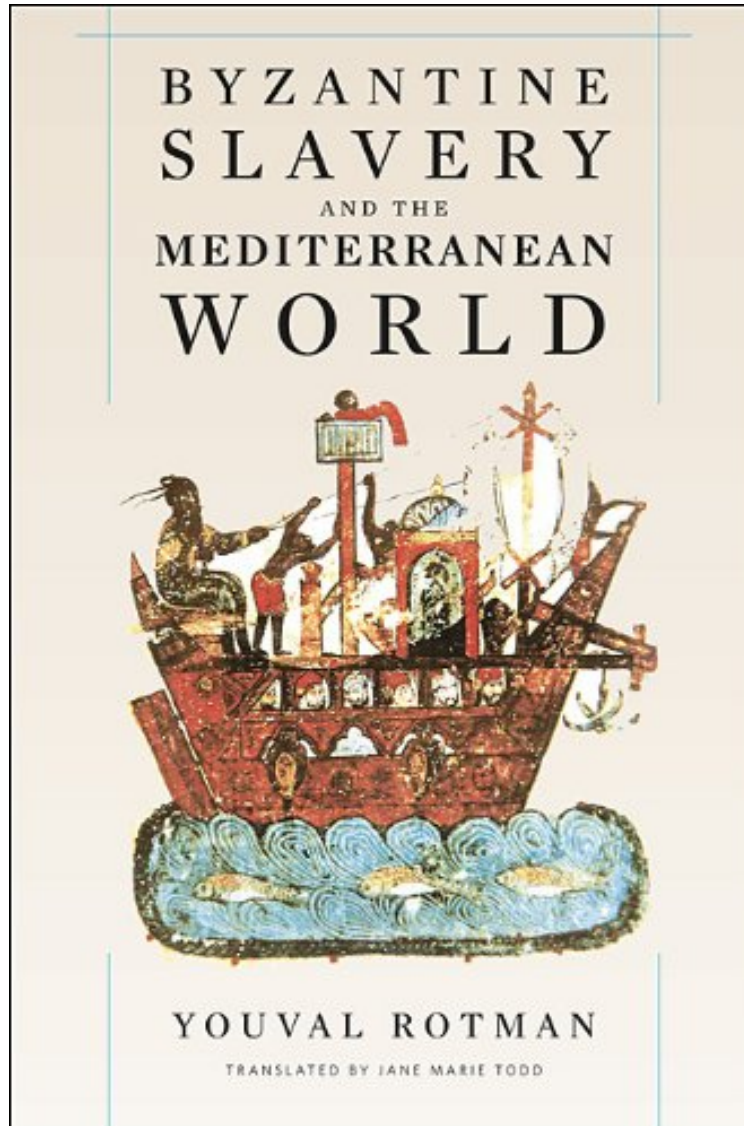


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## Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World

*Youval Rotman*

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**Youval Rotman : Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World:

Slavery may no longer exist as a legal institution, but we still find many forms of non-freedom in contemporary societies. It is a troubling paradox, and one this book addresses by considering a period in which the definition of

slavery and freedom proved considerably flexible. Between more familiar forms of slavery those of antiquity and of the Americas the institution as it was practiced and theorized in the Byzantine Mediterranean was of a different nature. Looking at the Byzantine concept of slavery within the context of law, the labor market, medieval politics, and religion, Youval Rotman illustrates how these contexts both reshaped and sustained the slave market. By focusing on a period of great change, his historical analysis brings a new perspective to concepts of slavery and freedom. In this period, when Byzantium had to come to terms with the rising power of the Islamic state, and to fight numerous wars over territory and economic interests, Rotman traces a shift in the cultural perception of slaves as individuals: they began to be seen as human beings instead of private property. His book analyzes slavery as a historical process against the background of the political, social, and religious transformation of the Mediterranean world, and demonstrates the flexible and adaptable character of this institution. Arguing against the use of the term slavery for any extreme form of social dependency, Rotman shows instead that slavery and freedom are unrelated concepts. His work offers a radical new understanding of the geopolitical and religious dynamics that have defined and redefined slavery and freedom, in the past and in our own time.

A highly original work that will be crucial reading for all historians concerned with the origins of the Mediterranean and Atlantic slave trades. (David Brion Davis) Rotman's study is definitely groundbreaking... The topic of slavery had never been thoroughly and properly investigated, even while the fate of slavery was such a primary issue, from Marx to Marc Bloch and beyond, in the debate over the transition from the Roman Empire to medieval societies. That void was a challenge in itself. Rotman has brilliantly risen to it, and has produced an innovative study. (Evelyn Patlagean) In this lucid and wide-ranging work, Rotman shows that the conventional belief that slavery ceases to be a relevant subject after the Roman period is no longer tenable. This is a major contribution to the understanding of the intricate, long-term evolution of the institution of slavery as it moves from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages. (Benjamin Isaac, author of *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*) This is a remarkable work, for which at present there is no competition. Rotman effectively bridges the transition from late antiquity to the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim Caliphate. He strikes a mortal blow to the popular view that slaves were no longer a productive economic force in late antiquity and beyond. In addition, he provides an essential counterweight to traditional accounts of the late antique colonate and the rise of serfdom in the West. (Glen W. Bowersock) About the Author Youval Rotman is Assistant Professor of History at Yale University.