

CAREGIVERS IN DOMESTIC SERVICE AND NURSING: THE CASE OF ENSLAVED WOMEN IN ANCIENT ROMAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Enslavement of people in different forms and nomenclatures is an institution which has mutated across time and space into concepts such as forced labour, domestic servitude, sex trafficking, and bonded labour (debt bondage), thereby creating some confusions in scholarship. This paper, through a qualitative content analysis of both ancient and modern texts, focuses on the status and roles of some enslaved womenfolk, who were used as caregivers, skilled in the art of home management, domestic services, and nursing in ancient Rome. The paper, tracing the historical narratives of these Roman caregivers and domestic servants, relates their experiences with those of the modern. It finds that the enslaved woman in ancient world was not absolutely the same as her modern counterpart, especially, in terms of value, treatment and consent to labour. The two, however, share certain commonalities in terms of the specifics of their jobs. The paper concludes that beyond the traditional notions and contemporary socio-cultural horrors associated with slavery, the enslaved female or domestic servant in the ancient world, compared with the modern caregiver, was a woman of many miseries but many household joys. It then recommends that states and governments at all levels should intensify efforts to totally put a stop to the resurgence of modern-day slaveries which, like in the olden days, seek to force, coerce or threaten the weak, especially the women, to do all forms of works against their free will.

Keywords: *enslaved female, domestic service, nursing, ancient Rome*

Introduction

According to the International Labour Organisation (1930), a forced labourer can be summarised as someone who is involved in any forced work or coerced service which is done against his will, sometimes under the threat of some punishment or intimidation. She/he is someone who, against his/her free will, has to do all forms of works under duress. Such works include agriculture,

domestic service, fishing, mining, quarrying, market trading, manufacturing, nursing, prostitution, and so on. In today’s world, when international prohibition on slavery is absolute, a forced labourer is not necessarily a slave; a slave, however, does all the works of a forced labourer (Segrave, Piper, & Napier-Moore, 2015). A slave differs from a labourer or domestic servant in three

important aspects: value, consent, and treatment. In terms of value and reward for labour, the modern labourer or servant is paid for his/her work, while the slave is not. With regards to consent to work, the slave, willingly or unwillingly, is obligated to labour for free; the most that the fortunate slave could expect in return as a reward is basic human kindness. His labour is both forced and enforced by threats of physical harm or worse punishment. The forced labourer, however, is coerced against his/her will to work or provide service. In terms of treatment, the modern forced labourer or servant is generally treated better than his slave counterpart.

Generally, in the ancient world, the concept of a *forced* labourer hardly existed for a slave had to do all menial works including those of the modern-day labourer or servant. For the ancient Graeco-Romans, the slave is a *human* but not a *man*. A certain maxim simply sums up the definition: *servus homo non est* (a slave is not a man). In the eyes of the law, a *man* referred to an adult male citizen. A slave, however, had none of the privileges, rights and immunities of the citizen and in this regard, he is a *nullius filius* (son of no-one), a piece of property (*res*). The slave was a piece of *breathing* and self-working property just like a house or a farm animal, which came under the physical control of a master, hence the jurist Florentinus' definition that he is 'someone subject to the *dominium* of another, contrary to nature' (Watson, *Digest*, I.5. 4.1; Hammond & Scullard, 1970. 'slavery': 994). Xenophon, the Greek historian, in his *Memorabilia* (Xen. Mem. II.iii.3), described slavery as a sudden and complete rupture of all familial bonds; transported to a completely alien existence, language, and culture. Slaves were of different varieties and nationalities, and moved from one end

of the Mediterranean to the other. In every large city, there were slave markets, usually located somewhere near the water front (Frost, 1971).

In the fifth century B.C., slavery was an essential component in the development of ancient world. The Graeco-Romans considered this institution, not only as essential, but quite natural. By the early fourth century B.C when slavery began to take distinct forms, some isolated debates began to appear, culminating into two generalizations. First, at all times and in all places, especially, in the Greek and Roman world, states relied on some forms of forced labour to meet their needs, both public and private (Finley, 1975). By this, we mean that forced labour, sometimes called dependent labour, was essential in a significant measure, if the requirements of agriculture, trade, manufacture, domestic service, public works and war production were to be fulfilled. By forced or dependent labour, we mean work performed under compulsion other than those of kinship or communal obligations. Second, with the rarest of exceptions, there were always substantial numbers of free peasant men who also engaged in productive labours (Finley, 1975). By this we mean primarily not free hired labour but free men working on their own (or leased) land or homes as craftsmen, housekeepers and shopkeepers. It is within the framework created by these two generalizations that questions are often asked as regards how to locate slavery in the Graeco-Roman society.

Between the enslaved in ancient Rome and the modern worlds

In Republican Rome, the law recognized people who were enslaved as a social class, and some authors have found in their condition the earliest concept of a proletariat, given that the only property they might own

was the gift of reproduction. Slaves lived then within this class with very little hope of a better life; and freemen owned and exchanged them just like goods (*Ancient History Sourcebook: Rome*). They had a price as *human instruments* while their life had none.

In very early times, perhaps in the sixth century B.C., the ancient Romans were peasant farmers and shepherds who used just few slaves for farm labour alone. By the Republican era (*circa* 509-264 B.C.) when these Romans were repeatedly recalled from the fields to fight for their state, the use of slaves gradually increased. By the Middle Republican period (*circa* 264-133 B.C.), the slave population had become astronomically more than freemen who worked for pay. In no time, the use of slaves for personal service and industry became general. It was one of the worst outcomes of Rome's foreign conquests and imperialism (Akinboye, 2015). The streets of Rome and its colonies swarmed with enslaved male and female attendants who not only displaced free citizen labourers and peasant farmers but skilled workers in various professions. As it was earlier practised in ancient Carthage and Greece, conversion of a person into property (chattel) in Rome was tolerable only for complete outsiders. Foreigners were usually enslaved and maybe a few citizens who had committed offences. For instance, debtors who had failed to pay back borrowed money could also be taken into forced labour. The non-Romans were conscripted to do a lot of works because they often had the brains, labour, skills and other qualities which were, in most cases, superior to those of the Romans.

Thus, throughout the flourishing times of the Romans, especially from the last century of the Republic (*circa* 133-31B.C) to the Imperial era (31 B.C. - A.D. 68), almost all

manual labour, trades and commerce as well as other professions had been transferred into the hands of slave men and women or freedmen who displaced free peasant citizens. Because slaves swarmed in the houses of the Romans, ministering to their love for luxury, directing their amusements, and educating their children, the masters steadily lost their old virtues of simplicity, frugality and temperance. As they lost their strength of character in a life of ease and luxury, their sway over the civilized world also decreased (Treggiari, 1969). In no time, there were constant dangers of servile insurrections, which more than once brought the Republic to the brink of ruin, hence the saying in Rome: *quot servi, tot hostes (so many slaves/servants, so many enemies)*. As implied above, many of the people forced into various domestic labour and plantations in Rome were generally trafficked through war conquests, exposure of unwanted babies, brigandage, piracy, kidnapping, and so on (Scheidel, 2007). So many were the slaves (agricultural labourers, sex traffickers, domestic servants, caregivers, shop attendants, skill providers, tillers of the soil, mine workers, etc) that it was regarded as a most degrading poverty not to own a single servant or slave. Since the Roman era, so important was the institution of slavery that it metamorphosed into many different types, systems and nomenclatures in modern world. Compared to the contemporary times, it can be argued that ancient slavery differs from historical slavery in some ways - value, consent, and treatment – as noted above. No industry depends on slavery in the way that the plantations did in the Graeco-Roman times or period of the Atlantic slave trade. Although it is illegal in every country of the modern world, enslavement of people still privately exists. According to Richard (2002), 'Conservative estimates indicate that

at least 27 million people, in places as diverse as Nigeria, Indonesia, and Brazil, live in conditions of forced bondage'. However, rather than refer to forced labourers as slaves, slavery nowadays comes in various guises other than the obvious form in which one person owns another person (chattel slavery). Such guises that amount to modern slavery include bonded labour or debt bondage, where a person's labour is the security for a debt. Migrant workers often do bonded labour to pay off those who smuggled them to their new country; they could not break bolt away for fear of being deported. In this case, the migrant labourers' passports are confiscated to keep them in bondage. A young person (under 18) may be transferred to another person so that the young person can be exploited as domestic servant. In another vein, young females today are also trafficked into forced prostitution (BBC, 2014). Women and children could be coerced or forced into prostitution by syndicates and other organized crime groups to earn money (Ryan, 2013). According to Davis (2006), this is different from ancient slavery where slaves were captured and could be raped or quickly sold. The main objective of the modern slave trafficking is to earn profit by the owner and even sometimes by the victims while the ancient slave owner, as we shall see, did not necessarily keep his slave mainly for economic gains. Today, trafficked victims are not born into slavery unlike what was obtained in ancient Rome. Long ago, Aristotle had muttered the idea that free men are not suitable for slave labour world, rather, they should be useful for community life. On the contrary, he opined that the bodies of enslaved or trafficked victims are to be made strong for the services they had to render; such services today would include all the jobs of the modern-day migrant workers, bonded

labourers, or trafficked victims (Davis, 2006). The baseline, however, is that the modern bonded labourer ranks above his Roman counterpart in terms of the value paid or rewards for his labour, consent to work, and treatment while performing his task.

Unlike the modern societies, the ancient Roman society had enslaved labourers who were generally of two classes/types: the public and the private slaves. The public ones were owned by the states and their duties were to care for public buildings, fields, and markets and serve public magistrates and priests. Great numbers were used by *quaestors* (financial officers) and *aediles*. Some public slaves were drilled as firefighters; others were lictors (attendants on an official), construction workers, etc. Although the number of public slaves was large, it was inconsiderable compared with the number of privately owned ones (*Ancient History Sourcebook*: 244, 246). The private slaves were owned by various individual citizens and were largely of two types. The first were either the *familia rustica*, servants who were employed to work on their master's country estate or the so called *familia urbana*. The others were the city household servants who worked in the personal service of their masters' houses (*Ancient History Sourcebook: Rome*, 234). Many of the private slaves, particularly those of Hellenistic and African origins were like the modern-day labourers identified above. They were the ones who provided services as domestic servants or labourers, or nurses, doctors, attendants, teachers, home-managers, and general caregivers. Thus, with regard to the latter band of private slaves, this paper examines the Roman perspectives on the enslaved women, who were used in home-management and general caregiving roles.

Caregivers: Between the ancient enslaved and the modern free woman.

The concept of caregiving is a complex phenomenon that evolved in antiquity, taking on a more clearly defined system in contemporary times. Today, caregivers, also known as home health or personal care aides, are people who have the capacity to provide care for homes and other people in need. They provide varied assistance to people: the rich master/mistress, the sick, injured, mentally or physically disabled, the elderly and fragile, minors and so on. Unlike the Roman world which sourced its caregivers among the enslaved population, modern caregivers are largely a band of professional and free moral agents who, mostly, get paid for their services. According to Stepler, Renee (2015), modern medical and non-medical caregivers, depending on the state and a client's need, perform a range of tasks such as housekeeping, medication reminders, companionship, bathing and dressing of clients, monitoring the sick or the weak, minding minors, transportation from place to place, grocery shopping, meal planning, and preparation, mental and physical activities, redirection and behavioural management for people with memory problems, blood pressure and insulin checks, and other minor medical tasks and so on. The female caregivers in ancient Rome, as we shall see below, also performed some of the functions which were similar to those of the modern caregivers.

The enslaved female workforce were chiefly non-Romans who were acquired by the same methods used in the acquisition of their male counterparts. Unlike the modern world which outlawed slavery, the Romans' workforce depended on captives taken in wars and obtained through outright purchases, kidnappings, exposures, brigandage, piracies, etc. With respect to

their purchases, their prices varied according to their physical features, country of origins, heights, complexion and beauty. While some became enslaved as teenagers, many were, however, acquired in adulthood. Unlike nowadays where there is lesser emphasis on the gender of caregivers, enslaved women of Rome were the ones primarily used for caregiving roles and domestic purposes in the various households. Many even worked as midwives, actresses, entertainers, or prostitutes and their education was limited.

In the remote past, the distinction among various groups of slaves that constituted the caregivers' class was not clearly defined. However, today the story has changed. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), there are about seven types of caregivers today:

1. *Family caregivers* who are unpaid family members who are caring for the needs of the old. These members would include children and grandchildren. Others are friends and neighbours taking care of their non-relatives. These ones are not bound by state regulations that guide paid caregivers, for they are not necessarily paid for the services they rendered to their loved ones.

2. *Agency caregiver*, otherwise called the Personal Care Agent or Private Duty Agent, is a paid caregiver with or without certification and he/she helps in light housekeeping, transportation, cooking, and other non-medical duties. In most cases, clients pay agencies for the services provided by their caregivers out of pocket.

3. *Skilled nursing home caregiver* operates a nursing home care daily. The caregiver here works very hard to do all the things a resident requires that is not nursing related. Residents, for instance, need help with transferring, toileting, bathing, dressing, eating etc.

4. *Senior living caregiver* is a broad term for the caregiver who assists seniors (55 years of age and older) with living facilities, in-home care, care resources and memory care facilities. In assisted living facilities, caregivers are very important members of the team that help people function day-to-day in a safe environment. They help with bathing, dressing, hygiene, and accompany people to the dining room or activities.

5. *Home health caregiver* offers physical and occupational therapy, nursing, and speech therapy to clients that insurance-covered. If someone is home from an injury or illness and needs help to recover, home health caregiver provides much help by visiting the patient two to three times a week to help with the basics like bathing and grooming.

6. *Online caregiver* advertises his services with online companies that post resumes for caregivers and the clients connects to the caregiver through the company to hire that person.

7. *Independent caregiver* is the one who independently provides care for families, and advertises his skills through word of mouth or personal advertisement.

Of the seven types of modern caregivers listed above, only the first three (family, agency and skilled nursing home caregivers) relate to the ancient caregivers, domestic servants and home-managers who were drawn from the retinue of slaves that swarmed the streets of Rome. The unpaid Roman counterparts combined the three types and were involved in nursing/raising of minors, general housekeeping, maintenance of healthy living for the household members, transportation, cooking, and other non-medical duties. Thus, in what follows below, this paper discusses the specific roles that these enslaved females performed in various households.

Caregivers in ancient Rome: enslaved women in domestic service and nursing

Generally, ancient Roman society had some enslaved female residents who were domestic servants and caregivers that served in different capacities in different households instead of serving in the plantations, mines, bars and shops. Their roles were akin to those of the house-helpers whom the Yoruba of South west Nigeria would call *omo òdò obìrin*. They had a variety of jobs though these were more limited than those of the male slaves. As characteristic of most females in antiquity, these female domestic servants were uneducated; they were only trained in traditional household skills. Thus, they worked as child nurses, cleaners, cooks, spinners, weavers, clothmakers, menders, wet nurses, kitchen attendants, etc. The shrewder ones were engaged as clerks, secretaries, ladies' maids, cloth folders, hairdressers, haircutters, mirror holders, masseurs, readers, entertainers, midwives and infirmary attendants.

Epigraphic evidence about the above varied on domestic services provided by enslaved and freedwomen have survived. For instance, the Roman satirist, Martial, mentioned female servants who were hairdressers (Martial I.66) while Juvenal made references to *ancillas* (maids) who were spinners and weavers (Juvenal II.57). One of the most important services that an enslaved woman rendered was cleaning and laundry. For example, Iucunda Pexsa was a notable laundress, whose servile parents and sister put up a tombstone in her memory (Dessau No. 7430). There were also dressmakers; an example was Italia in whose honour a fellow-slave built a monument. She was dressmaker to Cocceia Phyllis. The monument in Italia's honour was quite expensive, but Acastus, presumably a manumitted slave and "husband" of Italia,

must have earned enough to pay for the monument (Dessau No. 7428). Another dressmaker, with her *peculium* (small savings), was said to have set up a tombstone in honour of her brother and fellow-servant, Secundio (Dessau No. 7431). Although in the Roman society, secretaries were usually male slaves, but we also know that female servants worked as secretaries. A certain Publius Rubrius Optatus was recorded to have instituted a monument for his wife, Pyrrha, who was a secretary to one Rubria Helvia.

In the Imperial times, duties in royal homes were subdivided into bits. A female domestic servant could be in charge of just brooches or perfumes or pearls. She could have combined this with other little chores around the house. Another servant could act as a teacher to the children of her master or mistress. She could also act as an infant's nurse from the time the child was born oftentimes up to the point that the child would be received by the *paedagogus*. The *paedagogus* was meant to teach the child (his pupil) Greek, which was the language of the elite apart from the mother tongue. The *paedagogus* accompanied his pupil to the theatre and to school. If the parents of a child were so miserly, they would deliberately acquire the cheapest female servant. This would then be used both as a nurse and *paedagogus* for the child. Some naughty domestic servants who looked after the children of their masters had unsteady character. These lots filled the children's mind with depraved stories, incorrect notions and wrong modes of learning. At the same time, some *paedagogi* were educated and hardworking and were found to be very humble.

Of all the enslaved females engaged in various domestic services identified above, the chief was the *vilica*, a skilled

housekeeper, who held a supervisory position. She was a home manager who held a superintendent position of great responsibility. She was in charge of all the female domestic servants in the households; if it was on the farm, she coordinated all the feminine farm activities and female slaves' welfare. It was the duty of the *vilica* to prepare and comb wool for spinning; the worked wool was worn by members of the households on wet and cold days. It was also necessary that all clothes to be worn by both the male and female slaves should be made by female slaves on the farm to save cost. If any of the domestic servants fell ill, the *vilica* had the duty to look after them by deploying infirmary attendants to attend to their needs. Thus, a good *vilica* enjoyed the goodwill and obedience of her subordinates. Above all these, enslaved females, in addition to their domestic services, were generally employed to meet the sexual needs of their masters. They proved as a sort of societal safety-valves against rape, bigamy, infidelity and adultery. For a Roman male citizen, it was better to satisfy his sexual cravings with his slave woman than to offend his fellow citizen by committing adultery with the citizen's wife or female ward. Indeed, a master could have sexual relations without penalty with his domestic servants/household slaves and it would not be regarded as an immoral sexual relation. Enslaved females evidently provided weird and demeaning sexual services which the male citizen could not demand from his wife -such as fellatio, blow jobs, anal sex and the likes (Akinboye, 2013).

In many wealthy households, rich Roman women seldom breastfed their infants. Rather, they engaged the services of caregivers, the enslaved women or freedwomen, who took over the nursing of their children (Fildes, 1986). The practice of

a woman feeding a child at the breast who is not biologically her child is called wet-nursing (*nutricia*) (Baumgartel, Sneeringer & Cohen, 2016: 25). Soranus, a second century Roman era Greek gynaecologist, prescribed that a wet-nurse's breastmilk was preferable in the days after birth, noting that the mothers could be too tired to continue to feed their babies (Soranus, *Gynaecology*, 2.19.24-5). The ideal wet-nurses (*nutrices*) were often Greek women who were employed because they had a lot of benefits including the fact that they could easily transfer the gift of mother tongue to the new babies as Greek was the language of the elite (Obladen, 2012). The Roman philosophers, Plutarch and Gellius, noted that the bond between the mother and the child through breast-feeding could be strong; and they warned that wet-nurses might compromise this emotional bond and so Plutarch recommended that a mother should be excused from breastfeeding only when ill (Fildes, 1988). Notwithstanding his warning, wet-nurses were engaged with pay and held in high esteem in Roman households; they could, indeed, be responsible for a child's training up to adulthood. In spite of the foregoing submission, it is important to admit that a wet-nurse could only be employed after her breastmilk was subjected to the sweet bay leaf test. Should the milk droplet retain its form after being dropped on the leaf, it was considered good. Milk that dissolved almost immediately or became watery was considered indigestible milk.

To buttress the above, a Latin author in an extant piece, Gellius, told us about a man named Favorinus, who visited the house of his friend, a noble of senatorial rank, to congratulate him on the arrival of a new son. Favorinus, when he learnt that the mother of the baby was sleeping, asked the friend: "I have no doubt, she will suckle her son

herself?" The mother-in-law of the woman of the host cut in and told the guest that her girl (the new mother) was exhausted by the pains she had already borne in labour. Surprised, Favorinus replied,

"I beg you, madam, let her be wholly and entirely the mother of her child. For what kind of unnatural, imperfect and half-motherhood is it to bear a child and at once send it from her? To have nourished in her womb with her own blood something which she could not see, and not feed with her own milk what she sees, now alive, now human, now calling for a mother's care? Or do you perhaps think' he said 'that nature gave women nipples as a kind of beauty-spot, not for the purpose of nourishing their babies, but as an adornment of their breasts? ...'. "But it does not matter whose milk is used, so long as it feeds the baby and enables it to live." Why don't they then say it doesn't matter in whose body and from whose blood the baby is formed." (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XII. 1. 1-10f.)

The speaker went on to say that the child would be physically and mentally deformed if given to a nurse to breast feed. He went on to say that if a child was breastfed by a slave of a different cultural origin, there would be the tendency for the child to develop the terrible habits of the slave. He complained

about nourishment of another woman's milk, especially if the nurse one employed to provide the milk was either a slave or of a servile background, and as it often happened, of foreign or barbarian nationality. She could also be dishonest, ugly, immoral, unchaste, and a wine-bibber; for usually, without discriminating choice, any enslaved or freed woman, who happened to be lactating at the times was brought in to do the job (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XII. l. 14-17). This passage only emphasised that upper-class women were fond of passing the duty of breast-feeding to nurses.

Indeed, more than a few extant inscriptions and expressions revealed various opinions concerning how children in the Roman households were taken care of by nurses and other domestic servants. One of such views was found in the following words of Quintilian which told us that infants tend to grasp words and habits of adult companions and nurses very fast, whether good or bad.

Above all, the talk of the child's nurses should not be ungrammatical. Chrysippus wished that nurses, if possible, should be chosen as the best available, as far as circumstances would allow. To their morals, doubtless, attention is first paid, but let them also speak with propriety. It is the nurse that the child will first hear. It is the nurse's words that he will try to form by imitation. We are by nature most tenacious of what we have imbibed in our infant years; for good habits are easily changed for the worse, but then will you change bad ones for good ones? Therefore, let the child

not become accustomed, even while he is yet an infant, to phraseology which must be unlearned (Quintilian I. 1. 4-5).

Therefore, the best servants and nurses with the best manners and who have good command of the spoken and written languages (Latin and/or Greek) were employed in the households. Tacitus, in another vein, frowned on engagement of certain nurses and domestic labourers in the household; he was quoted saying:

But nowadays, the new born infant is handed over to some little Greek slave girl who is given as mate to one or other male slave from the whole body of slaves in the household; and usually this mate is a worthless fellow, quite incapable of any serious service. The child's tender and simple mind is, from the start, imbued with the tales and errors of these people, and nobody in the entire household gives any thought to what he or she says or does in the infant's presence. Moreover, the parents themselves accustom their little children, not to modesty and probity, but to lasciviousness and dirty jokes; and so, impudence and contempt for others gradually worm their way in. Indeed, the characteristic vices of the city of Rome seem to me to be conceived almost in the mother's womb: for instance, the habit of glamorizing actors, gladiators and

jockeys. When a child's mind is occupied and obsessed with things like this, how can it have adequate room left for good things? (Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratibus* 29).

Here, Tacitus tried to tell us that the behaviour of the child could be affected when he was given to a nurse who had a male slave as her housemate. This is because the child would be affected by dirty jokes and immoral games engaged in by these people which obviously might not good for him at his very tender age.

As already pointed out, there were in Roman households as many good and as many bad caregiver nurses, and as many haughty as many humble ones. The fortunate ones reciprocated the goodness of their masters and mistresses in some ways. For instance, the fortunate nurses could set up monuments for the owners they had nursed while the owners or nursed children could also do the same for their old nurses. Epigraphic evidence about the domestic and nursing services of enslaved and freedwomen and their devotions have survived. On the devotion of nurses to men or women they had wet-nursed or nursed as infants, a monument was set up by one Maecilia Rogata in honour of her master, whom she described as "the sweetest of fathers and a good, honey-sweet and very dear lover who will continue to love all his family." Her master whom she had nursed was Lord Camenus along with Lady Caeionia. This enslaved caregiver later became a freedwoman (Dessau, No. 8533).

Another monument was set up by the duo of Aurelia Soteris and Mussius Chrysonicus for Quintus Licinius Florus Octavianus, whom the two enslaved had jointly nursed and whom Aurelia had actually wet-nursed. At the time they set up this monument, the two

had become husband and wife and had been freed as slaves. They even became their master's main heirs, since he predeceased them (Dessau No. 8534). Again, a monument was set up for Licinia Lampetia Basilioflora by Mussius Chrysonicus and Aurelia Soteris who were the Licinia's nurses and milk providers (Dessau No. 8535). The same nurses who had taken care of Licinia had also earlier nursed her father, Quintus Licinus above. This tells us that this couple had been nurses in this household for a very long time. There was also a monument set up for Lucius Valerius by his "honey-sweetest nurse." He lived for eight months and twenty-five days (Dessau No. 8537). This evidence shows us that the nurse was more like a mother to the child.

As regards the devotion of the owners (parents, masters or mistresses) or nursed children to their nurses, we know that Servius Cornelius Dolabella Matillianus set up a monument for his well deserving nurse and breast feeder, Cornelia Sabina (Dessau No. 8532). The monument was a token of his affection for the woman; thus, he freed her before her death. A certain Volumnia Procula set up a monument for her nurse, later made a freedwoman, Volumnia Dynamis, who lived for 105 years (Dessau No. 8538). She had been a "baby nurse" which means she had looked after her master's younger children. Quintus Pesecennius Chrestio also set up a monument for his nurse, Clodia Asthioca, who had breast-fed him as a baby (Dessau No. 8542). She was a wet nurse and had breast-fed him along with her master's other children.

A few examples may also suffice here as evidence of devotion of parents for their children's childhood nurses. Flavia Domitilla set up a monument for Tatia Baucylis who had nursed her children. She also had tombs

for her freedmen, freedwomen and their descendants (Dessau No. 1839). A tombstone was constructed for Caius Papius Asclepiades and Julia Iucunda, freedwoman and nurse of the Imperial children, Drusus and Drusilla (children of Germanicus) (Dessau No. 1837). Also, in the Imperial home, there was a tombstone erected for Valeria Hilara and her husband, Tiberius Claudius Fructus. Valeria had nursed Octavia, wife of Claudius Caesar Augustus (Nero). The monument was set up by Tiberius Claudius Primus and Tiberius Claudius Aster (Dessau No. 1838). Both husband and wife were remembered with affection during the early empire. A small monument was set up for one Crispina by her husband, Albus. The monument was for his “divine and well deserving wife” who had nursed two senators (Dessau No. 8531). Both husband and wife were slaves. The husband barely had enough money to set up the monument, but he showed affection and was also proud of his wife. Also, a monument was erected for Atticus, son of the nurse, Stacte, who breast-fed Atticus at the same time she breast-fed the son of her master, Sisenna (Dessau No. 8539); she was an *ancilla* (maid) nurse. Glyptus set up a monument for his devoted sister, Teia Threpte, cradle rocker of the Vestal Virgin Rufina (Dessau No. 8541). She was later freed while her brother, Glyptus, still remained a slave.

Pliny wrote about the daughter of his friend, Fundanus. Fundanus’ daughter died at the age of thirteen and Pliny told us that “she loved her nurses, her attendants and her teachers, each one for the service given her” (Pliny, *Epistulae* V.16.1). In another letter thanking, most likely, a farm manager for looking after the farm he (Pliny) had given to his nurse, Pliny said that he treasured the farm as much as his nurse also treasured it.

At the time Pliny bought the farm, he paid 100,000 Sesterces. The farm had initially done badly until he entrusted it to somebody whom he had much confidence in (Pliny *Epistulae*, VI.3). The nurse, who now owned the farm, was already set free. She probably was an *ancilla* (maid) when she nursed Pliny as a child. At the time Pliny was writing, he was over forty, so the nurse must have advanced in age (Sherwin-White, 1966).

Conclusion and recommendations

The ancient Roman society was a civilisation that provided a solid bridge over which many of the finest ideas, thoughts, values, institutions and models of antiquity have found their way into the post-classical worlds of Christianity, Islam, the Medieval, the Renaissance and the Modern periods. One of such antique legacies, which was integral to the flourishing of ancient economies, was the practice of slavery, a phenomenon that metamorphosed into different modern mutations such as forced labour or domestic servanthood. Regardless of its obnoxious conception as immoral, horrific or illegal, slavery was one of the realities of human existence in the remote past. As discussed in the foregoing, the functional use of the enslaved females as caregivers, domestic servants and nurses makes the institution of slavery a necessary tool to meeting the socio-economic needs of individual households and even the state in the ancient world.

In contemporary times however, the situation has, to some extent, changed. Many female caregivers and domestic servants are rewarded for their services and are no longer drawn from slave (chattel) population. With the abolition of slavery all over the world, domestic servants or labourers are now free moral agents and are not completely subjected to the *dominium* of another even when situations warrant that they, against

their free will, should be coerced or threatened to do all forms of works under duress. The modern-day labourer, home manager, caregiver or domestic servant, as we have seen, is distinguished from the chattel slave in terms of consent to willingly work, and treatment or value that are rewarded for labour. These days, caregivers, domestic servants, nurses and labourers have professionalised their jobs and have become selective. These are facts that were lacking in the enslaved female servants in the past. Against this backdrop, the paper concludes by recommending that:

- Governments at all levels should intensify efforts to totally put a stop to the resurgence of modern-day slaveries which, like in the olden days, seek to force, coerce or threaten the weak, especially the women, to do all forms of works against their free will.
- Studies about some socio-cultural phenomena of the past should be encouraged to enable researchers determine and chart out relevant courses for the future of the world.
- Governments and organisations at all levels should give quality attention to both medical and non-medical caregivers to enable them to improve on the tasks of providing cares to the needy and the weak, especially the elderly, the minors, the sick, the injured, widows and widowers who are all important part of a healthy nation.

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