a pasha in Constantinople who had sent a servant to Egypt to execute the transaction. In Alexandria, the boy had

<sup>52</sup> H. Barron to F. R. Drummond-Hay, Constantinople, January 11, 1870, reprinted in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1870–1871*, vol. 61 (London, 1877), 415.

<sup>53</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 70. In 1844, Cuban government officials convicted the British consul in Cuba, David Turnbull, of being a "prime mover" behind an alleged conspiracy to incite a slave revolt there—commonly known as *La Escalera*—because of his anti-slavery agitation. See Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, Conn., 1988).

<sup>54</sup> H. Elliot to Earl Granville, Therapia, July 17, 1870, reprinted in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1870–1871*, 420.

<sup>55</sup> Hilton, "1807 and All That," 71.

<sup>56</sup> In an April 9, 1857, letter to Canning, Clarendon declared that "the regulations which [it contains], if carried out in good faith, are sufficient for the purpose for which they are required." They were not carried out in good faith. Quoted in Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan*; "in good faith," 156; "a mere fiction" (July 1858) and "a solemn mockery" (November 1863), 158. The trade in "white" (i.e., Caucasian—most commonly Circassian, but also Georgian) slaves was banned temporarily during the Crimean War, from about 1854 to 1858. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 32. Miers notes that even "on the eve of the Berlin conference," that is, in the 1880s, "Turkish cooperation against the trade existed on paper only." Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 86. Elliot complained to the Sublime Porte that "notwithstanding the many clear cases which I have brought under the notice of the Imperial Authorities on no single occasion has the Slave Dealer been dealt with as the law requires." H. Elliot to [illeg.] Pasha, Constantinople, April 14, 1873, Copy no. 51, NAFO 84/1370, 47.

been issued a *tezkere*, the internal passport that Ottoman subjects were required to obtain for domestic travel, in which his civil status was clearly marked as *kul*—one of the many designations for “slave” available in Ottoman Turkish.<sup>57</sup> The second was a 16-year-old Ethiopian boy, traveling without a companion, who was returning from a “cure” in Egypt. There were two small children, a brother and sister between 8 and 10 years old, traveling with a Greek merchant and his biological offspring. The merchant told the authorities that the African children had been baptized and were being raised as his own. Cumberbatch’s report additionally mentioned three young boys who had been taken violently in a raid in Abyssinia and then transported in a convoy of more than 100 children, first to Medina and then on to Egypt. Cumberbatch took all the children into custody—the youngest pair clinging tearfully to the legs of their adopted siblings until the Greek merchant himself led them to the consulate. Cumberbatch found positions for most of them in Smyrna, but was reported by the Austrian consul to have returned the littlest ones to their self-proclaimed foster father.

The discovery of the enslaved children on board the *Mars* was unwelcome to many. It was unwelcome to the Greek merchant. It was unwelcome to Captain Druscovich, who, although he hid from the shame of the search by steadfastly refusing to leave his cabin until it was complete, could not hide from the shame of the investigation that followed. It was unwelcome to the British Foreign Office, which wished that Cumberbatch had been slightly less zealous in revealing the limitations of the anti-slave trade agreements that Britain had reached with the Sublime Porte. It was unwelcome to the Austrian consul in Smyrna, the Austrian consul general and ambassador in Constantinople, and the Austrian Foreign Ministry in Vienna—all of whom had been proudly denying, despite accusations reaching all the way back to 1850, that any Austrian ship had ever transported any slave across the Mediterranean.

And the disquieting accusations continued to come: the *Jupiter*, the *Arciduchessa Carlotta*, the *Apollo*, the *Vesta*, the *Urano*, the *Diana*, the *Memphis*—within a matter of months, almost every large Lloyd steamer servicing the Alexandria-to-Constantinople route was found to be carrying slaves through Smyrna, some of them repeatedly.

Austrians were tempted to lay all the blame at the feet of Cumberbatch himself. Were his motives perhaps personal? Was he trying to “lame the powerful competition that Lloyd ships give the English merchant marine in the seaports of the Levant,” advancing the fortunes of the British Empire by cynically using the problem of slavery to undermine those with longer histories in the Mediterranean, as the Austrian maritime administration speculated?<sup>58</sup> Was he putting to use monies made

<sup>57</sup> For a listing of other words for “slave” in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew, see R. Brunschvig, “‘Abd,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 1 (Leiden, 1960), 24.

<sup>58</sup> Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, February 24, 1871, no. 1155/SB, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 433/HP. Other European powers frequently expressed suspicion of Britain’s true motives and fear that its “anti-slavery policy cloaked political and economic ambitions” that were advanced by Britain’s ability to “interfere with the trade of rival commercial and maritime powers by harassing their shipping.” Indeed, “it was often impossible to distinguish between a policy aimed at suppressing the slave traffic and one designed to further British commercial, strategic or political interests.” Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 13, 33. Paul Lovejoy concurs that “at times it proved useful for one European country to condemn another because too little was being done to end the evil institution.” Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 270.

available by “some sort of British philanthropic organization”—funds without which he could not afford to take “these sorts of precautionary measures”?<sup>59</sup> In either case, the Austrians argued, he was artificially creating the appearance of a crisis. “Mr. Cumberbatch,” complained the Austro-Hungarian consul general in Smyrna, Baron Baum, “appears to have made sleuthing rumored slaves and slave children the particular focus of his official duties here, which may also be the reason why this type of smuggling, which has occurred more or less secretly since time immemorial, would emerge exactly in the past few years, and only in the transit station of Smyrna.”<sup>60</sup> A strange defense indeed.

No longer was Cumberbatch “fantastical”—no longer could a captain aver, as had Druscovich, that “there can be no slaves on an Austrian ship.” Or could he? In the 1870s, instead of denying the presence of slaves on the ships of the Austrian Lloyd, Austrian consuls, statesmen, and representatives of the company denied the fundamental underlying premise of their enslavement: that it was involuntary. Their argument was woven together from four strands, so tightly bound to one another that they are nearly impossible to disentangle. The first strand was practical: it was not possible to tell a slave from a servant, at least not in the time allotted to the captain of a ship that sailed according to a schedule; they were distinct in neither race nor bearing nor behavior. The second was cultural: “slavery” as practiced in the Ottoman Empire bore no resemblance to the plantation or chattel slavery of the Western Hemisphere, and was generally both humane and mild. The third strand was legal (or at least legalistic): absent the demonstration of any dissatisfaction with their condition or desire to change it, slaves were not really enslaved and thus could not be freed. The fourth was existential: if taken to its logical conclusion, the Lloyd’s refusal of responsibility for the enforcement of the treaties banning the slave trade threatened to undermine the entire premise of diplomacy—that statesmen could enter into binding international agreements, and that private individuals, both citizens and corporations, would then have the responsibility of executing those agreements in practice.

Each of these contentions—we cannot stop the slave trade; it is not important that we stop this particular slave trade; we are not sure that the slaves being traded are really slaves in the true sense of the word; and it may be someone’s job to stop the slave trade, but it is not ours—rested on the basic premise that there were no socially visible markers of enslavement that could set off a chain of actions resulting in emancipation (not to mention repatriation). Captain G. Lombardini, of the *Diana*, insisted that he “could not possibly tell who is a free servant and who is a slave” aboard his ship.<sup>61</sup> The director of the Lloyd further excused the captains’ willful ignorance with this comment: “The circumstances of traffic in the Orient are such that a steamship company that transports passengers is inevitably exposed to the possibility of boarding slaves without the knowledge of the captain or the shipping

<sup>59</sup> Baron Baum to Prokesch-Osten, Smyrna, July 12, 1870, no. 682/XXIII, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “Non posso conoscere se sono liberi servi o schiavi.” Protocol of the interview of G. Lombardini by Direttore Navale Sig. A. Cav. Di Tappo, enclosed with letter #797 from Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, October 17, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

agent.”<sup>62</sup> The slave trade, he suggested, was as much a necessary incident of the Mediterranean trade as the passage of water through the ballast tanks of boats.

IN CONTRAST TO GREAT BRITAIN, where the debate over slavery was public and spirited, and its political, economic, and cultural ramifications were great—even for those whose own liberty, security, and happiness were not at stake—the public and politicians in Austria indulged in a comfortable conviction that slavery was not particularly relevant to their domestic or foreign policy—except to the extent that their own countrymen and countrywomen were its victims. In the early modern period, Austrians’ experience with slavery had been as slaves, not slaveholders; stories of the enslavement of Christians by Muslims crossing into Austrian territory on slaving raids, as well as of Mediterranean corsairs and pirates, seemed to confirm Central Europeans’ stereotypes of Eastern despotism versus Western freedom.<sup>63</sup> To imagine Austrians as perpetrators rather than victims did not come easily, and as far as most Austrians knew, there was no occasion for it. There was no Austrian equivalent of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>64</sup> After all (again, unlike Britain), Austria had neither any tradition of involvement in the Atlantic slave trade nor any tradition of domestic or colonial slavery. Serfdom was more comparable to slavery in some portions of the monarchy than in others.<sup>65</sup> It, however, had been eliminated

<sup>62</sup> Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, July 5, 1870, no. 599, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>63</sup> Anton von Prokesch-Osten, the Habsburgs’ ambassador to Constantinople from 1855 to 1871, had, in the first years of his diplomatic career in the 1820s, been involved in the exchange of Greek slaves for Arab slaves, their numbers reaching into the hundreds. “Slavenlösung in Modon 1828 u. eine Erinnerung aus 1825,” HHStA, Nachlaß Prokesch-Osten, Schachtel II, Briefwechsel mit verschiedenen Personen. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Habsburg subjects had been some of the most common targets of Ottoman slavers; by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the focus had shifted to the Caucasus. The relative predominance of African in comparison with European and Caucasian slaves in the Ottoman Empire peaked in the nineteenth century. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 104. Even in the heyday of Mediterranean piracy and slaving, it was not only Muslims who seized Christians. Robert Davis has called the era from 1500 to 1800 a “three-centuries-long Christian-Muslim *jihad*” in which “men and women, Turks and Moors, Jews and Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox: all were potential victims, to be seized and eventually herded into the slave pens of Constantinople, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Malta, Naples, or Livorno and resold as galley oarsmen, agricultural laborers, or house slaves.” Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (New York, 2003), 140. Catholics—including the Knights of Malta—were among the “most fearsome pirates”; their victims could be Muslims, Jews, or even Orthodox Christians. Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J., 2010), 2–4. On the seizure of Austrians by Muslim slave raiders, see Robert Davis, *Holy War and Human Bondage: Tales of Christian-Muslim Slavery in the Early-Modern Mediterranean* (Santa Barbara, Calif., 2009), 64, 244–246.

<sup>64</sup> On the Anti-Slavery Society, see Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 30–33. In 1888, Maria Theresia Ledóchowska read a brochure written by the French cardinal Charles Lavigerie, calling on the “Christian women of Europe” to take up their pens and join the fight against slavery in Africa. Ledóchowska immediately wrote a play, *Zaida the Negro Girl*, and devoted her life to the cause. She resigned from her post as a lady-in-waiting, founded the Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver, and published a newsletter called *Echo from Africa*. According to Ledóchowska, attempts to found an anti-slavery society in the late 1880s were unsuccessful; fundraising was not sufficient to cover the costs of publishing the short-lived *Antisklaverei Revue*. The first anti-slavery congress in Austria was held in Vienna in 1900. The address given by Ledóchowska on that occasion is available on the website of the Missionsschwester vom hl. Petrus Claver, [http://www.petrus-claver.ch/media/DIR\\_138958/1900\\_Wien\\_Die\\_Antisklaverei-Bewegung.pdf](http://www.petrus-claver.ch/media/DIR_138958/1900_Wien_Die_Antisklaverei-Bewegung.pdf). Paul H. Schmidt, *Die selige Maria Theresia Ledóchowska* (Bern, 1984).

<sup>65</sup> Contemporary commentators were most apt to compare the lot of peasants in Hungary and Gali-



gradually (and in some cases repeatedly, thanks to the short-lived and swiftly revoked ambitions of Josephinism)—in the “core” Habsburg lands with the 1811 *Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (Austrian Civil Code), and everywhere else by 1848.<sup>66</sup>

It would appear that no one knows for certain what the legal status of an enslaved African in the entourage of a traveler visiting the Habsburg lands would have been before 1811.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, in the eighteenth century, slavery seems to have had no acknowledged formal existence in Austrian law at all.<sup>68</sup> The Josephinian Code of 1787, the first formal codification of Austrian laws throughout the *Erbländer* (Hereditary Lands), elided the problem of slavery—and even serfdom, which was certainly relevant within the empire—by referring to everyone as “subjects” who were entitled to the protection of “state law” and who “enjoy, without exception, complete freedom.”<sup>69</sup> In a 1796 draft of a comprehensive legal code outlining citizens’ rights, the

cia, neither of which enjoyed the benefits of reforms imposed on the “Hereditary Lands,” to that of slaves—as, for example, here: “Unfortunately, however, the peasant of Hungary has scarcely any political rights, and is considered by the government much more than by the landlord, in the light of a slave.” Frederick Shoberl, *Austria: Containing a Description of the Manners, Customs, Character and Costumes of the People of That Empire* (Philadelphia, 1828), 52. Historians, too, have seen some merit in the comparison; according to Roman Rosdolsky, serfs in “Poland” “could be sold without land, and at least occasionally, were sold, and from the sixteenth century enjoyed no legal protection. Even if the lord struck a serf dead, there was no penalty . . . doubtless there were elements of slavery here.” He further noted that serfs’ state of “unfreedom” was determined as much by the economic structure of their relationship to the landlord as by the presence or absence of legal rights. Roman Rosdolsky [sic], *Untertan und Staat in Galizien: Die Reformen unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II* (Mainz, 1992), 111, 117. His comparison between serfdom and slavery continues from 111 to 121. In the seventeenth century, Bohemian serfs “had to have the lord’s permission to marry, to learn a trade, to sell in the open market, or to travel outside the confines of the lord’s jurisdiction”—permission that could usually be had only in exchange for a fee. In addition, serfs could neither “bring [a] plea before the bar” nor “stand as a witness in a legal action.” All the same, serfs were not slaves: “men were not bought and sold”—nor, one presumes, were women. William E. Wright, *Serf, Seigneur, and Sovereign: Agrarian Reform in Eighteenth-Century Bohemia* (Minneapolis, 1966), 17, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Joseph’s first patent to emancipate the serfs, the *Leibeigenschaftsaufhebungspatent*, was issued in November of 1781, but fell short of giving “the serf unqualified freedom.” Wright, *Serf, Seigneur, and Sovereign*, 74–75.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Sauer has done an admirable job of reconstructing as much as possible about the origins of Africans in the Habsburg lands, their pathways to Austria, and their fates while there. Together with Andrea Wiesböck, he presented the beginnings of a prosopography of Africans in Austria in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, based on more than forty known cases. Walter Sauer and Andrea Wiesböck, “Sklaven, Freie, Fremde: Wiener ‘Mohren’ des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts,” in Sauer, ed., *Von Soliman zu Omofuma: Afrikanische Diaspora in Österreich 17. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck, 2007), 23–56. He has also uncovered the stories of several African girls “rescued” from slavery in order to be deposited in convents within Austria, and reports on the unhappy fates of two in Vorarlberg in “‘Mohrenmädchen’ in Bludenz, 1855–1858: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der afrikanischen Diaspora in Österreich,” *Vierteljahresschrift für Geschichte und Gegenwart Vorarlbergs* 56, no. 4 (2004): 293–300.

<sup>68</sup> When Jakob Haly tried to flee from his Ottoman owner during a visit to Vienna, for example, his case was determined *ad hoc* by the emperor, and revolved more around his willingness to convert to Catholicism than around any set rules about manumission. Sauer and Wiesböck, “Sklaven, Freie, Fremde,” 35. There is no mention of slavery in Carl von Hock’s authoritative *Der österreichische Staatsrath (1760–1848)* (Vienna, 1879), which has sections on the administration and legal reforms under Maria Theresa (91 pages), Leopold II (7 pages), Francis II (41 pages), and Ferdinand (13 pages), but is largely devoted to the administration under Joseph II (529 pages), and most particularly to the legal reforms carried out under his rule. Even Joseph II’s attacks on *Leibeigenschaft*, or serfdom, reveal that he understood it to be a “fundamentally different status than actual ‘slavery.’” Rosdolsky, *Untertan und Staat in Galizien*, 113. The Codex Theresianus (which never took effect) accepted the enslavement of “heathen” prisoners-of-war. Sauer and Wiesböck, “Sklaven, Freie, Fremde,” 47.

<sup>69</sup> *Josephinisches Gesetzbuch*, 1787, Patent vom 1. November 1786, Zweites Hauptstück §1: “Unter dem Schutze, und nach der Leitung der Landesgesetze geniessen alle Unterthanen ohne Ausnahme die vollkommene Freiheit.” I am indebted to Derek Beales for sharing this observation.

Austrian jurist Joseph von Sonnenfels declared that the “benignant Austrian government thought it worthwhile to declare, through the express provision of a law, that it does not permit humankind to be debased into slavery within its realm.”<sup>70</sup> This tenet, he insisted, had always existed in practice, although it had admittedly never before been expressed. But the absence of a domestic category of slavery did not prevent Africans from traveling to Austria in the retinues of their employers or owners—their status as free servants or slaves drawing so little curiosity that in the few cases in which the Africans’ own names are known, it is difficult to reconstruct exactly what that status was.<sup>71</sup>

The most famous case of an African in Austria in the eighteenth century—so famous that it nearly singlehandedly encapsulates the entire category of literature about Africans in the Habsburg Empire—was that of Angelo Soliman.<sup>72</sup> (See Figure 2.) Soliman was born sometime around 1721; enslaved as a child, he was eventually acquired by a noble household in Messina, Sicily. He came to Austria after many years of service to the Sicilian imperial governor, Prince Johann Georg von Lobkowitz. After Lobkowitz’s death, he entered service in the household of Prince Joseph Wenzel von Liechtenstein, one of the wealthiest and most influential aristocrats in the Habsburg lands.<sup>73</sup> Exactly when Soliman was manumitted is unclear: he entered the Lobkowitz household as a slave and left the Liechtenstein household as a self-declared free man after Liechtenstein dismissed him for being secretly mar-

<sup>70</sup> As quoted in Sigmund Adler, *Die politische Gesetzgebung in ihren geschichtlichen Beziehungen zum allgemeinen bürgerlichen Gesetzbuche* (Vienna, 1911), 122. This part of Sonnenfels’s proposal was incorporated into the 1811 code.

<sup>71</sup> By the seventeenth century, it was “fashionable” among the Viennese aristocracy (and the aristocracy throughout the Holy Roman Empire) to employ “Moors” and other Africans. The deaths of thirty-two “Africans” were reported to the Viennese magistrate between 1649 and 1798. Walter Sauer, *Das afrikanische Wien: Ein Führer zu Bieber, Malangatana, Soliman* (Vienna, 1996), 33–34. In the early modern period, Central Europeans were more accustomed to thinking of slavery in the Islamic context as involving the enslavement of Christians by Muslims. Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration: The Habsburg Empire Confronts Islam, 1526–1850* (London, 2008), 42. To contrast the situation in Austria with that in pre-revolutionary France, see Sue Peabody, *“There Are No Slaves in France”: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>72</sup> The literature on Soliman is so substantial that the author of a recently published and absolutely fascinating article on the significance of his attire felt the need to justify her intervention: “there has been no sustained focus on his sartorial fashions.” Heather Morrison, “Dressing Angelo Soliman,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 3 (2011): 378 n. 8. That literature reaches back to a biography compiled by Viennese author Karoline Pichler at the request of the French abolitionist Henri Grégoire in 1807. Wilhelm Bauer consulted twenty archives in his 1922 biography of Soliman, republished as *Angelo Soliman, der hochfürstliche Mohr: Ein exotisches Kapitel Alt-Wien*, ed. Monika Firla-Forkl (Berlin, 1993), 15. More recent literature on Soliman, which reflects his extraordinary prominence in Austrian-African studies, includes Monika Firla, “Angelo Soliman in der Wiener Gesellschaft vom 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert,” in Gerhard Höpp, ed., *Fremde Erfahrungen: Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich, und in der Schweiz bis 1945* (Berlin, 1996), 69–96; Monika Firla and Hermann Forkl, “Neue Details zur Biographie von Angelo Soliman (um 1721–1796),” *Etudes germano-africaines* 14 (1996): 119–136; Firla, “Bemerkungen zu zwei kontroversen Punkten in der Biographie Angelo Solimans (um 1721–1796),” *Aufklärung, Vormärz, Revolution: Mitteilungen der internationalen Forschungsgruppe “Demokratische Bewegungen in Mitteleuropa 1770–1850” an der Universität Innsbruck* 18–19 (1998–1999): 25–39; Walter Sauer, “Angelo Soliman: Mythos und Wirklichkeit,” in Sauer, *Von Soliman zu Omofuma*, 59–96. The Rollett museum Baden had a special exhibit on Soliman featuring a plaster bust made immediately after his death: Monika Firla, ed., *Angelo Soliman: Ein Wiener Afrikaner im 18. Jahrhundert* (Baden, 2004). Sauer, *Von Soliman zu Omofuma*, contains many essays on other aspects of Africans’ experience of life in Austria. From September 2011 to January 2012, the Wien Museum in Vienna displayed an exhibit on Soliman, “Angelo Soliman: Ein Afrikaner in Wien.”

<sup>73</sup> Liechtenstein’s vast properties placed one million subjects under his princely rule. Sauer, “Angelo Soliman,” 66.





FIGURE 2: Angelo Soliman (ca. 1720–1796). Mezzotint by Johann Gottfried Haid, after a painting by Johann Nepomuk Steiner. Soliman was the most famous African to live in Vienna in the eighteenth century. He was respected as a scholar and tutor in his lifetime, but his body's galling posthumous fate as part of a museum display has overshadowed his success in securing a life of relative independence and professional success in imperial Vienna. Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, N.Y.

ried.<sup>74</sup> Soliman then supported himself and his family by working as a paid tutor in aristocratic households. He was a freemason, a dandy, a successful gambler, and an admired intellectual who spoke German, Italian, French, Czech, English, and Latin. After his death, his skin was removed, stretched over a wooden frame, fancifully dressed (in ostrich feathers), and displayed as a component of an imperial museum exhibit—a disgraceful move that disregarded his daughter's wishes and has overshadowed the respect he was shown during his lifetime as a desirable tutor who was familiar with the latest scientific discoveries.

Perhaps even more heartrending is the case of the Brazilian-born Emmanuel Rio, who was sent by the Archduchess Leopoldine as a present to her brother, the Archduke Francis, sometime around 1820. In an 1836 portrait, Rio is depicted with all the sensitivity due an individual subject; his devoted gaze at a portrait of Francis I, the imperial hymn on his lap, and the silk stockings tucked into his boots all are signs of the well-respected and grateful imperial subject. (See Figure 3.) His theoretical freedom notwithstanding, he was never able to make decisions about his own fate and was always dependent on the imperial family that came to shun him when he “acted up” in his adulthood.<sup>75</sup> The core elements of Angelo Soliman's and Emmanuel Rio's lives are typical of those few Africans who did come to the Habsburg lands in the eighteenth century: “capture, slavery, court service with unclear personal legal status [*in unklarer personenrechtlicher Position*].”<sup>76</sup> As Austria entered the nineteenth century, “unclear personal legal status” appeared to be good enough.<sup>77</sup>

If there was any place where the personal legal status of Africans was less clear than in Vienna, it was on board the passenger ships of the Mediterranean, where the supposed isomorphism of race and slavery on the Caribbean plantation had no equivalent. One of the striking characteristics of Ottoman slavery was the comparative absence of racial markers. The expectation of relatively rapid manumission (preferably—although not necessarily—after no more than a decade, which is to say, “rapid” from the perspective of the slaveholder), the predominance of sexually vulnerable women among the enslaved, and the law that made any child born to a free slaveholder and his concubine also free meant that there was no necessary connection between skin color and status.<sup>78</sup> The wives and mothers of grand viziers

<sup>74</sup> At the time of his marriage, Soliman had to swear that he was not a slave—but that marriage was kept secret from his current employer. Sauer describes the historiographical controversy over Soliman's status *ibid.*, 67–68.

<sup>75</sup> Ina Markova and Walter Sauer have shared the results of their painstaking search for all available evidence about the life of Emmanuel Rio in “Waldhornblasender Gärtner: Ein schwarzer Brasilianer im vormärzlichen Österreich. Oder: Vom Wilden zum Weltbürger und wieder zurück?” *Wiener Geschichtsblätter* 66, no. 2 (2011): 95–110. For a closer analysis of the portrait, see Gloria Groom, “Portrait of a Gardener and Horn Player in the Household of the Emperor Francis I,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 58–59, 95.

<sup>76</sup> Sauer, *Das afrikanische Wien*, 37.

<sup>77</sup> To be fair, Austria was not alone. “The law takes no notice of the Negro [slave],” claimed an English judge in 1706. Even in France, where the “freedom principle” was supposed to render any slave who set foot on French soil instantly free, multiple restrictions and caveats made it impossible for slaves to actually secure freedom by entering France. Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves In France*,” 3–10; Ada Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (February 2012): 48.

<sup>78</sup> Manumission was considered a good deed, and there is evidence that many slaveholders voluntarily set their slaves free after a period of service. Slaveholders could manumit slaves in pious celebration of a special event, such as a marriage; to acknowledge the slave's work done over a period of



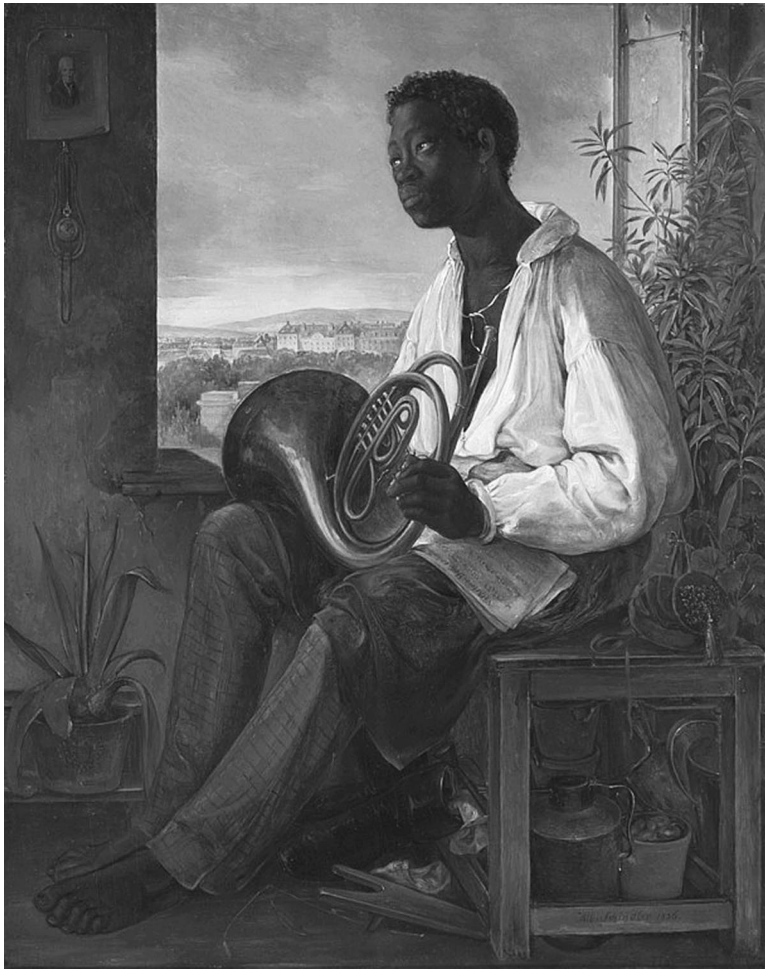


FIGURE 3: Albert Schindler (1805–1861), *Ein Mohr / Waldhornbläser / Gärtner in Laxenburg bei Sr. Maj. / dem Kaiser Franz I. / gemalt von Natur (Portrait of a Gardener and Horn Player in the Household of the Emperor Francis I, 1836)*. Emmanuel Rio's origins as a slave determined his complete dependence on the support of the imperial family throughout his life. Art Institute of Chicago.

and sultans were often Circassian slaves—the Circassian beauties of nineteenth-century lore—“rescued,” as the official story went, from lives of penury in the Caucasus.<sup>79</sup> The trade in Circassian women introduced thousands of enslaved Cau-

time; in honor of a special contract between the slave and the slaveholder agreeing to manumission after its terms were met; or in their wills. Slaveholders were not, however, required to manumit their slaves at all. John Hunwick, “Black Slaves in the Mediterranean World: Introduction to a Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora,” in Elizabeth Savage, ed., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 1992), 24.

<sup>79</sup> Elliot claimed that Circassian slaves “have long been obtained almost entirely from needy families who look upon the admission of these children into a Turkish House as an effectual way of bettering their condition, and as a step on a road which might lead them to the highest honours at which a Turkish woman can hope to arrive. These children, instead of falling, rose in the social scale receiving an education and a treatment far above what they could otherwise have obtained.” H. Elliot to Earl Granville re: “Arrival of Circassian Slaves at Smyrna,” *Slave Trade* no. 4, Constantinople, March 8, 1873, 29–30, NAFO 84/1370. A columnist for the *New York Times* commented on the relationships between the



casians into the Ottoman Empire. Dark skin was no more a guarantee of enslavement than light skin was of freedom. Indeed, the rare but prominent cases in which slaves reached positions of power, including grand vizier, also meant that there was no necessary connection between enslavement and status—a point often made by the defenders of Ottoman slavery.

The British themselves were confounded by the intricacies of Ottoman slavery; the rights they had secured, in treaty after treaty, to search Atlantic ships were considered to be without value or effect in the Mediterranean. The head of the Slave Trade Department of the Foreign Office in 1869, William H. Wylde, recommended against pursuing a treaty with the Ottomans that would allow British vessels the right to search Ottoman vessels in the Mediterranean—a measure that had been repeatedly considered (and rejected) since at least the 1850s. His argument was that “the steamers that carry slaves carry also passengers of all denominations, pilgrims of all shades of colour, free blacks who are domestic servants of some of the passengers, and free blacks travelling on their own account. How could the Commander of a cruiser discriminate between the slaves and the free blacks, when, as I hear is the case, the former are dressed up the same as their free countrymen?”<sup>80</sup> But despite its own admitted confusion, the British Foreign Office expected Austrian captains and shipping agents to do just what it knew to be most difficult: discriminate.

Lloyd captains pointed out that in the absence of outward signs of enslavement, determining someone’s status would necessarily involve some form of questioning. Not even the biographical information on a traveler’s *tezkere* was useful, for it was written in Turkish or Arabic, languages that Lloyd captains did not understand. Interviewing passengers, however, was dismissed as an impossibility. In sworn testimony given in Smyrna, Giovanni Felice Benich (captain of the *Urano* and accused of transporting eight slaves in July 1871) said, “it is materially and morally impossible for me to examine them—first because I do not know the Arabic or Turkish language, and second because I cannot speak with them without risking a revolution on board of their coreligionists, since the Turkish religion does not permit speaking with women.”<sup>81</sup> The Lloyd executive committee warned that “unbidden intrusions into relations of a very delicate nature would be extremely careless and not seldom bound up with terrible and sad consequences.”<sup>82</sup> The presumption was that Ottoman society demanded that a traveler—by implication male—and his entourage (containing an unknown and, the captain argued, unknowable combination of wives, concubines, servants, and legally owned slaves) be encased in a veil of privacy that no agent of a shipping company could lift without losing first that customer and then all of his

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foreign minister, Fuad Pasha, the grand vizier, Aali Pasha, and their respective wives as follows: “they are the most exemplary and dutiful husbands; and . . . the beauty and charms of character of their wives, though at least one of them was bought for so many pieces of silver, originally, as a slave, are such as to insure them for a long time their affections.” “The Levant,” *New York Times* September 23, 1852, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Wylde’s note was written in response to a letter from Elliot to Clarendon, July 20, 1869, and is reproduced here as quoted in Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan*, 157.

<sup>81</sup> Protocollo assunto nella Cancelleria dell’i.R. Consolato G[enerale] d’Austria-Ungheria in Smirne li 29 Luglio 1871, transcript attached to [illeg.] to Beust, Constantinople, August 1, 1871, no. 27 AB/HP, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>82</sup> Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, July 5, 1870, no. 599, attached to Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, February 16, 1871, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, February 24, 1871, no. 1155, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 433/HP.

countrymen and coreligionists. The untenable distinction between slave-trading and slaveholding was supported here by the invocation of social distance, sexual exoticism, and cultural inscrutability.

Cumberbatch rejected the premise that slaves could not be identified on sight. "If the supercargo on board the Austrian Lloyd's steamer, or at least the agents at Alexandria, cannot perceive that they have frequently carried slaves on board their vessels, . . . their eyesight must be remarkably obscure." He went on to describe the obvious markers that the Austrian consuls and agents were willfully ignoring. "If," he wrote to the British foreign secretary, the Earl of Clarendon, "the Austrian Consular officers at Constantinople and Smyrna call African children dressed in the white flowing Nubian dress, with metal bracelets and anklets, accompanied by slave-dealers, 'servants,' or 'members of Oriental families,' they cannot declare them to be free agents: therefore, they are slaves in my estimation."<sup>83</sup> Cumberbatch insisted here on the legibility of visual evidence: the distinctive clothing and jewelry of the children marked them as Nubian, and therefore as not-yet-Ottoman. Even more remarkably, he compressed the full spectrum of bonded, hierarchical, and coercive social relations—including those between husband and wife and between father and child—into slavery. For Cumberbatch, it seems, there was no unfreedom that was not rightly called slavery.

The power of visual evidence was called upon to opposite effect by the minister of foreign affairs in Vienna. Where Cumberbatch saw slavery in every social relation, the foreign minister deduced slavery from a narrow range of telltale signs: bruises, cuts, and chains. This did not immediately let the Lloyd off the hook; in reference to the three slave boys who had reported their violent capture in Abyssinia, the minister angrily wrote: "We can hardly accept that these slave boys, on whom the traces of violence are surely to be found, were not recognizable as such at their embarkation in Alexandria, and the captain of the *Mars* is thus at the very least guilty of neglect."<sup>84</sup> But the emphasis on "traces of violence" as proof of enslavement did offer the Lloyd the chance to make the usual excuses: the ship's doctor had seen no signs of violence, and besides, there were 600 passengers on board, with no time for detailed inspections of their persons.

The larger question was not whether a child violently seized in a raid could be recognized as a slave, or even whether a child kept in a slave pen in North Africa for weeks, fed and tended until the signs of deprivation had been hidden in order to make a more profitable sale, could be recognized as a slave—but rather the character of Ottoman slavery and the extent of Austrian responsibility for helping it function. What, for instance, should be made of the 16-year-old Ethiopian returning to Constantinople, unaccompanied by a slaveholder or dealer, after his owner had sent him to Egypt for a cure? This was a case where the epistemology of European liberalism was incapable of imagining forms of violence and coercion that went beyond the physical, and therefore proclaimed the absence of coercion as fact. The Austro-Hungarian consul general in Constantinople thought he knew something

<sup>83</sup> Cumberbatch to the Earl of Clarendon, Smyrna, February 28, 1870 (received March 14, 1870), reprinted in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1870–1871*, 446.

<sup>84</sup> Draft of outgoing note from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Maritime Administration, Vienna, June 28, 1870, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 2150/HP.

about Ottoman slavery that made the boy's return sensible. "That which Europeans understand under the term 'slavery' does not exist here," he explained. "While the mass of free people starves, the slave wallows in luxurious excess in his master's palace . . . The Circassian and the Nubian consider it a great fortune to be brought into a Constantinople harem even as unfree servants, and follow the agent who brings them here with pleasure."<sup>85</sup> Cumberbatch's accusations, the Lloyd insisted, revealed "a complete ignorance of those social relations peculiar to the Orient."<sup>86</sup> The arguments made by the Austrian Lloyd and reiterated by Austro-Hungarian consuls and high-ranking diplomats rested on the presumption that they understood something about the nature of Ottoman slavery that Cumberbatch and other interventionist British consuls in the Ottoman Empire did not: something, they asserted, that placed Ottoman slavery, slavery though it was, outside the general European consensus regarding anti-slavery.<sup>87</sup> This vision of Ottoman slavery fully conformed to the public image of that institution promoted by the Ottomans themselves.

There is some truth to the argument that, in the nineteenth century, slavery in the Ottoman Empire was unlike slavery in the Western Hemisphere. First, it was heavily female—the vast majority of enslaved Africans (and for that matter Circassians) brought to the Ottoman Empire were girls.<sup>88</sup> Second, with very few exceptions, slave labor was domestic, not agricultural.<sup>89</sup> Third, in the Muslim world—

<sup>85</sup> Wassitsch to Maritime Administration, Constantinople, December 27, 1869, no. 6241, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, January 9, 1870, no. 8/I, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 158/HP. This argument was neither unusual nor novel. Ogier de Busbecq, who was the Holy Roman emperor's emissary in Constantinople from 1554 to 1562, noted (as summarized by Paula Fichtner) that freedom "meant little to people who did not have the means to enjoy it. All human beings, he said, required some authority over them." Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration*, 79; Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge, 2009), 9. Similarly, neither the notion of hierarchy nor the idea of lives of more toil than pleasure was fundamentally offensive to the nineteenth-century sensibility. Wilberforce and the other advocates of abolition in the British Parliament believed that "life was a place of moral trial, a moral obstacle course standing between each soul and heaven, and slaves were no more born to be happy than anyone else." Hilton, "1807 and All That," 75.

<sup>86</sup> Verwaltungsrath der Dampfschiffahrt-Gesellschaft des oesterreichischen Lloyd to Maritime Administration, no. 109, Trieste, February 4, 1872, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 1285/F48/V, re: Verwaltungsrath des oesterr. Lloyd über den angeblichen Sklaven-transport am Dampfer "Apollo," Trieste, February 10, 1872, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>87</sup> Habsburg diplomats could proudly point to a long tradition of study of what they called the Orient. The Imperial Royal Academy of Oriental Languages, or Oriental Academy, was founded in 1754 and trained not only translators and interpreters but also "candidates for the higher grades of the consular and diplomatic corps" in order to prepare them to serve "the political and commercial agenda of the state." Their thorough training in Ottoman language, literature, history, custom, and constitutional law included copying out Turkish sayings such as "He who does not know how to serve does not know how to rule." Thanks to the Oriental Academy, "at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Austria . . . had a clear advantage over its rivals Prussia and Russia in dealing with the Porte." Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration*, 122, 126, 127, 129.

<sup>88</sup> By the early nineteenth century, "the overwhelming majority of Ottoman slaves were female, African, and domestic; males, white females, and *kul/harem* slaves were only a small minority." Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 6–7, 12. "It must be said that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the slave of the Ottoman slave owner was a woman and that slavery itself was increasingly female." Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 215. See also Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, Wis., 1983), 5.

<sup>89</sup> There was not always a clear distinction between "domestic," "agricultural," and "artisanal" labor. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise*, 62–64; Michel Fontenay, "Pour une géographie de l'esclavage méditerranéen aux temps modernes," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 65 (2002), <http://cdlm.revues.org/index42.html>. For a discussion of the wide array of "productive tasks" concealed by the "misleading" phrase "domestic slavery," see Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 3–4. "We

and in the Ottoman Empire specifically—slavery was conceived of as a temporary condition, and one that, though it emerged from capture and sale, was predicated upon the condition of unbelief, not that of race.<sup>90</sup> Manumission was lauded as a good work; the children of any sexual union between an enslaved woman and her free owner were free at birth, and their mother was to be freed immediately upon the death of her owner.<sup>91</sup>

Scholars of Ottoman slavery must tread very carefully. To judge Ottoman slavery to be milder than Western plantation slavery risks appearing apologetic. After all, in the Islamic world, a slave “could be sold, given away or inherited, and his services could be pledged or hired out—all without his consent.”<sup>92</sup> In the case of female slaves, temporary sale and resale could lead to a form of enslaved prostitution.<sup>93</sup> While only non-Muslims could be enslaved, a slave’s conversion to Islam did not result in manumission—a convenient elision of the prohibition on slavery within *Dar-al-Islam* (the House of Islam).<sup>94</sup> Enslaved men and women could not own property, nor could they inherit it; their evidence was considered unreliable and generally unacceptable in a court of law. Slaves were not allowed to marry without their owners’ permission; if they were the victims of crime, their lives were considered less valuable than those of their free counterparts.<sup>95</sup>

To judge slavery in the Islamic world harshly, on the other hand, can fit all too easily into orientalist tropes of Eastern barbarity lasting long beyond Western hu-

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also know that the human toll of slavery, both physical and cultural, was intimately tied to the exigencies of production, notably the work regimen.” Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), 18. Circassian refugees to the Ottoman Empire did bring their own agricultural slaves with them when they fled the Russian Empire in the 1850s and 1860s. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 12, 82–84.

<sup>90</sup> John Hunwick, “Islamic Law and Polemics over Race and Slavery in North and West Africa (16th–19th Century),” in Shaun Marmon, ed., *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, N.J., 1999), 43; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York, 1990), 5–8. For a discussion of the interpretations offered by British “men on the spot” of the compatibility of Islam and slavery, see Clarence-Smith, “The British ‘Official Mind’ and Nineteenth-Century Islamic Debates over the Abolition of Slavery,” 125–142.

<sup>91</sup> A concubine who bore her master a child (even a stillborn child) attained the status of *ümm-i veled*, or mother of a child. An *ümm-i veled* “could not be sold or otherwise alienated from her master’s household, and she became free upon his death. If her master wished to marry her, he had first to manumit her. An *ümm-i veled*’s children were free and enjoyed equal legal and social status with the children of their father’s free wife.” Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1993), 30–31. On the many ways in which an *ümm-i veled*’s status remained vulnerable, see Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 109–113.

<sup>92</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 59.

<sup>93</sup> “The prostitution of female slaves by dealers and casual buyers was endemic in port cities all over the Mediterranean.” Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 199; Hunwick, “Black Slaves in the Mediterranean World,” 12–13. A Koma woman named Fadl al Saq (presumably a concubine) was sold no fewer than five times during one three-day period in 1877, for the price of 53, 66, 72, 70, and 74 *riyals*, respectively, leading Jay Spaulding to conclude, “it is difficult to believe that she would have accepted the proposition that ‘a slave in the Sudan was above all a human being, a member of a society or a family.’” Spaulding, “Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15, no. 1 (1982): 13. Spaulding’s internal quotation comes from Abbas Ibrahim Muhammad Ali, *The British, the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Sudan, 1820–1881* (Khartoum, 1972), 75.

<sup>94</sup> Hunwick, “Islamic Law and Polemics over Race and Slavery in North and West Africa,” 52; Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 6–8.

<sup>95</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 59.

manitarian abolitionism.<sup>96</sup> Avoiding either of these extremes, several decades of scholarship on slavery in Africa and the Ottoman Empire has shown that domestic labor and “wallowing in luxury” were not the same; that manumission was more frequently extolled than practiced; that mothers of free children were vulnerable to having their status challenged by the heirs to their owners’ estates; that the lives of most women in Constantinople harems were characterized more by the brutal hierarchy of their gendered space than by the putative privileges that came with the status of concubine.<sup>97</sup> And of course, as William Gervase Clarence-Smith has put it, the fortunes of even the luckiest of slaves “remained vulnerable to the whims of the free.”<sup>98</sup>

Cumberbatch got in trouble with his superiors in part because he repeatedly took under his protection slaves in Smyrna who came to him complaining of ill-treatment. Juma fled to Cumberbatch to get away from his owner, a slave trader who had tried to murder him when he was unable to sell him after a month. Mehmet was shot through the leg when he tried to escape having his ears cut off by his owner. Hadji Mehmet served as a slave from about the age of 9 to the age of 16 and then was duly manumitted. Although he was married, as a free man, in Alexandria, he was pursued so relentlessly there by slave traders intent on re-enslaving him that he fled to the British consulate in Smyrna looking for protection.<sup>99</sup> Slaves in North Africa jumped over the walls of consulate compounds in an effort to reach the protection of British consuls there, who responded by having their walls built higher.<sup>100</sup> The depredations

<sup>96</sup> Ehud Toledano critically summarized what was then the latest scholarship on slavery in the Islamic world in the final chapter of *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (135–154) and raised the issue of the “good treatment debate” again in “Bringing the Slaves Back In” (12–24). William Gervase Clarence-Smith, with characteristic brevity, noted: “intellectual paralysis springs from a contradictory desire to condemn slavery and spare Islam.” Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 1. Hakan Erdem notes that “the result of these two conflicting sets of ideas can often be paralyzing, leading to a ‘neutral’ stance which is not conducive to the study of slavery.” Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise*, xvii. Chouki El Hamel addresses the silence regarding the fact that “Islamic countries generally harboured a benign attitude towards slavery” in “‘Race,’ Slavery and Islam in Maghribi Mediterranean Thought: The Question of the *Haratin* in Morocco,” *Journal of North African Studies* 7, no. 3 (2002): 30. John Hunwick mentions a 1983 debate between Sudanese scholar Yusuf Fadl Hasan, who said “slavery is slavery and cannot be beautified by cosmetics” in an effort to provoke “a courageous and objective” discussion of Afro-Arab relations, and the Algerian scholar who retorted that one must emphasize “the Arabs’ humane and familial treatment of their slaves compared with other slave-owning people.” Hunwick, “The Same but Different: Africans in Slavery in the Mediterranean Muslim World,” in John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, N.J., 2002), x. T. G. Otte complains of “genuflection before current Western intellectual fads” as inhibiting spirited inquiry into the topic. Otte, “‘A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance,’” 93. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff acknowledge a “squeamishness” that affects Western scholarship. Miers and Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, Wis., 1977), 6.

<sup>97</sup> On gendered hierarchies of the harem, see Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, ix, 6–7, 141. On the precarious claim to the rights of the *ümm-i veled*, see Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 109–113.

<sup>98</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Cumberbatch to the Earl of Clarendon, Smyrna, August 28, 1869, reprinted in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1869–1870*, vol. 60 (London, 1876), 741.

<sup>100</sup> A Manumission Bureau was established in Cairo as a result of the Anglo-Egyptian Anti-Slave Trade Convention of 1877, with the task of issuing manumission papers to escaped slaves and helping them secure “gainful employment”—a plan that provided a “gradualist” alternative to an “outright ban on slavery,” which Lord Cromer believed would not be tolerated by Muslim society. Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford, 2004), 256. See also Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise*, 92, 171.



of slavery, moreover, were not limited to those who had been personally enslaved. In the Ottoman Empire—where, thanks to high manumission rates, relatively few children were born into slavery—slavery was impossible to maintain without a constant supply of newly enslaved young people. Every African-born slave, however comfortably housed in Constantinople, Smyrna, or Beirut, left behind a mother, a father, siblings, and friends in Africa; every slave who survived the march across the Sahara witnessed many more die along the way.<sup>101</sup>

According to the terms of §95 of the 1852 penal code, captains of Austrian ships on the Mediterranean were obliged to provide slaves asylum, not to parse complicated questions about the differences among various forms of bondage and the orientalist hegemony of Anglo-Atlantic analytical categories.<sup>102</sup> The automatic provision of asylum was, after all, the very argument that had inspired Druscovich's initial defense—not that he could not tell whether there were slaves on an Austrian ship, but that there could not be any. According to Austrian law and Austro-Hungarian policy, any passenger who approached the captain of an Austrian ship and reported himself or herself to be held in a condition of enslavement was to be immediately escorted to the nearest port and turned over to the Austro-Hungarian consulate. The consul would see that the passenger was freed, and would find him or her suitable employment in the vicinity. The director of the Lloyd used the argument that slaves asked for a captain's protection, in his words, "not infrequently," to demonstrate the captains' willingness to act whenever action was called for.<sup>103</sup> But according to the Austro-Hungarian consul in Constantinople, "it has not yet occurred that one of the passengers declared to be a serving girl or boy has turned to the captain in order to reclaim his freedom"—an argument the consul general used to suggest, in his words, that "the slaves have no taste for freedom."<sup>104</sup>

Now Druscovich's claim that "there can be no slaves on an Austrian ship" appears in a different light. It was not a position of plain ignorance, it was a legalistic position that based its claim on an assertion of the implied consent of each and every pas-

<sup>101</sup> The survival rate of slaves who were forced to march from the Sudanic belt to Cyrenaica has been estimated at one in three. There is a substantial literature on the "trail of desolation and death" that the slave trade left behind in Africa. See, in particular, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 61; Manning, *Slavery and African Life*; and Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, 1972). This same outrage was apparent to, and bemoaned by, William Pitt in his now-famous speech of April 2, 1792, before the House of Commons: "Do you think nothing of the ruin and the miseries in which so many other individuals, still remaining in Africa, are involved in consequence of carrying off so many myriads of people? Do you think nothing of their families which are left behind? Of the connections which are broken? Of the friendships, attachments and relationships that are burst asunder? Do you think nothing of the miseries in consequence, that are felt from generation to generation? . . . What do you yet know of the internal state of Africa?" *The Speech of the Right Hon. William Pitt, in the House of Commons, on the 2d of April, 1792, on the Subject of the African Slave Trade* (Newcastle, 1824), 22–23.

<sup>102</sup> For a field-defining analysis of those German speakers who did try to create a scholarly understanding of the Ottoman Empire, see Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*.

<sup>103</sup> Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, July 5, 1870, no. 599, attached to Lloyd to Maritime Administration, Trieste, February 16, 1871, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, February 24, 1871, no. 1155, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 433/HP.

<sup>104</sup> Wassitsch to Maritime Administration, Constantinople, December 27, 1869, no. 6241, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, January 9, 1870, Trieste, no. 8/I, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 158/HP. Compare this to the problem of slavery within Africa: "it is assumed that all slaves must be unhappy, since their autonomy is so severely restricted. If they do not appear unhappy, then their autonomy is either not so limited or for some reason they do not feel that it is." Miers and Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa*, 5.

senger who did not complain. “The ships’ captains,” the consul general further explained, “see their passengers in whatever light they themselves wish to be seen.” If they wished to give the appearance that they were traveling as servants, not slaves, then so be it. In its defense of Captain G. Giurovich, who was accused of transporting slaves on board the *Apollo*, the Lloyd administration insisted that without a spontaneous declaration on the part of the slave, the captain was “neither obligated nor entitled to substitute his own initiative for that of those whose interests are most immediately at stake in order to investigate the personal circumstances of the passengers. Such an inquisitorial course of action would have dreadful consequences for the Lloyd.”<sup>105</sup> In effect, the Lloyd argued that the unbidden termination of slavery on board its ships would constitute its own form of enslavement—that is, the forced substitution of one person’s initiative for another’s. Such a position would make abolition as a humanitarian act impossible: the slave would have to bear responsibility for liberating herself—she would have to exert her own force of will in order to demand action on the part of the captain. Beneath her slavery, she would have to know that she was free.

That this argument was self-serving is self-evident. But its flaws were nevertheless pointed out by the same Austrian officials who would have preferred to argue that Austria was, ultimately, blameless. When asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to compare Austria’s anti-slavery legislation to that of other powers, and to ascertain whether Austrian ships were particularly prone to accommodating slave traders because of loopholes in the legal system, Anton von Prokesch-Osten, the ambassador in Constantinople, determined that the laws themselves were sound. “Our laws,” he reported, “leave little to be desired. The communication of the law, however, cannot be judged favorably. Those slaves who set foot on board an Austrian ship under the designation of children, relatives, or servants of the slave driver, only seldom realize that their master no longer has the slightest power over them. It occurs to no one,” he continued, “to educate the children of the desert about their rights.”<sup>106</sup> Prokesch reiterated Druscovich’s emphasis on what both believed to be the real-life relevance of the law: the slaves were not slaves, because the law had freed them. Their masters no longer had the slightest power over them. Their passage from terrestrial slavery to maritime freedom back to terrestrial slavery might have been invisible to the slaves, and immaterial to the prospects that anything would actually be done about the Mediterranean slave trade, but it was essential to the maintenance of the enabling fiction that Austrian law was sovereign on Austrian ships.

Prokesch, unlike Druscovich, seemed to understand the paradoxical aspect of unknown rights, and his solution was literally to paper it over: to mount a tablet with the respective portions of Austrian legislation in a prominent place on each Lloyd ship. In addition, he proposed, “the ship’s officer should be assigned the duty of translating these legal passages to every individual who could possibly be a slave before departure and before disembarkation and to add that every slave who would like to be free and protected in freedom should come forward. If no one comes

<sup>105</sup> Verwaltungsrath der Dampfschiffahrt-Gesellschaft des oesterreichischen Lloyd to Maritime Administration, no. 109, Trieste, February 4, 1872, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 1285/F48/V, re: Verwaltungsrath des oesterr. Lloyd über den angeblichen Sklaven-transport am Dampfer “Apollo,” Trieste, February 10, 1872, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>106</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Beust, Constantinople, May 10, 1870, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 1660/HP.

forward, so the proof is delivered that all follow their leaders willingly—and therefore, in the sense of the law, are not slaves.”<sup>107</sup> The maritime administration offered a sober evaluation of this proposal: it would “not have the desired practical effect—either because of a lack of language ability on the part of the slaves or because of their fear of speaking before their ever-present owners.”<sup>108</sup> Note that it was the slaves’ lack of language ability that was blamed, and not that of the ships’ officers of the Austrian Lloyd, who were widely known to speak no languages but Italian and sometimes Croatian—not German, not French, not English, and certainly not Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, or any sub-Saharan language.<sup>109</sup>

The documents left behind by Druscovich, Prokesch, the maritime administration, the minister of foreign affairs, and the Austrian corporate or public officials who commented on the intractable problem of the Mediterranean slave trade are not primarily concerned with the slaves’ true capacity for liberal, self-interested promotion of their rights in the single-minded pursuit of freedom, or the lack thereof. Aside from this one comment about the “ever-present owners,” there is no acknowledgment of the forces operating to compel people to proceed quietly from port to port, Austrian laws notwithstanding. No acknowledgment that many of these slaves were children, or that most of them were (also) female. No discussion of even the remotest possibility of returning any of them to the land of their birth or the families from whom they had been stolen. No comment on the fate of an African without any semblance of a social network left to his or her own devices in a foreign land. No recognition of the social vacuum represented by the liberal notion of “freedom” to the sensibilities of a person accustomed to thinking in terms of kinship.<sup>110</sup> No plan for what to do in cases such as that of a group of women who were allegedly sequestered under a tent for the entire duration of their voyage so that no passengers

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, July 8, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 1633/HP.

<sup>109</sup> According to the vice-consul of the consulate in Hong Kong, even Lloyd captains servicing the Trieste–Bombay and other Asian routes spoke neither German nor English, which prevented them from collecting necessary information about the ports they visited. Nikolaus Post, “Bericht über die anlässlich seiner in der Zeit vom 2. Februar bis 19. März l. J. auf Schiffen des oest. Lloyd zurückgelegten Ausreise von Triest nach Hong Kong gemachten Wahrnehmungen, den Betrieb und Dienst der vorerwähnten Schifffahrtsgesellschaft betreffend,” to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hong Kong, May 30, 1900, HHStA MdA AR Fach 68/2: Beschwerden über den öst. Lloyd.

<sup>110</sup> “Most Africans belonged to a lineage, clan or other kinship group to which they owed clearly understood obligations and in which they had defined rights. This group protected them both spiritually and materially . . . To a member of such a close-knit group the European concept of the ‘free’ or autonomous individual was meaningless . . . Liberated captives generally thought the only real freedom lay in being returned to their own people.” Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 119–120. “In most African societies, ‘freedom’ lay not in a withdrawal into a meaningless and dangerous autonomy but in attachment to a kin group, to a patron, to power—an attachment that occurred within a well-defined hierarchical framework . . . Here the antithesis of ‘slavery’ is not ‘freedom’ qua autonomy but rather ‘belonging.’” Miers and Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa*, 17. On the other hand, “considering the Ottoman case, the sweeping concept of social alienation (or kinlessness), has a limited explanatory power for slavery in the Empire, since the proximity and intimacy of daily interaction between owner and slave produced what is sometimes called ‘fictive-kin’ relations that incorporated the slave—via the elite household—into the social networks (*intisap*) of Ottoman society, often effectively compensating for the lack of natural kin relations, though certainly at a psychological cost.” Ehud Toledano, “The Concept of Slavery in Ottoman and Other Muslim Societies: Dichotomy or Continuum,” in Miura Toru and John Edward Philips, eds., *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa: A Comparative Study* (London, 2000), 172.

(or crewmembers) could even lay eyes on them.<sup>111</sup> The maritime administration encouraged the adoption of Prokesch's suggestion because it would, in their words, "at least avoid the appearance of the ship's commander's complicity in any slave transports that might occur."<sup>112</sup> It could not, however, be expected to make those transports less likely.

Thus far, the interests of the Austrian Lloyd and the interests of the Foreign Ministry and consular corps appear to have been aligned. Their alignment was one of the Lloyd's key arguments: the minister of foreign affairs could not possibly ask the company to act against its own corporate interests, for the pursuit of those interests benefited all Austrians. But the final strand in the argument defending the Lloyd against the compulsion to take a more proactive stand against slavery was one that exposed a fundamental difference between the diplomatic needs of the Austrian Empire and the business needs of its largest shipping company. After twenty young African slaves were found aboard the steamer *Apollo* in October 1871, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs complained that "the ever-increasing cases of slave transports on Lloyd ships—especially larger transports—appear to lend a certain authority to the English consul in Smyrna's complaints about the lax application of regulations to suppress the slave trade in the Orient, by virtue of which the prestige and honor of the imperial flag is endangered."<sup>113</sup> Would not the Lloyd take special measures to protect the flag that protected it?

The Lloyd administration insisted that "the Lloyd company and its organs do not have the attributes of a police authority and are not in the slightest authorized to worry about the individual affairs of the passengers—whether white or colored."<sup>114</sup> Here it is not the proclaimed racial blindness of the Lloyd that was truly radical, but the brazen refusal to enforce the law. The maritime administration official who interviewed Druscovich after the *Mars* incident had to agree that "not only would the meticulous investigation of the personal relations of the passengers damage the Lloyd's commerce, it cannot possibly be the concern of a private company to play police."<sup>115</sup> The conviction that passengers chose shipping lines that provided more comfort and less control was even reflected in the popular press. In response to a proposal that the Lloyd should employ navy veterans, the *Triester Zeitung* claimed that Austrian passengers, too, "prefer those ships where they find less discipline and more personal freedom."<sup>116</sup> The Lloyd's duty to its shareholders, and to the Austrian tax-

<sup>111</sup> The Viennese traveler Ida Pfeiffer reported this case with horror in Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land: Unternommen im März bis Dezember 1842* (Vienna, 1844), 65. My thanks to Walter Sauer for directing me to this source.

<sup>112</sup> Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trieste, July 8, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 1633/HP.

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Maritime Administration, Vienna, October 11, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 2518/HP.

<sup>114</sup> Verwaltungsrath der Dampfschiffahrt-Gesellschaft des oesterreichischen Lloyd to Maritime Administration, no. 109, Trieste, February 4, 1872, attached to Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 1285/F48/V, re: Verwaltungsrath des oesterr. Lloyd über den angeblichen Sklaventransport am Dampfer "Apollo," Trieste, February 10, 1872, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90.

<sup>115</sup> "Bericht der k.k. Seebehörde vom 19 Oktober 1871 Z 9127 über den neuerlich vorgekommenen Fall eines Sklaventransports auf dem Lloyd dampfer 'Diana,'" Maritime Administration to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 9127, Trieste, October 19, 1871, HHStA MdA AR F34SR90, Z. 2655/HP.

<sup>116</sup> "Der Triester Lloyd und die Kriegsmarine," *Triester Zeitung*, undated clipping marked February 1869, in the Lloyd archive, Museo del Mare, Archivio Storico del Lloyd Triestino, 159v, 276 (11/510) 3609.



payers who subsidized its shipping lines, was to maintain its commercial strength in the Eastern Mediterranean, and not endanger its market share. Who in Austria would benefit if the Lloyd refused to honor legally purchased tickets, harassed its passengers, and showed no sensitivity to the precepts of Islam?

It was not the Lloyd's job to execute an anti-slave trade treaty signed by Austria according to the spirit of the law—but only to ensure that each traveling passenger had a valid ticket, was not visibly constrained in the exercise of his or her freedom of movement on board the ship, and was escorted to the nearest consulate if, and only if, he or she had explicitly requested the captain's assistance in escaping the bonds of enslavement. At stake here was the relationship of sovereignty and economy, that is, the character of empire: were private corporations bound to execute diplomatic agreements?

CUMBERBATCH DIED IN OFFICE, of causes not recorded, on March 29, 1876. With his passing, the detailed documentation of slaving through Smyrna came to an end. The slave trade, on the other hand, did not stop in the 1870s. It would be developments in the realm of international diplomacy, not individual exposures of slave-smuggling, that eroded the legal transportation of slaves across the Mediterranean. The Anglo-Egyptian anti-slave trade convention of 1877 was the first in a series of treaties that initiated what Suzanne Miers has called “a more determined effort to prevent the import of slaves” into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>117</sup> The British occupation of Egypt, starting in 1882, gave the British more control over embarkation procedures in Alexandria and thus greater opportunities to prevent slaves from boarding ships. The Berlin Conference of 1885 and the Brussels Conference of 1889 both involved the Ottoman Empire in international agreements prohibiting the slave trade. The adventitious distinction between the slave trade and slavery within the empire's borders, however, continued to be upheld even as the Ottomans' official declarations that the trade in human beings would not be tolerated became more sincere and more stringently enforced. The Ottoman Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Police were responsible for the suppression of the traffic in Africans, but the deputy minister of the interior himself purchased slaves in 1893, which suggests that his principled commitment to preventing the trade was compatible with its practical continuation.<sup>118</sup> The constitution of 1876 guaranteed the personal liberty of all subjects of the empire, but it was not put into practice until 1908. By then, the only slaves coming into the empire had to be smuggled in; the slave population had declined year by year.

According to Miers, “in the mind of the British public, the trader plying his busi-

<sup>117</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 81. According to Paul Lovejoy, Britain became especially keen to “clean up” Egypt after the opening of the Suez Canal brought more exposure to the illegal slave trade there. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 270. Lovejoy argues that Africans themselves—rather than European moral diplomacy—deserve credit for forcing the abolition of slavery: “The aim of slaves was freedom, not the modification of the conditions of slavery, and this often placed Europeans in the position of reforming the institution so that its demise would occur gradually and not in one, single revolutionary action. The colonial regimes became the defenders of slavery and the greatest single impediment to full emancipation” (253).

<sup>118</sup> Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, 35.

ness, the missionary spreading the gospel and the consul watching over British interests were as much concerned in [the slave trade's] suppression as the sailor patrolling the coast."<sup>119</sup> Britain's military, diplomatic, commercial, and religious-ethical interests, that is, were all imagined to be aligned. This notion, David Armitage has argued, lay at the center of Britain's own original understanding of its empire: the British Empire was "Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free."<sup>120</sup> But the history of Britain's interactions with Africa has long been recognized as belying this happy assertion: slavery was tolerated where a challenge to it would threaten political stability, as in Egypt, as in Zanzibar, as in the Hijaz, or, for that matter, as in Cuba.<sup>121</sup> The persistence of the slave trade in the 1870s was an anachronism that raised insistent and troubling questions about the character of European civilization and the benefits of European commerce in the Mediterranean. What if thickening commercial networks and revolutionary transportation technologies, instead of bringing an end to slave traffic, actually provided mechanisms for the transportation of slaves at greater speed and with greater comfort—slaves traveling as passengers, not in the holds of ships; slaves enjoying freedom of movement within the fundamental confines of a ship at sea; slaves disembarking without the use of visible force, according to a published timetable? What if, to amend Pitt's plaintive cry before Parliament in 1792, "the perversion of [European] commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one quarter of the globe"?<sup>122</sup> What if free trade and freedom were not the same? After all, the dictates of the free market meant that the Austrian Lloyd had to compete for the very passengers whom its ships could easily lose to another company if the balance between ticket prices, convenience, comfort, and privacy tipped in the direction of "too costly."<sup>123</sup>

Austrian diplomats' correspondence with the Lloyd and with their British counterparts shows that not only did these disquieting contradictions emerge from Britain's self-appointment as the primary enforcer of European civilization, personal liberty, free trade, and British commercial interests around the globe, but they also plagued empires with more modest ambitions. It was not, after all, the colonial powers that were most notorious for transporting slaves across the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century, but second-order powers such as Austria, Egypt, and the Ottomans themselves. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, Austria was caught between imperial formations—servicing the residual connections between the Ottoman Empire and Africa, while simultaneously striving to participate in the emergent

<sup>119</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 38.

<sup>120</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 8.

<sup>121</sup> On the Hijaz, see Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 82. Nevertheless, in Africa, Britain allowed itself to apply a kind of pressure that, according to Robin Law, actually violated international law—actions that ultimately facilitated the "European partition of Africa." Law, "Abolition and Imperialism: International Law and the British Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Peterson, *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain*, 170. In a similar vein: "The first worldwide campaign for human rights did not call upon self-determining nation-states to end slavery as much as it took part in the determination of which people were fit to govern themselves as nations and which needed to be colonized in order to fulfill the higher good of eliminating slavery." Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley, Calif., 2001), 13.

<sup>122</sup> *The Speech of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, 24.

<sup>123</sup> "Empires," Frederick Cooper has pointed out, "perpetrated violence because they were strong and because they were weak." Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, Calif., 2005), 157.

abolitionism that was coming to characterize the British and other colonial powers' expansion into Africa.

Austria had promised to prevent the transport of slaves on Austrian ships; it had even authorized other powers to search its ships to see that the law was being enforced. Its public role in international congresses and conventions throughout the long nineteenth century was that of a non-colonial power; a power that refused to participate in the exploitation and enslavement of Africans; a power for whom treaties about arms control, the export of alcohol, and the spread of drug addiction were inconsequential because it was confident that it had no stake in any of those nefarious trades.<sup>124</sup> As a Mediterranean power, Austria was able to set some of the rules of Levantine commerce. It could ponder the Eastern Question, pressure the Ottoman Empire to modify its policy toward France during the Crimean War, and insist on the maintenance of "capitulations" (the rights to regulate the affairs of Habsburg subjects living in the Ottoman Empire according to its own laws). But Austria was also governed by the mutually accepted immutability of other, older rules of Mediterranean trade: on these waters, personal autonomy was inscrutable, family was mutable, sovereignty was endangered. Only commerce was truly free.

<sup>124</sup> On Austria-Hungary's lackluster involvement in discussions about the limitations of alcohol and arms imports into Africa, see Graf Tarnowski, Brussels, to Aehrenthal MdA, Vienna, November 9, 1906, re "Die am 3. I. M. in Brüssel geschlossene Convention über das Zollregime für den nach Afrika eingeführten Spiritus betreffend," HHStA MdA AR Fach 39/4 [hereafter F39/4], Z. 89320; Kereskedelemügyi m.k. [Hungarian Ministry of Commerce] to Aehrenthal, April 9, 1907, HHStA MdA AR F39/4, Z. 27633; Note to Legation Royale de Belgique note verbale with copy to Hungarian HM Vienna, November 4, 1907, HHStA MdA AR F39/4, Z. 82165/9 7400; Note from Roessler (Austrian Ministry of Commerce) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs re Revision des Zollregimes auf Waffen und Munition in Afrika bis April 1908, Vienna, January 3, 1908, HHStA MdA AR F39/4, Z. 1454.

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