

Ottoman Women in Public Space

Women and Gender

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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Ottoman Women in Public Space

Edited by

Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet



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Preface

Some years ago at a conference on Ottoman women at the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies, Newnham College, Cambridge, we began to think about the level to which Ottoman women were visible in the public space, beyond the traditional trope of trips to the bath house or the occasional appearances of the good and the great. As a result we started a research project at the Skilliter Centre on Ottoman women in public space, examining the subject from different angles and perspectives and through a variety of different sources from literature to newspapers, memoirs to official state documents. What we wanted to do was to question just how much Ottoman women were invisible in Ottoman society, and to generate a discussion around the level to which such perceived invisibility in fact mirrored reality and to suggest that women could have been much more of a public presence in Ottoman society than has generally been thought. We therefore set out to try and understand this issue in general terms and to gain some sort of overview of Ottoman women's visibility throughout the empire and throughout the period of its existence as a starting point for such discussions and an encouragement for further, detailed and specific case studies. Attempting to examine any issue across the entire empire and over the whole period of the empire's existence carries with it the inherent danger of over simplification or of conflating time periods. Regional difference within the empire was considerable, so making it impossible to establish any one fixed empire-wide pattern for female visibility. At the same time, any attempt to follow a linear chronological line runs into problems because, just as the regional variation was enormous, so too was the variation in patterns of behaviour which do not conform to any prescribed chronology. Thus, while a historical context can be given, this context is not necessarily chronologically bound.

In our attempt to understand patterns of female visibility it was essential to use as wide a range of sources as possible. Women are not always particularly easy to locate in state documents, for example, and for this reason we turned also to literature and memoirs. This played into our desire for the book to be very much the production of a team working together, from different backgrounds and with expertise in different periods and branches of study. Team work is not used as much among historians as it could be. However, it is clear that by combining the strengths, languages and specialist knowledge of academics working together, the results attained will be much more wide-ranging and in-depth than those produced by individuals working alone. Working

together enriched our understanding of the subject and made it possible to produce a multi-voiced book at the end of this project.

We should therefore like to thank our fellow authors, Edith Gülçin Ambros, Palmira Brummett and Svetla Ianeva, who were willing to become involved in the project and who made both the workshop and the book such an enjoyable experience. We are also most grateful to the Skilliter Centre for its support of the research project which gave rise to this book. At Brill, we should like to thank Nicolette van der Hoek with whom it has been as always a great pleasure to work.

Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet

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Ottoman Women in Public Space: An Introduction

*Edith Gülçin Ambros, Ebru Boyar, Palmira Brummett, Kate Fleet,
Svetla Ianeva*

The traditional portrayal of women as “passive Orientalist caricatures”¹ has come under increasing attack over the past few decades and, as Abraham Marcus noted some years ago, research has begun to “draw Middle Eastern women out of the dim fringes of history to which they have been relegated hitherto, and to lend them more realistic dimensions”.² More recently, Dror Ze’evi drew attention to the impact of research in the *sicil* records which has revealed Muslim women, “previously characterized as downtrodden and exploited”, as “relatively independent, in control of their property, and actively engaged in social and economic affairs”.³ Despite such reassessments, the view of Ottoman woman as relegated to the roles of wives and mothers, at least before the nineteenth century,⁴ still persists and little scholarly attention has been paid to women as active participants in the public space, visible, present and an essential element in the everyday, public life of the empire.

The conceptual framework of private and public spheres has never been dominant in the history of Middle Eastern women according to Elizabeth Thompson who argues that failure to engage with these terms may “incur steep costs to historical understanding” and encourage cultural exceptionalism and essentialism.⁵ This may indeed be the case but the term public, “slippery in its

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- 1 Baer, Marc, “Islamic conversion narratives of women: social change and gendered religious hierarchy in early modern Ottoman Istanbul”, *Gender and History*, 16/2 (2004), p. 426.
 - 2 Marcus, Abraham, “Men, women, and property: dealers in real estate in eighteenth-century Aleppo”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26/2 (1983), p. 146.
 - 3 Ze’evi, Dror, “The use of Ottoman Shari‘a court records as a source for Middle Eastern social history: a reappraisal”, *Islamic Law and Society*, 5/1 (1998), p. 36. Iris Agmon also noted that the *sicil* “enables the historian to draw a more accurate and detailed picture of the social history of Muslim women”, Agmon, Iris, “Muslim women in court according to the *sijill* of late Ottoman Jaffa and Haifa”, in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World. Power, Patronage, and Piety*, Gavin R.G. Hambly (ed.) (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 126–7.
 - 4 Çakır, Serpil, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis, 2011), p. 59.
 - 5 Thompson, Elizabeth, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15/1 (2003), p. 52.

capaciousness”,⁶ is not necessarily an easy one to pin down and the public/private divide is not as rigid as it has often been taken to be.⁷ The divide between house and street, for example, often seen as the quintessential private/public divide, in fact rapidly dissolves into “less tidy, more complex, and more illuminating zones of action, strategy, or negotiation where more choices existed than we might suppose”.⁸ Thus the *mahalle*, the neighbourhood, could be both public and private, a public zone but also an extension of home and family,⁹ a ‘private’ space policed and controlled by its inhabitants, a discreet, controlled and separate world, ‘private’ for its members and closed to the outside. Thus, like private gardens, neighbourhoods formed an intermediary zone, or third space neither fully public nor private.¹⁰ Even the house, usually regarded as a quintessential private space, could at times become very much public when, for example, males of the *mahalle* invaded the home of a woman suspected, rightly or wrongly, of immoral behaviour. Leonore Davidoff, when discussing public and private in British gender history, has pointed out that even within the house itself there is a “shifting division” between areas that are public and those which are very much private, something highly applicable to an Ottoman house.¹¹ In light of such realities, the restrictive binary dichotomy or “private/

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- 6 Ryan, Mary P., “The public and the private good: across the great divide in women’s history”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15/2 (2003), p. 11.
- 7 Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou have noted that recently “the ‘privacy’ of the private sphere has been shaken . . . and the ‘publicness’ of the public sphere is being renegotiated”, Köksal, Duygu and Anastasia Falierou (eds.), *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women. New Perspectives* (Brill: Leiden, 2013), p. 12.
- 8 Lauderdale Graham, Sandra, “Making the private public: a Brazilian perspective”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15/1 (2003), p. 29.
- 9 Janet Abu-Lughod refers to it as “semi-private space, a third category between public and private”, Abu-Lughod, Janet, “The Islamic city—historic myth, Islamic essence, and contemporary relevance”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19/2 (1987), p. 168.
- 10 Abu-Lughod, “The Islamic city”, p. 168. For the “semiprivate domain”, see Ayalon, Yaron, “Ottoman urban privacy in light of disaster recovery”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43/3 (2011), p. 517. The interaction of street peddlers with women of the house is one activity that takes place in this semi-private space; for a literary example involving a Jewish girl and an Albanian youth in a *mahalle* of Istanbul, written by Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân in the seventeenth century, see Edith Ambros’s chapter, “Frivolity and flirtation”. See also Palmira Brummett’s chapter, “The ‘what if’ of the Ottoman female: authority, ethnography, and conversation”, in this volume.
- 11 Davidoff, Leonore, “Gender and the “Great Divide”: public and private in British gender history”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15/1 (2003), p. 18.

public cleavage”¹² in which the term public tended to be understood has been increasingly abandoned, as Nina Ergin has noted, to be replaced by the more satisfactory and flexible concept of a spectrum¹³ or to be “plotted along a continuum”, as Asma Afsaruddin puts it.¹⁴

Defining public space in an Ottoman context is made more complicated by the vastness and diversity of the Ottoman empire itself which renders the empire less a unified whole than a mosaic of different worlds held loosely together by a state structure marked by its flexibility. Just as the economy of the empire was characterized by its diversity, with a multiplicity of coinage types in circulation, rates of exchange for the same coin varying area to area, and with a series of separate customs zones, for example, so too did the Ottoman social world exhibit striking regional differences. What constituted public space, and the place of women within it, thus differed greatly region to region where what set the acceptability of female conduct was the norms imposed by the local society itself rather than any state directed social standard. Punishment, for example, was often not related to state law but rather to local custom. What was acceptable in one zone could be quite unthinkable in another. Thus, while women were an everyday presence in the markets of the capital, such behaviour was, according to Evliya Çelebi, likely to be punished by death in Bitlis.¹⁵ Even regions geographically close to each other could display considerable variation in norms of social behaviour. Prostitution was, for example, recognised and accepted by the state in the nineteenth century in İzmir and Istanbul, but its existence totally denied by the same state in

12 Schick, İrvin Cemil, “The harem as gendered space and the spatial reproduction of gender”, in *Harem Histories. Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Marilyn Booth (ed.) (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 77.

13 Ergin, Nina, “Ottoman royal women’s spaces: the acoustic dimension”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 26/1 (2014), p. 102. The editors would like to thank Nina Ergin for allowing them to see this article before publication. In the Ottoman context Tülay Artan has argued that “‘indoors’ has come to stand for private activities (including women) and ‘outdoors’ for activities in public space (excluding women), though these should be taken not as opposite poles but as positions on a continuous scale”, Artan, Tülay, “Forms and forums of expression: Istanbul and beyond, 1600–1800”, in *The Ottoman World*, Christine Woodhead (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 380–1.

14 Afsaruddin, Asma, “Introduction”, in *Hermeneutics and Honor. Negotiating Female “Space” in Islamicate Societies*, Asma Afsaruddin (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1991), p. 3.

15 Evliya Çelebi, *Evlîyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. iv, Yücel Dağlı and Seyit Ali Kahraman (eds.) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), p. 123.

Kastamonu due to the conservative structure of local society.¹⁶ In this context, codes of public female visibility in Cairo and Sofia, at opposite ends of the empire in very different socio/ethnic/religious settings could be expected to be widely divergent. Evliya Çelebi, for example, commented on how women rode donkeys in Cairo, something quite inconceivable in the capital.¹⁷ Border zones too, such as the port cities of the Dalmatian region, where there was a heightened fluidity of movement and mutual influence, could also perhaps be expected to have displayed a more cosmopolitan approach to the presence of women in public space while enclosed or remote mountainous regions could have shown the reverse tendency.

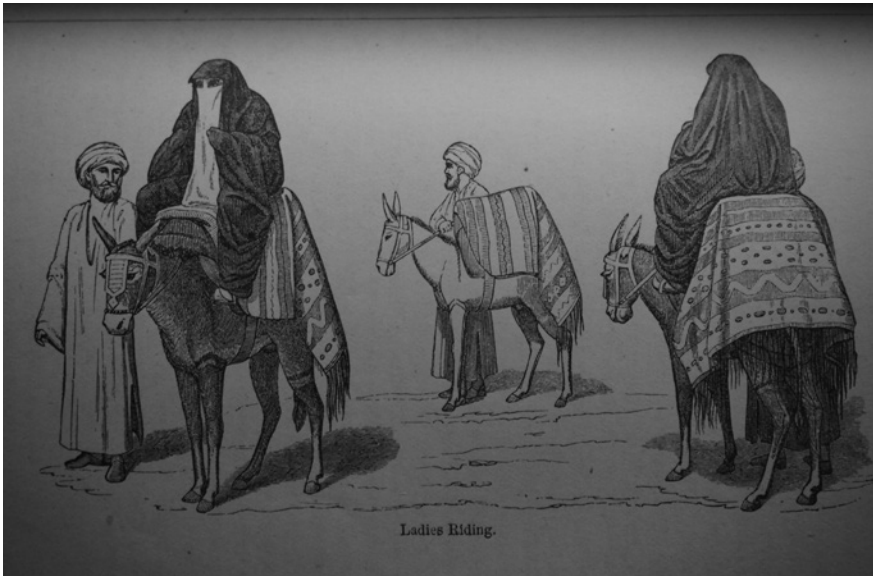


FIGURE 1.1 “Ladies riding”, in Lane, Edward, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: John Murray, 1871), vol. 1, p. 241.

FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF KATE FLEET.

- 16 Boyar, Ebru, “An inconsequential boil’ or a ‘terrible disease’? Social perceptions of and state responses to syphilis in the late Ottoman empire”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 2/2 (2011), 101–24.
- 17 Dankoff, Robert and Sooyong Kim (eds. and trans.), *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (London: Eland, 2010), p. 373. Evliya Çelebi explains that “this is not considered shameful, because the donkey is Egypt’s caique and ferryboat”. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali had noted the same thing a century earlier, see Tietze, Andreas

It is often argued that Ottoman women only emerged into the light of public visibility in the nineteenth century, Artan, for example, finding the argument that the public presence of women in the 1700s was characteristic of the period unconvincing, regarding it instead as “very embryonic” when compared with their position in the Tanzimat (1839–1876).¹⁸ Similarly, for Haris Exertzoglou women’s public activities only expanded “moderately” from the 1860s.¹⁹ While not wishing to deny the great social transformations which took place in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to redress the balance somewhat when discussing female public presence, for women were far more visible far earlier than either of these two views allow. What dictated visibility was social status and wealth rather more than chronology.

Nina Ergin has noted that “wealth, age and position within the life-cycle constituted critical boundaries circumscribing access to public space, more so than gender”.²⁰ That these factors should be of major significance in dictating levels of female public visibility is hardly surprising. Women from lower socio-economic strata or at the bottom of the social heap were more visible, working, shopping, selling produce or moving from door to door as peddlers and social go-betweens bringing gossip or arranging marriages, than women from the higher echelons of society who were less to be seen in the public sphere.²¹ Here one should note,

(text, transliteration, translation, notes), *Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī’s Description of Cairo of 1599* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), p. 41. Mustafa Ali’s approach is more critical: “[...] their women, all of them, ride donkeys! Even the spouses of some notables ride on donkeys to the Bulak promenade. Week after week they mount their donkeys and dismount like soldiers. Moreover, when they marry a daughter off they let her ride on a donkey and seventy or eighty women ride [with her], while the only things visible in terms of weapons are their shields. People of intelligence find that this unbecoming behavior constitutes a serious defect for the city of Cairo, because in other lands they put prostitutes on a donkey as a punishment. In Cairo the women mount donkeys by their own free will and expose themselves [to the eyes of the public]; therefore it appears appropriate that for punishment they be put on camels”. Edward Lane also refers to women riding, Lane, Edward William, *An Account of the Manners and the Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871), vol. 1, pp. 240–2 and illustration of “Ladies riding” on p. 241.

18 Artan, “Forms and forums of expression”, p. 401.

19 Exertzoglou, Haris, “The cultural uses of consumption: negotiating class, gender, and nation in the Ottoman urban centers during the 19th century”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35/1 (2003), p. 86.

20 Ergin, “Ottoman royal women’s spaces: the acoustic dimension”, p. 103.

21 A similar phenomenon can be observed in early modern Venice, see Cohen, Elizabeth S., “To pray, to work, to hear, to speak: women in Roman streets c. 1600”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 12/3 (2008), p. 294.

however, that Nelly Hanna has called into question “the generally held view that the physical movements of women from comfortable milieu were very limited”.²² At the same time, higher visibility was not necessarily related to frequency of visibility, for one could argue that poor women in crowds formed an ‘invisible’ mass, but rich women, although out much less often and not in the same numbers, were more visible for they represented power and wealth and pomp, something much more attractive than poverty. The *valide sultan* (the mother of the sultan) moving from one location to another, or the wedding procession of a daughter of the sultan was thus at a different level of visibility from a mass female presence on the streets to welcome back a victorious Ottoman army. Age, too, dictated the level of visibility, for younger women went out less, older women more. Strictures about women’s seclusion were not applied to old women by Yasin al-‘Umari, for example, author of a biographical dictionary of women written in Mosul in the eighteenth century.²³

A further division played a significant role in levels of visibility, and that was the urban/rural divide. As Zarinebaf-Shahr has noted, “the gender division of space did not spread deeply into rural and tribal communities primarily due to the necessity of women’s participation in agriculture and animal husbandry”.²⁴ Rural women, in the words of John Bowring in his report on Syria published in 1840, “are constantly seen” fetching water, collecting firewood and working in the fields.²⁵ They weeded orchards, applied pesticides to vines and moved around as migratory agricultural labourers.²⁶ Evidence of the visibility of young female villagers is to be found in folksongs, especially in some by Karacaoğlan, an Ottoman folk poet (*âşık*) of the Taurus region who lived in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.²⁷ In the urban context, however, the requirement for female labour was either not so high, or not so visible, and for the younger

22 Hanna, Nelly, “Marriage among merchant families in seventeenth-century Cairo”, in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 151.

23 Khouri, Dina Rizk, “Drawing boundaries and defining spaces. Women and space in Ottoman Iraq”, in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 176.

24 Zarinebaf-Shahr, Fariba, “Women and the public eye in eighteenth-century Istanbul”, in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 308.

25 Bowring, John, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1840), p. 50.

26 Reilly, James A., “Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus”, *Arabica*, 42/1 (1995), pp. 96, 98–9. For more evidence on Ottoman women’s involvement in agricultural activities see Svetla Ianeva’s chapter, “Female actors, producers and money makers in Ottoman public space: the case of the late Ottoman Balkans”, in this volume. See also Palmira Brummett’s chapter in this volume.

27 For more information see Ambros’s chapter in this volume.

women mostly restricted to the semi-private space of the *mahalle*, as when fetching water from the neighbourhood's fountain.

Although religion or ethnic differences are often taken as significant, the gap between, for example, elite Muslim and non-Muslim women was far less than that between a Muslim woman from the higher echelons of society and a Muslim woman from the lower social strata.²⁸ What dominated here as a marker of difference was not religion or ethnicity but wealth. Although religion was clearly a factor in seclusion or mobility, care needs to be taken in assessing just what its impact was. While it is usually thought that Christian women were more to be seen in public than Muslim women, for the Ottoman Armenian Basmajean, writing in the later nineteenth century, it was Muslim rather than Christian women who were out and about, smoking and strolling along the shores of the Bosphorus.²⁹ This caveat must also be applied to the role of culture and custom, for while cultural norms might require women to remain within the home, custom could permit them to visit *şeyhs* (holy men) and graveyards.

Cultural requirements could also be swept away by extraordinary events such as natural disasters or warfare and violence, which could quickly overturn the established order. The Balkan Wars, for example, resulted in waves of highly visible female refugees flooding into Istanbul and in the emergence of nurses treating the wounded in makeshift hospitals in the capital. Even Basiretçi Ali Efendi, whose approach to the changing times of the later nineteenth century and to the public presence of women was far from positive, called for women to do their patriotic duty and work for the war effort during the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877–78.³⁰ This war led not just to female refugees but to widespread publicity about them, for photographs of the wounded refugee women, who escaped from the Russian and Bulgarian forces, showing the nature of their injuries were sent to foreign embassies as proof of atrocities committed against civilians.³¹

28 A minor division among Muslim women resulted from being in close contact with a mystical (*sufi*) order, or not, because those who were in close contact benefited from a more positive appreciation of their capabilities than that granted them by orthodox Islam, see Ambros, Edith Gülçin, "O Mohammed, sie sagen wir sind mangelhaft!" – Osmanische Dichterinnen nicht auf den Mund gefallen?", *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 8/1 (2005), pp. 23–7.

29 Basmajean, G.Y., *Social and Religious Life in the Orient* (New York: American Tract Society, 1890), p. 172.

30 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, Nuri Sağlam (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), pp. 668–9.

31 The National Archives, London, FO 78/2583, 23 August 1877.

Regardless, however, of any special circumstances or distinctions of social status or rural as opposed to urban location, factors which impacted on levels of visibility, one can say that women were always a presence in the Ottoman public sphere, seen or perceived in one way or another. Indeed the famous *şeyhülislam* Ebussuud Efendi ruled in the mid sixteenth century that the presence of women in public places was acceptable.³² Women, accompanied by servants if rich or alone if poor, went to the *hamam* or to the market. They visited neighbours, graveyards, *şeyhs* and doctors.³³ They went on trips to pleasure gardens³⁴ to eat cherries or drink coffee, or disported themselves on the ferris wheels, swings and merry-go-rounds which marked the exuberant extravagance of the Lale Devri (the Tulip Era, 1718–1730).³⁵ It was even not uncommon, at least according to Edward Lane who was in Cairo in the first half of the nineteenth century, “to see females of the lower orders flirting and jesting with men in public”.³⁶ Not only women of the lower orders in Cairo showed such an inclination, if we are to believe Julia Pardoe who noted what she saw in Istanbul in the same period.³⁷ They appeared in court and in crowds on the streets for celebrations, the birth of royal children, circumcisions, military victories, or religious festivities. Some miniatures depicting imperial circumcision festivities, for example, allow no doubt about the high visibility of women at such events.³⁸ Women attended political meetings,³⁹ travelled on

32 Ebussuud Efendi specified that women were to carry themselves with dignity and in a virtuous manner, and were to be accompanied by a eunuch and servants, Düzdağ, M. Ertuğrul (ed.), *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1972), p. 55, no. 154.

33 Yılmaz, Coşkun and Necdet Yılmaz (eds.), *Osmanlılarda Sağlık 11, Arşiv Belgeleri* (Istanbul: Esen Ofset, 2006), p. 281.

34 For the literary evidence on women going on outings to pleasure gardens at the end of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries given by Tacizade Cafer Çelebi and by Maşizade Fikri Çelebi, see Ambros's chapter in this volume.

35 Zilfi, Madeline C., “Women and society in the Tulip Era, 1718–1730”, in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 292; Hamadeh, Shirine, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008).

36 Lane, *An Account of the Manners and the Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 1, p. 227.

37 For a more detailed account see Ambros's chapter in this volume.

38 About these miniatures and an excerpt from the *Surname-i Hazin* (Book of Festivities of Hazin) of the eighteenth century, showing how visible women were, see Ambros's chapter in this volume.

39 See, for example, the picture “Darılfünun Konferans Salonunda Osmanlı Hanımları”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 27 Temmuz 1329 / 7 Ramazan 1331 (10 August 1913), no 2–100, p. 4.

the boats plying between the old city of Istanbul and Galata,⁴⁰ and appeared on the streets of the capital, though not always safely for women were liable to attack there, something which according to an article in the magazine *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) in 1913 was increasing daily.⁴¹ Women also travelled further afield, again not always safely as the experience of Gülli Hatun shows for she was attacked and robbed in the Koliserto mountain pass while travelling with her son Hasan Reis through the *kaza* (district) of Trabolice in the Peloponnese in 1631.⁴² Nesli Hatun, travelling in 1583 to Budin with her husband Mustafa Çavuş, suffered a worse fate for she was attacked by 25 brigands who seized and plundered her goods, murdered her husband and wounded her female slaves (*cariyeler*).⁴³ Women travelled on pilgrimage⁴⁴ or for less worthy reasons, fleeing justice in the case of Mankalya, accused with her son in 1630 of having murdered her husband and various travellers who were guests in her house, seizing their goods and money, and of having created further sedition, and who successfully evaded capture, escaping with the help of local officials.⁴⁵

Women could be made visible for a variety of reasons, as commodities in the slave market or as the punished perpetrators of crime such as adultery or prostitution. Working women were highly visible, in the fields, gathering firewood or collecting water at public fountains, planting flowers in Istanbul,⁴⁶

40 Molestation of female passengers was one of the reasons for the sultan's order in 1583 for boats to be withdrawn from service, Ülker, Hikmet (ed.), *Sultanın Emir Defteri (51 Nolu Mühimme)* (Istanbul: TATAV, 2003), no. 272, pp. 142 and 88 of the facsimile; Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrî'de İstanbul Hayatı (1495–1591)* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1988), pp. 41–2, no. 6 and 7; on this topic see also Ambros's chapter in this volume and Brummett's chapter in this volume and the illustration of a woman in a boat (Fig. 2.1: Women in a boat. John Hay Library, "Vue general du Port et de la Ville de Constantinople," Inset. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage Pittoresque*, vol. II pt. 2, plate 70, after page 480) in Palmira Brummett's chapter.

41 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 27 Temmuz 1329 / 7 Ramazan 1331 (10 August 1913), no 2–100, p. 13.

42 *85 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1040–1041/1630–1631 (1632))*, 2 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2001–2002), vol. I, no. 254, p. 108 (transcription, vol. II, pp. 154–5), Cemaziülahır 1040 (January–February 1631).

43 Ülker, *Sultanın Emir Defteri (51 Nolu Mühimme)*, no. 207, Gurre-i Şaban 991 (20 August 1583), pp. 109, 66.

44 In 1631 Juwaiyria bint Hasan stipulated in her marriage contract that she would be allowed to go to, and return from, Mecca, Hanna, "Marriage among merchant families in seventeenth-century Cairo", in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, pp. 152–3.

45 *85 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1040–1041/1630–1631 (1632))*, I, no. 346, p. 146 (transcription, II, pp. 209–10), 29 Rebiülevvel 1040 (5 November 1630).

46 Zarinebaf-Shahr, Fariba, "The role of women in the urban economy of Istanbul, 1700–1850", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (2001), p. 142.

as peddlers⁴⁷ or market traders, or as factory workers on their way to work.⁴⁸ In the seventeenth century female *gaytancılar* (producers of silk cords) were free to move unmolested throughout Bursa, selling their wares in whichever market they wished.⁴⁹ Peasant women moved from village to town to sell their produce in the urban markets,⁵⁰ or pounced on passing travellers to sell foodstuffs such as bread.⁵¹ They were also visible in a restricted fashion as professional mourners (*ağutçılar*)⁵² singing laments at funerals to an exclusively female audience.

Women's presence in the Ottoman public sphere was not limited to visuality for, as Nina Ergin has pointed out, "auditory access and acoustic methods of communication often exceeded the limits of vision and visually bounded space."⁵³ For Ergin "the physical boundary between the two [i.e. private and public spaces] was more akin to a permeable membrane easily punctured by sound"⁵⁴ and she argues that consideration of women's acoustic space will

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- 47 A female peddler in mid-seventeenth-century Cairo inserted a clause in her marriage agreement that her husband would not stop her from pursuing her work, Hanna, "Marriage among merchant families in seventeenth-century Cairo", in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 150.
- 48 The female workers in the silk factories in Bursa in 1910 complained of the difficulties they experienced in coming to and from work, Çelik, Birten, "Sweatshops in the silk industry of the Bursa region and the workers' strikes in 1910", *Turkish Historical Review*, 4/1 (2013), p. 34.
- 49 Gerber, Haim, "Social and economic position of women in an Ottoman city, Bursa", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12/3 (1980), p. 237.
- 50 Peasant women came into Damascus, for example, to sell their produce there, Reilly, "Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus", p. 98. According to Ruth Kark and Roy Fischel, 68 per cent of peasant merchants at Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem in the early twentieth century were women, Kark, Ruth and Roy Fischel, "Palestinian women in the public domain during the late Ottoman and Mandate periods, 1831–1948", *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, 10/1–2 (2012), p. 89.
- 51 Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin de, *The Turkish Embassy Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, Edward Seymour Forster (trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 21. See Brummett's chapter in this volume.
- 52 They could be professionals and receive remuneration or talented amateurs, as they could be strangers or related to the family of the deceased; the visibility of the professional unrelated *ağutçılar* was naturally higher.
- 53 Ergin, "Ottoman royal women's spaces: the acoustic dimension", p. 95.
- 54 Ergin, "Ottoman royal women's spaces: the acoustic dimension", p. 103. See Ambros's chapter in this volume for Evliya Çelebi on the effect of the "womanizers' lute" (*zenpare sazı*), a good illustration of the permeability of the physical boundary through sound.

lead to “a refinement of the categories of private/public/male/female space”.⁵⁵ Women were therefore also present in the public sphere through sound, women singing and playing instruments within their own homes, for example, being audible to the outside world,⁵⁶ and, as Madeline Zilfi notes, “most women took part in street life, even if only via a basket lowered to vendors or through a window calling to children”.⁵⁷ Although concealed, they could be heard through the lattice work of the *cumba* (bay window), through which they themselves could see to the street below,⁵⁸ or while watching a *Karagöz* play from behind a screen, as was the case in Crete in the seventeenth century when the French traveller Jean Thévenot was shocked by his host’s wife’s hearty enjoyment of jokes so bawdy that they would make a gentleman blush.⁵⁹ Audible female presence also applied to the *deniz hamamu*, the sea *hamam* (public baths) that became all the rage in nineteenth-century Istanbul. Here men could hear the women, screened off in their own particular patch of sea, protected from prying male eyes by an attendant policeman. At times, men did get a glimpse, at least of foreign women who swam out of the enclosure into the open sea.⁶⁰

In the same way as the acoustic dimension adds depth to female public presence, so too should the olfactory space be taken into account, something also pointed out by Nina Ergin.⁶¹ Evliya Çelebi, in his description of women in Mecca, noted the impact of smell. “If a woman passes by a man of God”, he wrote, “his brain is suffused with the perfumes of musk and ambergris and civet”. Evliya Çelebi himself was much affected when he “ran into a flock of women” in a wedding procession, for “even from a distance of ten paces my

55 Ergin, “Ottoman royal women’s spaces: the acoustic dimension”, p. 89.

56 Lane, *An Account of the Manners and the Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, II, pp. 237–8. The *ağutçılar*, too, were certainly audible to the men listening outside the room where the mourning ceremony attended only by women was taking place.

57 Zilfi, “Women and society in the Tulip era”, pp. 298–9.

58 The *cumba* or *mashrabiyya* was a feature, too, of Jewish houses in Istanbul, see Rozen, Minna, “Public space and private space among the Jews of Istanbul in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”, *Turcica*, 30 (1998), pp. 342–3. Enderunlu Vasif (d. 1824) wrote a humorous poem in which a mother warns her young daughter of, among other things, communicating with men by making signs from windows; see Ambros’s chapter in this volume for the excerpt.

59 Thévenot, Jean de, *Voyages de Mr de Thevenot tant en Europe qu’un Asie et en Afrique* (Paris: chez C. Angot, 1689), vol. I, pp. 95–6.

60 Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 282–5.

61 Ergin, “Ottoman royal women’s spaces: the acoustic dimension”, p. 95.

brain was suffused with fragrances”.⁶² Not everyone was so pleasantly affected. In 1567 a complaint was registered in court about the water closet introduced by the daughter of Nasuh, the former *mütevelli* of Ayasofya, into the *harem* of the Eyüp mosque in Istanbul. The unseemly smell upset the Muslims in the summer and spread into the mosque itself. In consequence they wanted the offending loo removed.⁶³ This olfactory presence was also one that could clearly apply whether women were physically present or not.

While women, though not physically visible, could be heard or smelt in the public sphere, so too could their reputation become public property, for at the moment a woman’s name fell onto “the tongue of the people”⁶⁴ and she became the object of rumour or report, good or bad, she was de facto present in the public space. What occasioned a woman’s name to circulate could be the impact of her charitable deeds, the founding or functioning of a *vakıf* (pious foundation), the building of a mosque or a fountain for example,⁶⁵ or it could be quite the reverse in the case of disreputable behaviour, such as drunkenness⁶⁶ or of prostitution. Rumour was dangerous and could be used against women who sought to defend themselves, appearing in court to protest against false accusations, resorting to bribery or having to accept the payment of money extorted from them, as did a perfectly respectable woman vouched for by her entire *mahalle* when falsely accused by Süleyman I’s corrupt *subaşı*

62 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, IV, p. 361.

63 *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975–976/1567–1569)*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1997–1998), vol. 1, no. 186, p. 95 (Ottoman text, p. 67), 6 Rebiülevvel 975 (10 September 1567).

64 This was the phrase used by the *şeyhülislam* Esad Efendi and the *sadaret kaymakamı* Sofu Mehmed Paşa when arguing that it was necessary to place Mustafa rather than Osman on the throne in 1617. Failure to do so, they argued, would leave them unable to protect themselves from “the tongue of the people”, İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevî Tarihi*, 2 vols., Murad Uraz (ed.) (Istanbul: Neşriyat Yurdu, 1968), vol. II, p. 452.

65 For women as founders and administrators of *vakıfs*, see Deguilhem, Randi, “Gender blindness and societal influence in late Ottoman Damascus: women as the creators and managers of endowments”, *Hawwa*, 1/3 (2003), 329–50; Meriwether, Margaret, “Women and waqf revisited: the case of Aleppo, 1770–1840”, in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 128–52; Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Women in Shari’a court records of Ottoman Damascus”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 3/2 (2012), 119–42 and Svetla Ianeva’s chapter in this volume.

66 See, for example, the case of Emine bint Abdullah in Aydın, M. Akif (ed.), *Kadı Sicillerinde İstanbul. xv. ve xvii. Yüzyıl* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), pp. 150–1 (1583), and for women drinking with men in Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Public morality in 18th century Ottoman Damascus”, *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 55–56 (1990), p. 182.

(official in charge of security), Kara Hızır.⁶⁷ Men could find themselves having to go to court to defend their wives' honour.⁶⁸

In one way or another, women were thus a constant presence in the Ottoman public space and were not as secluded or shut away as has often been contended. Further, this public existence was not limited to the nineteenth century but was a factor in much earlier periods of Ottoman history. This conclusion leads one to a further question: what impact did this female presence have on the public sphere?

That women indeed did have an impact is made clear in the first place by the evidence of social distress that their presence occasioned.⁶⁹ Ahmad ibn Budayr al-Hallaq complained of women smoking and drinking in public in eighteenth-century Damascus;⁷⁰ Basiretçi Ali Efendi complained in the following century about women tripping around Beyoğlu from morning to night;⁷¹ M. Hourmouzis expressed his indignation at the luxurious outfits worn by women out in public which so embarrassed him that he refrained from going to the fashionable casinos and cafes of the capital;⁷² and the anonymous author of the eighteenth-century *Risale-i Garibe* (The Treatise of Strange Things) complained constantly about nearly everything including the public presence of women.⁷³ Women themselves could also be hostile and vigorous opponents of female public presence, old women in Istanbul hurling verbal insults or even physically attacking well-dressed and attractive females, whose

67 Sahillioğlu, Halil (ed.), *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951–952 ve E-12321 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002), no. 281, p. 216.

68 See for example Günalan, Rifat et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 2 Numaralı Sicil (H. 924–927/M. 1518–1521)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 287, Evasit-i Şaban 925 / 7–17 August 1519, p. 165.

69 For the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ottoman press's expressions of concern for the appearance and behaviour of women in the streets, see Brummett, Palmira, "Dogs, women, cholera, and other menaces in the streets: cartoon satire in the Ottoman revolutionary press", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27/4 (1995), pp. 444–6, 449–54, and Frierson, Elizabeth, "Mirrors out, mirrors in: domestication and rejection of the foreign in late Ottoman women's magazines", in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, D. Fairchild Ruggles (ed.) (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 183–5, 197–9.

70 Sajdi, Dana, *The Barber of Damascus. Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 30, 66, 155. This behaviour was also distressing to the Greek Orthodox priest Mikha'il Burayk al-Dimashqi, *ibid.*, p. 89.

71 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 21.

72 Exertzoglou, "The cultural uses of consumption", p. 86.

73 Develi, Hayati (ed.), *XVII. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair Risâle-i Garibe* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998), p. 24.

outfits they found unacceptable, at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁴ Reaction could be much harsher, even resulting in banishment.

The reason for stern state reaction to female presence was the direct link between state success and female security. The ability of the state to protect its female subjects, which explains, for example, the great emphasis placed on the security of roads leading to and from the *hamam*, was a marker of its competence: an effective ruler could protect women, an ineffective one could not. This was what lay behind the intermittent crackdowns on the presence of women on public occasions, banning them from attending *bayrams* or other public celebrations such as those for the arrival of the Iranian ambassador in 1576.⁷⁵ Celebrations for the birth of Ayşe Sultan, Mahmud II's daughter, in 1809 were cut short because of fear that the presence of so many women out and about day and night might incite violence.⁷⁶

While the state concerned itself with the potential impact of violence against women in the public space, many focused on the considerable potential of the female consumer.⁷⁷ Women, it can be argued, dictated many of the consumption patterns of Ottoman society and even drove the consumer market in certain commodities, in particular fashion. In the nineteenth century, journals such as *Mürüvvet* (Munificence) and *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (The Newspaper for Ladies), among many others, were aimed specifically at a female readership. The impact of female consumption also had the knock-on effect of producing a women-for-women market in which female entrepreneurs catered for a specifically female clientele, from women markets to female *hamams*, women-run female journals to female professionals catering for women, such as the female dentist who advertised in the late nineteenth-century Istanbul press for female clients⁷⁸ and female photographers.⁷⁹

Women not only consumed but also thought and wrote. Poets, such as Mihri Hatun (d. after 16 March 1512), Fitnat Zübeyde (?–1780) and Moralızade

74 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar: İttihat ve Terakki, I. Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, Alpay Kabacalı (ed.) (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), p. 32. See also, Brummett, Palmira, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 214–15, 221–33.

75 Gerlach, Stephan, *Türkiye Günüğü 1573–1576*, vol. 1, Türkis Noyan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), pp. 289–90, 337.

76 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târîhi*, 2 vols., Mehmet Ali Beyhan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 515–16.

77 See Kate Fleet's chapter, "The powerful public presence of the Ottoman female consumer", in this volume for a detailed discussion of female consumption.

78 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 13 Ramazan 1313/15 Şubat 1311 (27 February 1896), no. 52, p. 2.

79 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 52.

Leyla (?–1848),⁸⁰ or, with the developments of the nineteenth century, novelists such as Fatma Aliye [Topuz] (1862–1936) or writers such as Halide Edip [Adivar], (1884–1964), as well as female journalists, including Nuriye Ulviye Mevlan (Civelek, 1893–1964), owner of *Kadınlar Dünyası* or Arife, owner of *Şüküfezar* (Flower Garden), clearly had an impact on the public sphere. The aim of *Şüküfezar*, which was the first women's journal owned by a woman and with an entirely female staff of writers, was to make women's voices heard in the public sphere through their writings.⁸¹ Like *Şüküfezar*, *Seyyale* (Flowing), *Kadınlar Dünyası*, *Siyamet* (Protected) and *Diyane* (Our Mother), all either owned by women or whose writers were women, similarly published “the sound and thought of women”.⁸² Women also wrote letters to the press, women's letters appearing in *Terakki-i Muhadderat* (The Progress of Respectable Women), which, according to Serpil Çakır can be taken as the first women's journal,⁸³ *İnsaniyet* (Humanity) and in *Hanımlar* (Ladies), as well as in *İkdam* (Perseverance), *Tanin* (Buzzing), *Servet-i Fünun* (The Treasury of Knowledge), *Sabah* (Morning), and *Millet* (Nation).⁸⁴ That women read and aired their views was not appreciated by all, the nineteenth-century author of a work on Istanbul, Scarlatos Vyzantios, disapproving specifically of “ladies with a good education, who were in the habit of holding regular subscriptions to Fashion Reviews and getting elected as Presidents or vice Presidents in Societies and Associations”.⁸⁵

Not only did women have an impact on the Ottoman public sphere but they also clearly expected to. They presented petitions,⁸⁶ used the services of *arzuhalcis* (professional letter writers)⁸⁷ and appeared personally in court, buying and selling property, claiming inheritances, registering debts or payments of debt, getting divorced or registering marriages, presenting cases of violence

80 Havlioğlu, Didem, “On the margins and between the lines: Ottoman women poets from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 1/1 (2010), 25–54.

81 Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 64–5.

82 Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 83–4.

83 Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 60–1.

84 Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 63, 76, 77.

85 Exertzoglou, “The cultural uses of consumption”, p. 86.

86 Zarinebaf-Shahr, Fariba, “Women, law, and imperial justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the late seventeenth century”, in *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, Amira El Azhary Sonbol (ed.) (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 81–95.

87 Ben-Bassat, Yuval and Fruma Zachs, “Correspondence manuals in nineteenth-century Greater Syria: between the *arzuhalci* and the advent of popular letter writing”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 4/1 (2013), p. 11, note 46.

perpetrated against them, or answering accusations of criminal activity.⁸⁸ According to Zarinebaf-Shahr in an article on the period 1700 to 1850, “women appeared as litigants and defendants in more than forty per-cent of all lawsuits and property transactions in the Islamic courts of Istanbul, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, Kayseri and Cyprus”.⁸⁹ They took a “very active role” in the Bursa courts in the seventeenth century, where, significantly, they appeared in litigation with male members of their own families “seemingly on an equal footing”.⁹⁰ Women used courts “regularly, freely, and openly”, according to Jennings who concluded that “manifestly the court was accessible to them and relevant to their lives”.⁹¹ Female workers, such as the prostitutes in Thessaloniki in 1908⁹² or the female silk workers in Bursa in the early twentieth century,⁹³ claimed their rights or protested their working conditions, presumably with some expectation of success.⁹⁴ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, women in Istanbul reacted angrily and violently to what they saw as excessive food

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- 88 For women's use of the law courts see, for example, Ze'evi, Dror, “Women in 17th-century Jerusalem: western and indigenous perspectives”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27/2 (1995), pp. 164, 166; Jennings, Ronald C., “Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records: the Sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 18/1 (1975), pp. 59, 61, 65, 110, 114; Seng, Yvonne J., “Invisible women: residents of early sixteenth-century Istanbul”, in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, pp. 241–62; Agmon, Iris, “Women's history and Ottoman Sharia court records: shifting perspectives in social history”, *Hawwa*, 2/2 (2004), 172–209. One should note that a court ruling did not necessarily translate into action on the ground, see Keddie, Nikki R., “Problems in the study of Middle Eastern women”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10/2 (1979), p. 229. See also Pierce, Leslie, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003) and Doumani, Beshara, *The Rightful Beneficiaries: A Social History of Family Life in Ottoman Syria, 1660–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- 89 Zarinebaf-Shahr, “The role of women”, p. 142.
- 90 Gerber, “Social and economic position of women in an Ottoman city, Bursa”, p. 233.
- 91 Jennings, “Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records”, p. 5. Olga Todorova comes to the same conclusion regarding women in the central Balkans: Todorova, Olga, *Жените от Централните Балкани през османската епоха (XV–XVII век)* [Women from the Central Balkans in Ottoman Times (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)] (Sofia: Gutenberg Publishing, 2004), pp. 427–64.
- 92 See Ebru Boyar's chapter, “An imagined moral community: Ottoman female public presence, honour and marginality”, in this volume.
- 93 Çelik, “Sweatshops in the silk industry of the Bursa region”.
- 94 In the early twentieth century, the lower class working woman and poetess Yaşar Nezihe (1880–1935) was taken into custody for having written poems about going on strike, see Tamsöz, Bedihan, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Kadın Şairler Antolojisi* (Ankara: Ayrıldız Yayınları, 1994), pp. 104–9.

prices, calling for the situation to be rectified.⁹⁵ Here women were most definitely both visible and vocal in the public space. That they did protest and that they did use the courts so frequently highlights the fact that women not only played an active part in the public sphere and had an impact on it but that they also expected success from actions within it.

95 Oğulokyan, *Georg Oğulokyan'ın Ruznamesi. 1806-1810 İsyamları. III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, Hrand D. Andreasyan (ed. and trans.) (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1972), p. 22.

The ‘What If?’ of the Ottoman Female: Authority, Ethnography, and Conversation

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It all started with “Lady Tragabigzanda”, the Ottoman woman whom the infamous Captain John Smith, later governor of Virginia, claimed as a love conquest long before he met Pocahontas. Taken captive while fighting on the side of the Habsburg emperor in the early seventeenth century, Smith claimed he was sold in a Balkan slave market. He “fell to the share of Bashaw Bogall” who sent him in chains to Istanbul, “to his faire Mistresse”, the lady Charatza Tragabigzanda. The veracity of Smith’s account has been debated across generations of scholars. But what interests me here is his brief account of his stay in Tragabigzanda’s household.

This Noble Gentlewoman tooke sometime occasion to shew him to some friends, or rather to speake with him, because she could speake Italian, would feigne her selfe sick when she should go to the Banians [baths], or weepe over the graves, [in order to stay at home and question Smith about his imprisonment] . . . ; and [ask] if he were as the Bashaw writ to her, a Bohemian Lord conquered by his hand, as he had many others, . . . whose ransomes should adorne her with the glory of his conquests.

But when she heard him protest he knew no such matter, nor ever saw Bogall till he bought him at Axopolis, and that he was an Englishman, To trie the truth, she found means to find out many could speake English, French, Dutch, and Italian, . . . she tooke (as it seemed) much compassion on him; but having no use for him, lest her mother should sell him, she sent him to her brother, the Tymor Bashaw of Nalbrits, in the Country of Cambia, A Province of Tartaria.¹

1 Smith, Captain John, *True Travels, Adventures and Observations . . .* (London: I.H. for Thomas Slater, 1630), p. 23.

This brief vignette challenges a series of assumptions about the 'sheltered' Ottoman female and her role in the household.² In Smith's retelling, Tragabigzanda mobilizes a series of associates to gather information, makes decisions about the disposition of a slave, and basks in the glory of a *paşa's* conquests. She foregoes visits to the bath and the cemetery to stay home and "speak" to a foreign male. Some years back, I asked Leslie Peirce, a prominent authority on Ottoman women, about Tragabigzanda. Did she think such conversations could have occurred? She answered, "Why not?"

"Why not?" is an important question for us in the assessment of the Ottoman female, her roles and visibility. It helps us get at the possibilities. Somewhere between the erotic fantasy of the *harem* concubine and the anti-colonial discourse of the autonomous female political actor, is a flesh and blood, evolving, Ottoman woman with personal idiosyncrasies and networks of relationships. Her authority and movement were circumscribed, but they varied by status, place, and the nature of the narratives used to define her.³ I propose that if we apply the question "What if?" to our vision of the Ottoman female and to the sources we employ for the early modern era we find a complex set of options for women in which conversation plays a critical role. This chapter addresses the historiographic construction of early modern Ottoman women, the ways in which their options and roles have been perceived and presented. It juxtaposes those perceptions (for example, visions of the limits of accessibility and sociability) to the evidence from various types of early modern sources. I ask who exactly is included in the category "Ottoman female". I raise the question of regional and narrative variations, suggest a typology, and provide case studies from the literature of encounter to illustrate, among other things, that 'fact' and 'fancy' are not our only options, and to suggest that there was considerable scope for variation in women's behaviour in the multi-layered public space. In this paradigm, early modern Ottoman females have a central role in the household, exercise authority beyond the domestic sphere, and

2 For a study of Ottoman households in a later era, see Duben, Alan and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

3 van den Boogert, Maurits H., "Freemasonry in eighteenth-century Izmir? A critical analysis of Alexander Drummond's Travels (1754)", in *Ottoman Izmir: Studies in Honour of Alexander H. de Groot*, Maurits van den Boogert (ed.) (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabije Oosten, 2007), p. 113, gives us the account of Alexander Drummond, English civil servant and consul in Aleppo, who claims to have offered his services in 1754 as diplomatic escort on a French ship sailing from Cyprus to Alexandretta bearing "part of the Harem, or ladies belonging to the Seraglio of the *paşa* of Aleppo". Did these women stay locked in their cabin(s); or did they converse with the consul? Drummond does not make the level of association clear.

participate in a trans-Mediterranean republic of letters, culture, and sexuality. My focus here on the literature of travel and encounter (written by foreign male observers) highlights the nuanced ways in which Ottoman women were narrated and visualized. It also constructs a background against which the three-dimensional image of the Ottoman female crafted in subsequent chapters can be measured. Our female protagonist thus runs the gamut of representations, from those invoked by outsiders, to those produced by Ottoman men, to those (less accessible) moments in which we find her presenting herself (as producer, consumer, commodity, performer, flirt, criminal, or political actor).⁴

There is nothing particularly unbelievable about Smith's account of Tragabigzanda, even if he made it up out of a hodge podge of things that he learned and things that he experienced. He presents a woman with her own household and clients, one who benefits commercially from the captives taken by a subordinate (or associate). She is a woman who is curious about the foreign man who has fallen into her hands. She has "no [particular] use" for Smith; but still is concerned that her mother might sell him. Smith claims she loved him.⁵ He proposes that Tragabigzanda intended his stay with her brother to be temporary, an opportunity for him to "learn the language and what it was to be a Turke, till time made her Master of her selfe".⁶ But one might also read this story as an example of what Deniz Kandiyoti has called the "patriarchal bargain", an adaptive strategy by which women in patriarchal cultures achieve their objectives by manipulating the socio-economic system in which they are immersed.⁷ Tragabigzanda is thus a literate woman who manoeuvres within the constraints put in place by her opportunistic mother and her "suspicious" brother, while pursuing her own agenda of commercial, informational and, perhaps, pious objectives. Tragabigzanda had a circle of acquaintances beyond her household who spoke a variety of languages. She aspired to be "Master of her selfe", as Smith put it. In short, the heroine of this drama is not "free" but she is plugged in to a network of people and places. And her story, regardless of its blend of fact and fiction, resonates with what we learn from other evidence, such as travel narratives, and the court records and other documentary

4 The Ottoman female, as this volume demonstrates, was not silent, but female narrators, especially in the earlier parts of the early modern era, were certainly more difficult to find than male narrators, in part because of conventions of culture, education, and literary production.

5 Smith, *True Travels*, p. 31.

6 Smith, *True Travels*, p. 24.

7 Kandiyoti, Deniz, "Islam and patriarchy", in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 23–42.

evidence that have been so eloquently explored by other scholars, some of whom are contributors to this volume.⁸

Presuppositions (Authority, Ethnography, Sexuality, Conversation): The Ottoman Female

But before we explore one segment of that evidence, let me address who exactly our Ottoman female is.⁹ The Ottoman female is a subject of the empire; she resides in Ottoman space. Her identity is crafted by that subjection to Ottoman rule and law, and by her being embedded in the broader sphere of traditional patriarchy, a sphere which transcended communal and imperial boundaries. She need not be Muslim, and her identities, including her religious identity, might be flexible or changeable over time. In short, the key factors are her setting and her gender.

If we employ the categories utilized in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travel accounts, the Ottoman female can be identified on the bases of her location; age; status as virgin, matron, or widow; her occupation, and household; ethno-linguistic associations (including religion); and her dress, looks, behaviour, and sociability (or accessibility). And it is important to remember that for many observers and narrators, “female” was itself a separate category of existence, one that transcended other identities.¹⁰ We must acknowledge the

8 For example, Peirce, Leslie, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Peirce, Leslie, “Writing histories of sexuality in the Middle East”, *American Historical Review*, 114 (2009), 1325–39; Zilfi, Madeline C., *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Zilfi, Madeline C., “We don’t get along: women and *hul* divorce in the eighteenth century”, in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 264–96; Zarinebaf, Fariba, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); and Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

9 For more on this question, see Brummett, Palmira, and Katherine Thompson Newell, “A young man’s fancy turns to ‘love’?: the traveller’s eye and the narration of women in Ottoman space (or the European male ‘meets’ the Ottoman female, 16th–18th centuries)”, *Journal of Ottoman Studies/Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 40 (2012), 193–220.

10 Relihan, Constance, *Cosmographical Glasses: Geographic Discourse, Gender, and Elizabethan Fiction* (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 2004), p. xii, has argued that the early modern characterization of space is inevitably gendered and inevitably (and primarily) an examination of self: “The definition of space is inevitably and implicitly for writers of early modern prose a definition of gender relations. Struggles to define cultures and spaces become struggles to control female sexuality...”. I would

significance of that gendered classification while simultaneously being wary of its situational limits, that is, the ways that status or age, for example, might trump gender as a paramount category. None of our commentators confused women with men. The boundaries of gender, however, were porous; they were violated by assertive acts, individual desires, and the obfuscations of costume or manners. Thus we begin with the bottom lines of perception and of identity to see how determinative they actually were.

Returning to the question of “What if?,” I begin with a set of premises that we may examine across the case studies in this volume.

- 1) What if the female is made a central figure in constructions of Ottoman households in the early modern era? That is, her role in the household (a place but also a network of personnel) is assumed to be central but variable, and contingent on factors besides gender, like that of a man. And what if she is presumed to have various types of authority that operate within the household but also extend beyond it.
- 2) What if female sociability is assumed to include men beyond the family in a set of increasingly distant (and complex) circles of direct and indirect association? We can examine mixed gender associations without either discarding same sex associations as primary or assuming that most female associations with non-familial men were “forbidden”.
- 3) What if we think of early modern women, like men, functioning routinely as commercial actors? Although we may hear about “peddling women” or “go-betweens” in Ottoman contexts, we have not, I think, tended routinely to discuss early modern Ottoman women as merchants, business people, labourers, or even direct consumers of things beyond the domestic sphere. (We have not generally tended to imagine them, for example, strolling, shopping, drinking, or engaging in social protests).¹¹ Even the default peasant is a man, despite the realities of agricultural life. How do our perceptions of Ottoman society change if we think about Ottoman

argue that the inevitability of gendering in the travel narrative is often expressed in the form of a firm conviction that femaleness is a separate category of existence that tends to transcend all others. As for the examination of self, I would, rather, propose that while comparison to self may be an unavoidable default category of ethnological scrutiny, the focus on self as central and as default seems to vary considerably from one traveller's narrative to the next.

- 11 On congregating, “immoral acts”, and visibility in public, see Andrews, Walter and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 188–93.

women as a default category of labourer, producer, and consumer (especially before the nineteenth century)? This question addresses what we might call the 'Khadija complex': the inclination to mention the fact that the Prophet's first wife was a businesswoman and employer, but then seldom to mention women in terms of production and economy again.¹²

- 4) What if women routinely asserted culture and personality over law? We know that they did; but often we think of that behaviour as "renegade" or transgressive rather than customary.
- 5) What if communal affiliation was not the primary category by which Ottoman women (and their observers) identified themselves? It seems to me a useful exercise carefully to delineate the ethnographies and class associations found in our sources to see exactly, in any given time, place, or situation, how hierarchies of identity were applied to women. One of the primary categories by which foreign observers typed Ottoman women, for example, was the distinction between "maidens" and married women.
- 6) What if women participated in networks of sociability, sexuality, and culture that had political and commercial ramifications comparable to (if not necessarily the same as) those described for men by Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, in their study of Ottoman salon culture?¹³ The republic of letters and of sexuality invoked by these authors must be redrawn to include women, just as Leslie Peirce rightly redrew the category of Ottoman *askeri* (military-administrative class) to include women.¹⁴

None of these premises propose to deny the essential patriarchal nature of Ottoman cultures, or the subordinate position of women deriving from the physical, cultural, and religious notions of male and female complementarity (each gender having its assigned and admittedly different role and position in society). Rather, they propose to subject presumed historiographic base-lines

12 Here the work of Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) is instructive. Enloe made the case in 1990 that women such as ambassadors' wives, military base prostitutes, and domestics had to be addressed historically in terms of their roles in the functioning of international production and economy.

13 Such a comparison would include same and mixed sex gatherings. Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, p. 57, however, note that "when women appear in public or in public roles such as that of poet, they are there on the sufferance of males and must conform to male conventions". See also, pp. 193–6, 210–11.

14 Peirce, Leslie, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3–12, 18–23, 71.

of female action and social convention to scrutiny on a case by case or (more particularly) narrative by narrative basis. By asking the question “What if?” we may develop a more nuanced sense of what those base-lines actually were. By addressing the question specifically to the language of travel narratives, I propose to examine what exactly outsider men from the Christian kingdoms of Europe had to say about the possibilities for women that they encountered (first, second, or third hand) in their sojourns through Ottoman space in the early modern era. Further, I propose to ask whether these narrators saw those possibilities as quite as circumscribed or predictable as one might imagine. Finally, because I focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries while other contributors to this volume continue the analysis into the modern era, I leave it to the reader to discern whether (and how) the appearance and movement of women in the public space was an evolutionary process.

These are not new ideas. Indeed Suraiya Faroqhi laid out a road map for these explorations in the section on “Women’s Culture”, in her book, *Subjects of the Sultan*.¹⁵ There she wrote:

It is clear then, that plenty of Ottoman women could see beyond the day-to-day business of family life or, in the case of the wealthier ones, that many of them were not content merely with clothes, women-friends and sweets. . . . After all, Ottoman culture was an ancient high culture with long literary and artistic traditions. Thus, we would expect some of the numerous women who lived in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries to have felt the urge for ‘men’s education, art, wisdom, and honor,’ and to have been successful in pursuing their ambitions.¹⁶

Aspiring to the ‘Things of Men’

A couple of examples may be used to reinforce Faroqhi’s point, and even to question what for Ottoman women were the imagined limits of “men’s education, art, wisdom, and honor”, and men’s realms of action or authority. Emine Fetvacı, in her work on Ottoman patronage, notes the circulation of illustrated manuscripts among members of the imperial household, including Ottoman

15 Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, reprinted from the 1995 German edition), pp. 101–22.

16 Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 121.

women's use, manipulation, and possession of luxury books.¹⁷ The Ottoman concubine has traditionally stood as a quintessential symbol of idleness and seclusion; but Fetvacı shows us that Ruḥşah, a favourite of Mahmud I (r. 1730–1754), owned a copy of a volume from the illustrated *Siyer-i Nebi* (a life of the Prophet Muhammad). How did she get it, handle it, and employ it? Could she read it? We do not know (just as often enough we do not know how Ottoman palace men used and deployed their books).¹⁸ But her ownership alone suggests a network of connections that transcends her personal relationship with the sultan. More dramatically, Lucienne Thys-Şenocak has pointed out that the Ottoman *valide sultan* (mother of the sultan), Hadice Turhan Sultan (1628?–1683), endowed 338 volumes to the mosque that she built in Istanbul, the Yeni Valide Mosque.¹⁹ Ottoman royal women thus owned, presented, and received illustrated manuscripts as gifts. Book ownership, as Roger Chartier has pointed out, does not necessarily imply literacy.²⁰ But the participation of women in the ownership, use, and deployment of these texts is suggestive. Further, we know that goods and sex are intimately related; indeed Hadice Turhan Sultan herself, as a captive given to the sultan's mother, was clearly a type of "goods". But instead of assuming that Ruḥşah owned a luxury book simply because the sultan, her 'lover', gave her one, we can use her possession of the *Siyer-i Nebi* as an opportunity to speculate on women's devotional practices, literacy, and network of connections.²¹ In the case of Hadice Turhan Sultan's endowment, we can use those 338 volumes to measure out the extent of her power and wealth, the scope of her patronage activities, and her use of that patronage to

17 Fetvacı, Emine, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 18, 36–7.

18 Although Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, pp. 29–37, 59–98, has certainly expanded our knowledge in this regard.

19 Thys-Şenocak, Lucienne, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), cited in Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, p. 36; Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 206–8.

20 Chartier, Roger, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 164–6.

21 I am not proposing anything like the women's "salons" described, for example, in Robin, Diana, *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); but there were certainly upper class, wealthy widows "who enjoyed their adult lives virtually as single women" (pp. 1–2), in Ottoman society. Elite women possessed books and engaged in reading practices about which we know very little. Some of the palace women (through their earlier lives, associations, or correspondence) were also in a position to be aware of the reading and devotional practices of their European Christian counterparts inside and outside the empire.

enhance the influence that she already possessed. Finally, the Venetian envoy, Ottaviano Bon, who travelled to Istanbul in 1604, in narrating what he knew of the Ottoman palace, wrote that the women in the seraglio had “their own places of study to learn to read and to speak Turkish. . . .”, under the supervision of older women, as well as places of recreation, “gardens and all the pleasures they wished”.²² This comment reveals something that Bon heard from an informant and not something that he saw. But it conjures a vision of palace women reading, rather than simply serving as sex partners, perpetuators of the dynasty, or marriage partners for men of the Ottoman *askeri* class. That shift in emphasis allows us to think rather differently about the *harem*, and the nature of its inhabitants.

My proposal, then, is simply that categories of analysis applied to the relations, functions, and status of men, may be applied to women as well, to see if and how they work. That approach may serve us better than starting out with a set of assumed functional categories for women that either presume domesticity and seclusion as paramount, or revert to sexual caricature which (much like that depicted in the Karagöz shadow-puppet theatre) reduces female options to the roles of beauty, hoyden, or drudge.²³

Visuality

And that brings me to ways of seeing women. What do Ottoman women ‘look like’ in the historiography of Ottoman space and its occupants; and what did they look like for the narrators of the early modern era? In other words, what are the possibilities for visualizing Ottoman women as public personae? Visuality is a critically important factor in our assessment of the roles of Ottoman females. After all, women seeing and being seen (or not) is an old trope, immortalized in literature, music, film, and histories: the glimpse of the Middle Eastern female, her attempts to look back, and the impediments to that looking.

22 Bon, Ottaviano, *Il serraglio del Gransignore*, Bruno Baile (ed.) (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002), p. 45. The English translation, Bon, Ottaviano, *The Sultan's Seraglio: An Intimate Portrait of Life at the Ottoman Court (from the Seventeenth-Century Edition of John Withers)*, Godfrey Goodwin (ed.) (London: Saqi Books, 1996), says the “maids” in the seraglio “could learn to speak and read the Turkish language” if they wanted to.

23 For example, Aisha was the young wife of the Prophet who is often represented as “pushy” or outspoken; Fatima is the daughter of the Prophet who is often held up as a model of obedience and submissiveness.

Certainly the vision of Ottoman women has become much more nuanced since the publication of Leslie Peirce's seminal work on the Ottoman *harem* in 1993.²⁴ But the notion of a somehow homogenized female existence, spanning three continents, governed by the restrictive laws of Islam and of traditional patriarchy still persists, I think, such that the social diversity of Ottoman society is not yet entirely apparent.²⁵ We have grown so accustomed to the notion of women confined behind walls (physical walls and walls of silence as Farzaneh Milani has so eloquently demonstrated), that it still requires some effort to think of them moving and associating more freely, walking *on* the walls or moving beyond them.²⁶ Surely the walls, of all sorts, were there. But they were not uniformly impenetrable.

Lucienne Thys-Şenocak provides us with a wonderful narrative vision of walls, power, and female gaze. She conjures a scene of the sultana, Hadice Turhan, having levelled an Istanbul neighbourhood and built her Yeni Valide mosque complex, prowling the ramparts of that edifice in order to survey the city.²⁷ This is not a typical "feminine" image. Even for such an elite woman it smacks of unfiltered ambition and authority. Hadice Turhan becomes a

24 Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*.

25 Important indicators of the diverse identities and actions of Ottoman women before the law may be seen, for example, in Zilfi, "We don't get along: women and *hul* divorce in the eighteenth century"; Peirce, *Morality Tales*, pp. 211–26; Zarinbaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul*, pp. 86–111. On the treatment of prostitutes in Istanbul, see Ergene, Boğaç, "Why did Ümmü Gülsüm go to court? Ottoman legal practice between history and anthropology", *Islamic Law and Society*, 17/2 (2010), pp. 225–6, 235–44; Jennings, Ronald, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571–1640* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); and Doumani, Beshara, *The Rightful Beneficiaries: A Social History of Family Life in Ottoman Syria, 1660–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Doumani illustrates the use of *vakıf* (*waqf*) to provide protection and options for women; and puts forth a fulsome vision of the legal dynamics of property relations and women's roles in those processes.

26 Milani, Farzaneh, *Veils and Words: the Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), introduction, demonstrates the enduring nature of society's silencing of women.

27 Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, p. 230. The complex's royal pavilion, Thys-Şenocak writes, was a site for "visual surveillance", giving Hadice Turhan an "active controlling gaze" over areas she could not visit. See also, Peirce, Leslie, "Gender and sexual propriety in Ottoman royal women's patronage", in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, D. Fairchild Ruggles (ed.) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 66, who notes that royal women's patronage was "embedded in protocols of sovereignty, in which gender was deployed as one of a number of strategies to project royal legitimacy. Yet such protocols were successful only insofar as they met

female Batman, or rather the character Storm from the X-Men team in Marvel Comics – a brooding, calculating individual whose self-expression is limited by various constraints. She is masterful, but not “master of herself” as Smith noted of Tragabigzanda. And she resembles Tragabigzanda in other ways. To Hadice Turhan, conquest mattered. Thus, while Tragabigzanda was “adorned with the glory of Bogall’s conquests”, Hadice Turhan took glory from patronizing and reconstructing Ottoman fortresses and supporting fiscally the military defence of the empire. Glory is a category for Ottoman women, whether the glory is direct, as in Hadice Turhan’s case, or derives from the exploits of one’s men. In a later Ottoman narrative, Evliya Çelebi’s (1611–1682) *Seyahatname*, another royal female, Kaya Sultan, is depicted as helping to mobilize the victory procession for her husband, Melek Ahmed Paşa, after the relief of Özu in 1656–1657.²⁸ Specifically, she is shown directing the workers who stuffed the severed heads of defeated foes that were to be displayed in Melek Ahmed Paşa’s triumph.²⁹ It was not an indoors activity. So much for the stay-at-home wife. Such images are, of course, impressionistic; and they deal with women who are at the very top of the status hierarchy of the empire. But both characterizations suggest the behavioural possibilities for women whose personalities, resources, or situations inclined them to desire and attempt a broader sphere of action than that to which their position, whatever it might be, would ordinarily entitle them.

Women were also visualized in early modern images. We have an interesting and unusual hybrid text from the seventeenth century that suggests some of the possibilities for Ottoman women beyond those who commanded authority in the palace. This illustrated manuscript dating to the 1660s seems to have been produced in Istanbul for a foreign audience, presumably Venetian.³⁰

with popular approval, hence the need to conform to broadly shared notions of gendered space and sexual propriety”. That need to conform, I would add, transcended class.

28 Dankoff, Robert (ed. and trans.), *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588–1662) As Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi’s Book of Travels* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 218.

29 Dankoff, *The Intimate Life*, pp. 218–19. For an earlier era there are Ottoman stories of King Wladislaw III of Poland and Hungary who was killed at the Battle of Varna in 1444, his head supposedly sent to Bursa for display.

30 See Rothman, Natalie, “Visualizing a space of encounter: intimacy, alterity, and trans-imperial perspective in an Ottoman-Venetian miniature album”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/ Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 40 (2012), 39–80, esp. pp. 43, 59, 68, who associates the manuscript with Giovanni Battista Ballarino, “long-time Venetian secretary and de facto ambassador to Istanbul”, p. 43. This album can be compared to one commissioned by Bartholomäus Schachman in 1590 in Danzig; see Nefedova, Olga, Sara Al Mana, and Fahad Al Faihani, “The travel album of Bartholomäus Schachman”, in *Bartholomäus Schachman*

Now in the Correr Museum in Venice (mss. Cicogna 1971), it begins with a series of images of the sultans, but then proceeds to another series depicting battles, scenes of punishment, and various activities in the Istanbul public space.³¹ Thus it mirrors the descriptions found in early modern travel narratives, like Bon's, which range from the intriguing interior spaces of the palace to the dramatic and the mundane of Ottoman public life. The majority of figures represented are male, but the miniatures also provide depictions of women. These include a peddling woman in front of the *valide sultan's* han; women playing instruments and leading the favourite (*haseki*) into the presence of the sultan and the Chief Black eunuch; a scene of singing and dancing for an all-female celebration in the *valide sultan's* quarters; women buying goods in the market; a woman relaxing before the hearth with her male companion; another perched on a rooftop while trying to escape an urban fire; a group of women enjoying an excursion on a boat ride; and a woman traveller seated in a vessel whose other passengers are all male.³² This situating of women in both interior and exterior settings clearly suggests movement between the two, the normalcy of that movement, and the accessibility of women in the public space (at least in some contexts) to the gaze of the foreign male observer.³³ It is that visual encounter that concerns us in the rest of this essay.³⁴

(1559–1614), *The Art of Travel* (Milan: Skira, 2012), pp. 63–90. Of the 105 watercolour and pencil images in Schachman's album, 26 depict women. Many are ethnographic images showing the dress of certain ethno-communal types. Others show a captive, women mourning, and women riding horses.

- 31 See *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Venedik ve İstanbul Görünümleri – Vedute di Venezia ed Istanbul attraverso i secoli dalle collezioni del Museo Correr-Venezia e Museo del Topkapı-Istanbul* (Istanbul: Güzel Sanatlar, 1995), plates 174–176, 179, 203, on Ms. Cicogna 1971. The work is inscribed “Memorie Turche”, and seems to have emerged out of the Venetian diplomatic establishment in Istanbul, though scholars speculate that the artist of the images was Ottoman (a “Turk”): see Romanelli, Giandomenico, “Il Bailo Soranzo”, in *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Venedik ve İstanbul Görünümleri*, p. 230.
- 32 See *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Venedik ve İstanbul Görünümleri*, plates 203–4, pp. 286–7. See for other, later imagery of females in the public space, plates 41, 48, 55, 66 (pp. 67, 74, 83, 94).
- 33 See Tezcan, Baki, “Ethnicity, race, religion, and social class”, in *The Ottoman World*, Christine Woodhead (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 166, on some of the Ottoman categories of identity that were operative at this time, including “foreign”. Tezcan's chapter, however, does not specifically address categories of gender.
- 34 European travellers increasingly had pictorial representations of Ottoman women in the public as well as domestic spaces as the eighteenth century progressed. See for example the images of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour who spent some years in Istanbul in the first decade of the eighteenth century, Nefedova, Olga, *A Journey into the World of the Ottomans: The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737)* (Milano: Skira, 2009), plates 68–69, 90–98.

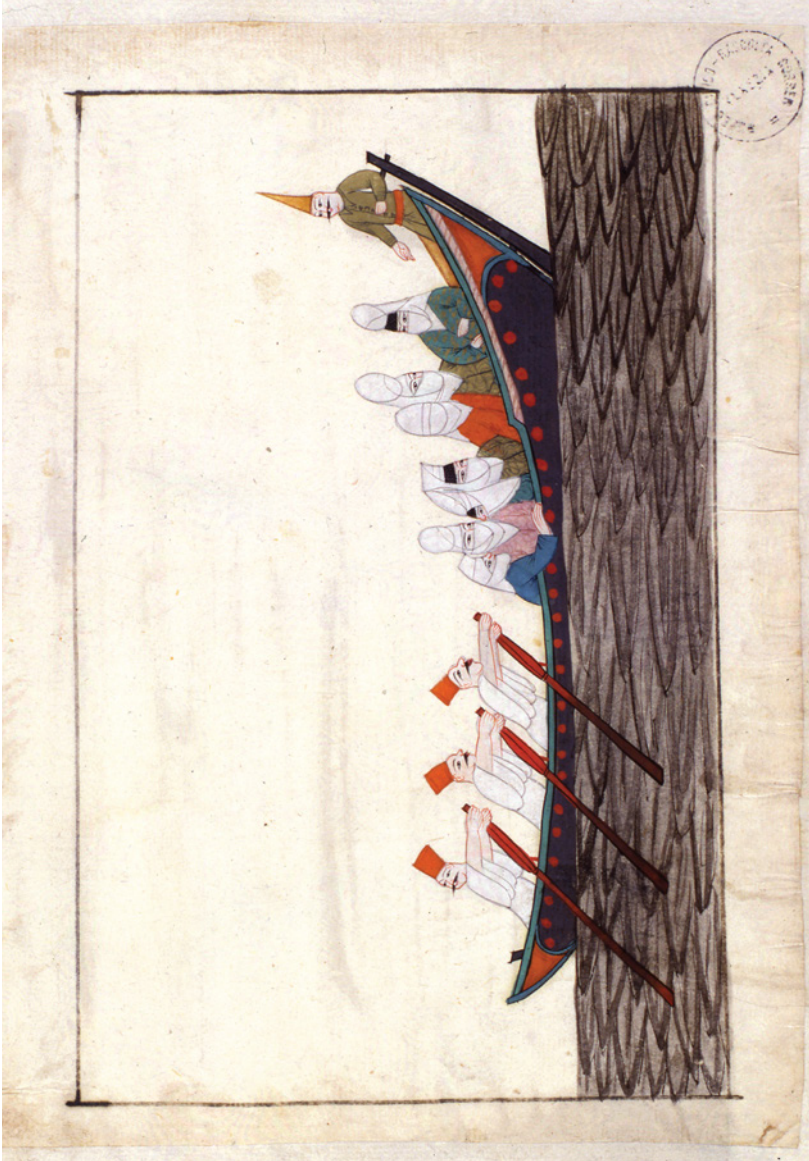


FIGURE 2.1 *Women in a boat, Correr, manuscript Cicogna 1971, 51r [Istanbul?], c. 1660s.*
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FIGURE 2.2 *Woman in a boat*, “*Vue général du Port et de la Ville de Constantinople*”, inset, in Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage Pittoresque de la Grèce*, vol. II, pt. 2 (Paris: n.p., 1824), plate 70, after p. 480. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.

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FIGURE 2.3 *Women in At Meydan, Istanbul, “Vue de la Place At-meidan (Hippodrome)”, inset, in Choiseul-Gouffier, Voyage Pittoresque de la Grèce vol. 11, 2, pt. 2, plate 81, after p. 484. John Hay Library, Brown University Library.*

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Travel and Trope

The traveller is, of course, a particular kind of witness, one who moves into and out of an Ottoman space that is not 'home'. That said, the traveller is also an important kind of witness, one who feels compelled to remark upon what a resident might think too every-day to notice. To assess the range of possibilities expressed in the narratives of male travellers to the empire from the Christian kingdoms of Europe, we might first look at the typologies they constructed of Ottoman women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like all such paradigms these constructions were both imagined and the result of eye-witness observations. They were premised upon expectations, experience, and memory. These typologies of travel used specific categories (commune, ethnicity, class, and marital status for example) to depict women. But those categories were not always deployed equally, or in the same ways. Our observers are men.³⁵ But some used sexuality and looks as a primary category, and others privileged class or ethnicity. Some took the equation of commune and ethnicity for granted. Others were primarily interested in women's culture, freedom, or occupations. Many authors of 'travel' accounts were not actual observers at all.

Chassepol

European sources and audiences could and did envision the Ottoman female as active, mobile, and seeking after glory. But such representations often emphasized sex and violence at the expense of household politics or individual patronage. François de Chassepol's lurid *History of the Last Two Vezirs, With Some Secret Intrigues of the Seraglio*, in many ways synthesizes for a later seventeenth-century audience the modes of narrating the conniving, super-sexualized *harem* woman.³⁶ Chassepol's text is nominally on the Dalmatian

35 On the narratives of European female travellers (from the eighteenth century on) see, for example, Melman, Billie, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 7–18; Roberts, Mary, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 59–75, 78–9, 80–99; and Wortley Montagu, Lady Mary, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago, 2000), pp. xxxix–xl.

36 I am using the Italian edition here, de Chassepol, François, *Historia delli due ultimi gran visiri, con alcuni secreti intrecci del Serraglio, e molte particolarità sopra le guerre di Candia, Dalmatia, Transilvania, Polonia, & Ungheria* (Venice: Giovanni Cagnolini, 1683), pp. 4–7. The French original was published in 1676, and an English edition in 1677.

wars and he begins it with a brief summary of political affairs. But the narrative swiftly switches gears to a lengthy description of *harem* intrigue. The author claims that Sultan Murad IV (r. 1623–1640) “feared” his chief concubine, who held him in thrall. She even accompanied him on the Baghdad campaign of 1638; but he sent her back to Istanbul so that he could take his pleasure “in the arms of a Persian beauty”.³⁷ According to Chassepol, this concubine, called “Rosana” enjoyed “extraordinary honours”, yet she “turned her formidable jealousy and cruelty against everyone”. Here the narrative begins to conflate Murad’s “concubine” with his mother Kösem (*valide sultan*, 1623–1651). Chassepol accuses her of forging a false order to have the sultan’s brothers executed, and then “having the cruelty to go herself and witness the execution”.³⁸ This terrible, unfeminine act, caused the “populace”, Chassepol writes, to be consumed with a furious aversion towards her. Even when the sultan returned from Damascus, his concubine, unrepentant, “menaced the person of the sultan himself”.³⁹ The *harem*, in this narrative, is homogenized into a snake pit of violence, jealousy, and ambition, where women use the power and “honours” they have received to undermine the state.⁴⁰ Reigns and individuals are conflated, and the borders of time and event are violated. The vengeful favourite is malicious, sly, and sexually hard to resist, just what Chassepol’s audience presumably expected. And the trope of the scheming female is linked to that of the lusty, philandering sultan. One wonders, nonetheless, what conversations the sultan might have had with a concubine who accompanied him on campaign, what roles she might have played, and what allies she might have contacted on her return to the Topkapı. Chassepol’s “history” also raises the question of what the public persona of any given *harem* woman might have been.

Beyond the slaughtered rivals and the vicious personalities of the imagined concubine and sultana, there are also two interesting scenes here which bear revisiting. One is the notion that the sultana herself went to see the execution

37 Chassepol, *Historia delli due ultimi gran visiri*, pp. 4–6.

38 See Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 101–7, 117–18, 232–3, 244–6, who discusses fratricide and notes that we know very little about Murad’s concubines.

39 Chassepol, *Historia delli due ultimi gran visiri*, p. 7.

40 [Du Vignau, sieur de Joannots], *A New Account of the Present Condition of Turkish Affairs . . .* (London: Randall Taylor, 1688), pp. 52–7, 69, who claims to have been in the empire nine years, tells a more detailed story of the *harem* and its activities, but he still emphasizes lust, passion, desperation, and wanton behaviour. In telling the story of how *paşas* are married off to sultanas he manages both to emphasize the humiliation of the male while still disparaging the female, p. 73.

of the sultan's brothers. The second is the charge that she forged an order from the sultan to secure their downfall. These scenes are quite Shakespearean in nature and suggest that Ottoman sultanas like some of their European Christian counterparts were actively and deeply immersed in household politics, not behind the scenes, but at the scene. The sultana is depicted as moving about the palace, transmitting written orders, and standing in a room with henchmen, witnessing the accomplishment of a dirty deed. In other words, European narrative constructions, relying on sources like the Venetian *relazioni* and other popular literature, made the women of the House of Osman look rather like those of the House of Tudor. Why not? Like Smith's story of Tragabigzanda, the point here is not so much the border between fact and fancy but the image of Ottoman women that circulated in early modern Christian Europe, the sense of possibilities and conventions provided by narrators for a literate (or semi-literate) segment of the public that had come to think itself familiar with the 'realities' of Ottoman palace life.⁴¹ There is also the notion that the Istanbul "populace" was invested in the actions of the *harem* women and demonstrated its discontent when their behaviour did not conform to certain standards.

Wratislaw

Chassepol's portrait of the scheming *harem* female, however, is not the only vision we have of Ottoman women at this time. For more observant and less remote 'witnesses' the Ottoman female constituted a diverse and wide ranging category. Wenceslas Wratislaw, for example, saw the Ottomans (male and female) first as sources of ethno-cultural interest and entertainment. Wratislaw travelled as an adolescent in 1591 from Vienna to Istanbul in the retinue of the Habsburg ambassador Frederick Kregwitz, and wrote down his experiences once he returned home. In Istanbul the young man made Ottoman friends,

41 The English dramatist, Mary Pix, *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks: A Tragedy As it is Acted by His Majesties Servants* (London: John Harding, 1696), preface, act 1, scene 1, pp. 12–23, repeats many of the common tropes of male contemporaries like Chassepol. Her *harem* of the sultan contains a plotting mistress and "women enough to undo the Universal world". But her play's tragedy is set up when the general Murad pledges to lay his triumphs at the feet of his love, Morena, daughter of the *müftü* (chief jurist), rather than at the feet of the sultan, p. 10. And while Morena is raped by the sultan, reinforcing the imagery of gendered violence and absolutism, the sultan is also called before the *divan* to answer for raping a free Muslim woman, p. 31. Thus Morena's identity as honourable woman transcends the identities of Muslim and Ottoman. Pix cites Paul Rycaut (1629–1700), whose *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1665) was much imitated, as a primary authority on the Ottomans.

learned some Turkish, and closely observed the public pastimes of society. In some ways his narrative depictions of women resonate with both the *relazioni* and with the illustrated manuscript, Cicogna 1971, mentioned earlier. Thus the work intersperses its tales of male sociability and diplomatic intrigue with a parade of women: some are the usual suspects from the palace, especially the *valide sultan*, but also the lesser sort of women, sitting, shopping, and interacting in the public spaces where the young man could see them.⁴² Sex is not a significant factor in Wratislaw's account, although he is interested to meet "Turkish" women. There are, however, no lurid details such as those found in Chassepol's *Secret Intrigues*. Indeed Wratislaw discusses the activities of the *valide sultan* in palace intrigues, but those plots have nothing to do with love or jealousy. Rather, he presents the Ottoman 'First Lady' as an influential figure in Ottoman household politics and foreign policy.

For Wratislaw, the sultanas were scheming figures, but also consumers and patrons. They appear in his narrative as patronizing a German goldsmith living in Galata, and as participants in the political machinations of the palace and its officials, some of whom were colluding with the Habsburgs.⁴³ The *valide sultan*, for example, is shown demanding the release of a Christian who had been arrested; bribing a *vezir's* physician to poison him; and negotiating with the *paşas* over whether the sultan himself should ride into battle. In turn, Wratislaw shows the Habsburg ambassador bribing Ottoman chamberlains for information on Hungary, and even securing intelligence from the *valide sultan*. In both instances, the carrier of information was female (first an "old woman", and then "a Jewess").⁴⁴ Ultimately, in 1592, discovering that the ambassador had been spying and keeping secret intelligence, the Ottomans had him and his entourage, including Wratislaw, arrested. Wratislaw wrote that evidence for the ambassador's guilt derived from documents confiscated from his house. When the *paşa* examined them:

42 See also, Brummett and Newell, "A young man's fancy turns to 'love'?", pp. 209–14.

43 Wratislaw, Wenceslas, *Adventures of Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw: What He Saw in Constantinople, in his Captivity, Committed to Writing in 1599*, Albert Henry Wratislaw (trans.) (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862), pp. 79–80. For German and Czech versions, see Vratislav z Mitrovic, Václav, *Des Freyherrn von Wratislaw merkwürdige Gesandtschaftsreise von Wien nach Konstantinopel: so gut als aus dem Englischen übersetzt* (Leipzig: Schönfeldschen Buchhandlung, 1786); and Vratislav z Mitrovic, Václav, *Príhody*, Milada Nedvěďová (ed.) (Praha: n.p., 1976), unnumbered front matter, which provides a short biography of Wratislaw (1576–1635), and a description of the various editions (p. 217).

44 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 102–3.

Observing, however, that many of the chief officials, and the Sultana herself, were implicated, like an old fox, not wishing to fall into disfavor with the imperial ladies, for the Emperor's mother and wife ruled everything, and did what they liked, he kept this to himself, made little noise about it, and only informed the Sultan that secret writings had been found in the chancery of the Viennese ambassador.⁴⁵

We know that Ottoman women, like Tragabigzanda or Hadice Turhan Sultan, could not just do "what they liked". But we also know that they were indeed, as Wratislaw suggested, actors in the politics of household and palace. The *valide sultan* may not have been 'visible' to the Habsburg delegation, but the female go-betweens certainly were.

Beyond these elites and their female servants, Ottoman women occupied the public spaces that Wratislaw explored on his journey from Vienna and during his extended stay in Istanbul.⁴⁶ He describes women in Bulgarian villages, anxious to "earn money", who upon hearing news of the arrival of strangers, rushed to bake bread to sell to the travellers.⁴⁷ In Istanbul, other women leaned from windows to witness young men on horseback playing at "stick-throwing" war games.⁴⁸ They rode to festivities in carriages, proceeded down the streets to the bath house, and fed stray cats:

So, too, we several times saw Turkish matrons and old women buying pieces of meat on the spit from the kitchen-boys, or from the public kitchens, which are not far from this place, and handing them on a long stick or wand to the cats as they sit on the walls, muttering meanwhile a kind of Turkish prayers.⁴⁹

45 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, p. 116.

46 See, Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, pp. 102–22, on women's culture and activities; and Fleet and Boyar, *A Social History*, pp. 205–8, 236–43, on recreation.

47 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 36–7.

48 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, p. 72. Such games among the palace pages were described by Wojciech Bobowski, or Bobovi; Fisher, C.G. and A. Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the mid-seventeenth century: Bobovi's description", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 10 (1985–1987), pp. 42–3 of the Fishers' translation.

49 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 75–6, notes that feeding dogs, cats, birds, and fish is considered a pious act, and repeats the meat monger's cry of "kedi et, kedi et" (cat meat, cat meat). Busbecq, Ogier Ghislen de, *The Turkish Letters*, Edward Foster (trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 114, a Habsburg envoy, who travelled to Istanbul in 1554–1562, mentions this feeding of cats and dogs as a pious act (which it was). And Bartholomäus Schachman, who travelled to Istanbul in 1588–1589, includes an illustration of this feeding of cats

There is a certain normalcy to Wratislaw's narration of the Ottoman female; she is neither exotic nor unique. This is not to say that the young author is immune from repeating the standard tropes of travellers who preceded him. He includes a familiar tale of lust, abduction, and enduring love featuring an aged Ottoman official and an alluring Greek maiden. He bemoans the sad vision of female Christian captives sold as slaves in the "women's market".⁵⁰ But in general he speaks of the female as part of the Ottoman social scene. She emerges in his narrative as the subject of information imparted to him by others and as someone he has seen himself.

Like other travellers from the Christian kingdoms, Wratislaw had a chance to observe women in the households of men who offered him hospitality. Sharing food was a key element in such stories even when the women did not sit down to eat with the men.⁵¹ Thus Wratislaw commented on the household of a German goldsmith in Galata who had invited him to dinner:

He had a Greek cook, a very handsome person, who was his concubine. . . . [he] sent to market immediately for all kinds of excellent sea-fish, and ordered her to prepare us good viands. He had another woman, too, in his house, who also acted as cook. These two women prepared for us, in a short time, a remarkably good dish from oysters, long-heads, round-heads, and all kinds of exceedingly well-tasted sea-frogs, and also gave us an abundance of lemons, pomegranates, oranges, and salads.⁵²

and dogs using pieces of meat skewered on a stick; see Nefedova, Frackowska, and Yum, *Bartholomäus Schachman*, p. 265. But it was Wratislaw who associated this activity with old women.

- 50 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 101–2. Wratislaw uses the term "Aurat-bazar". But Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, pp. 189–90, notes that foreign visitors "often confused the Slave Market with the Women's Market (*Avrat Pazarı*) some distance away" which was a market where women bought and sold "food and wares". Thus we do not know if Wratislaw is repeating what he saw or what he read or heard. Zilfi does go on to note that this "muddled identification" was not so surprising given that "by the late eighteenth century, if not before, women were not just the majority but the vast majority of slaves bought and sold in the Slave Market and the capital as a whole" (p. 190).
- 51 For another take on this question, see Dursteler, Eric, "Infidel foods: food and identity in early modern Ottoman travel literature", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 39 (2012), 143–60.
- 52 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 79–80. See, also, de Nicolay, Nicolas, *The Navigations in Turkie* (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1968 reprint of 1585 London edition), pp. 55–6, 63–8, 119–20, 141–6; and on female slaves, p. 62.

The second woman of the household is identified only by her task, cooking. We do not know her ethnicity, her faith, or her status, although it seems to be lower or less intimate than that of the Greek. In fact, we do not know if the goldsmith's visitor even spoke to these women but we do know that they were visible to the foreign male, presumably as they waited on him and his host. Our narrator does not call the second female "Turk" or "Greek", as other Western travellers might; for Wratislaw the designation "woman" (cook, concubine, or both) was sufficient.

The youth also provides some commentary on women's dress, an element of information that was already *de rigueur* for the travel narratives of the late sixteenth century:

Here we must bear in mind that all the Turkish women, whenever they go out in the street, are entirely shrouded, except that they have a black kerchief, or veil, about two fingers wide, before their eyes, so that they can recognize everybody, but no one can recognize them. But, though the Christian Greek women are dressed in the same manner as the Turkish women, yet they do not shroud their faces, but only wear a thin kerchief over the head, and everybody can look them in the face.⁵³

Despite this veiling, Wratislaw suggests that "Turkish" women are changing the conventions of seclusion. They flirt and see to it that men have the opportunity to "look them in the face".

There is this custom among the Turkish women. When any young man wishes to marry, he must marry rather through the information of his female friends than through the observation of his own eyes; for . . . he may not see her, or even go to the house of her father and converse with her openly; in fact, if he looks in her face before she is his, the Turks used to consider it a sin of the first magnitude. But this is already obsolete with

53 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 85–7. It was customary for European travellers to draw comparisons between the dress of "Turk" and Christian women living in Ottoman domains (although many noted similarities in the dress of women across ethnicity and commune). A predecessor of Wratislaw's, Stephan Gerlach, a German preacher attached to the entourage of a Habsburg envoy to Istanbul, speaking of the women of Niš, noted that "Turk" women in the streets "resembled nuns", while the Serb women dressed to "provoke and dazzle", Gerlach, Stephan, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1573–1576*, vol. I, Türkis Noyan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayinevi, 2007), p. 74. See also Faroqhi, Suraiya and Christoph Neumann, (eds), *Ottoman Costumes from Textile to Identity* (Istanbul: Eren, 2004).

them; for our janissaries told us that no Turkish maiden puts up with the rule that she is not to show herself to her lover, or speak with him, and if she cannot do it openly, she, at any rate, does it secretly. They have, usually, gardens beside their houses, and in them elevated galleries, on which the women dry their clothes and veils; and if a maiden has not such a convenience at home, she goes to the house of a female friend, and having an understanding with her lover, or with his female friends, makes known when and where he is to be in attendance.⁵⁴

Needless to say, Wratislaw was relying on his janissary and other male informants for this titillating information about the “secrets” of the Ottoman female. But, again, the question “Why not?” comes into play here. The Bohemian youth suggests that some women meet men “openly”, and that female “friends” act as go-betweens for lovers, a role long immortalized in the literatures of both East and West. Indeed Wratislaw’s narrative makes frequent reference to “female friends”, for both men and women. Nor should it surprise us that Wratislaw believed that socio-sexual conventions could become “obsolete”, and that the boundaries of women’s associations with men could be flexible or evolving, just like those that he surely witnessed at home.

Meeting Ottoman women face-to-face was thus a possibility. And Wratislaw conveyed to his audience that for a foreign male even conversation with Ottoman women was within the realm of possibility, just as John Smith claimed. He and his companions asked his janissary, Mustafa:

if it could be done without danger, to show us some handsome Turkish woman, that we might also know whether the women there are beautiful.⁵⁵

So Mustafa arranged an assignation. Wratislaw tells his readers that his janissary took them on a boat-ride in a garden (perhaps in a park), while a few of Mustafa’s janissary associates went into another garden nearby.

on returning, [they] invited us to go with them, saying that their female friends were there. We Christians – there were only four of us – went into the garden, and saw at a distance five or six Turkish women walking about. . . . Our janissary’s servant had a pipe, made of reeds, like an organ,

54 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 87–8. Just such a scene appears in Mahfuz, Najib, *Palace Walk* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), where a home’s roof in Cairo provides an opportunity for male and female protagonists to catch a glimpse of each other.

55 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 97–8.

on which he piped a Turkish tune. At this the women were apparently terrified, and looked to see who and where the piper was; but our janissary, stepping out and showing himself, bent his head to his knees, kissed the hand of each, and begged them not to take it ill that he had brought four *giaours*, or Christians, into the garden. After conversing with the ladies a tolerably long time, he called to us to come to him. We came to them, and, kissing their hands, said in excuse that we had not been aware of their presence, and begged that our conduct might not be annoying to them.

Not far off was a summer-house, which the ladies entered. We followed, and conversed with them as well as we could, and what they did not understand in our conversation our janissary explained to them. At length, at his urgent request, all but one unveiled; but we saw nothing particularly beautiful in them. All were brown, and black-eyed, and had dyed hair and eye-brows. They caused apples, oranges, and other fruit to be brought, and requested us to eat. After staying there a short time we took leave of them and departed.⁵⁶

No doubt this story is constructed on a variety of levels. Mustafa had already bragged to the impressionable youth about his various lady friends.⁵⁷ Thus he may have felt some pressure to deliver a meeting with “Turkish” women. Also Wratislaw’s description of his own role (and that of his comrades) suggests his particular notions of what constituted chivalrous behaviour when encountering strange ladies. Did the meeting take place? What was the nature of the household? And who brought the fruit with which they refreshed themselves? We cannot know. But what is interesting in this account is Wratislaw’s focus on conversation rather than sex. The “Turkish” women, so Wratislaw says, like *Tragabigzanda*, were intrigued at the possibility of talking to foreign men.⁵⁸

56 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 97–8.

57 Wratislaw, *Adventures*, pp. 99–100, goes on with a story about a young woman who made assignations with Mustafa by tricking her elderly husband into thinking she was at the bath. This is an oft repeated trope. But even here Wratislaw focuses on the “dinner” with which Mustafa entertained the lady rather than on her sexual favours. Wratislaw also makes explicit the separate status of women when, narrating a story he had heard, he notes that “Turks and Turkish women” comforted a young Greek maiden when her lover was being led to execution (p. 95).

58 So perhaps conversing with foreigners was not always quite so shameful as the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim (eds. and trans.) (London: Eland, 2010), p. 231, suggested when he compared, unfavourably, the behaviour of Viennese women: “The women sit together with us Ottomans, drinking and chatting, and their husbands do

With some reserve, they tried to converse with Wratislaw and his companions despite the apparent language barrier. Thus the appearance of various Ottoman females in Wratislaw's narrative, without all of the standard trappings of eroticism and intrigue, suggests a model for assessing women in the Ottoman public space. We know they were there, whether (and no matter how) they appear in the literature or not. In accounts like Wratislaw's, they may serve as figures in the background (often nameless), ethnic types, prominent figures like the *valide sultan*, or individuals (still often nameless) who cook, flirt, converse, observe, and feed the street cats of Istanbul. The question of their 'availability' often remains unclear. But it is worth remembering that they constituted roughly one half the population of Istanbul, and much of that half was visible one way or the other.

Covel

More than 80 years after Wratislaw's sojourn to Istanbul, a very different traveller, the English chaplain, John Covel, provided his readers with another set of impressions of the Ottoman female. Covel was a scholar of antiquities travelling in the 1670s. And despite his clerical identity, he was not averse to providing his audience with a bawdy story of a sultan's concubine when he explained the origins of the name of the town of Havsa, located on his route from Istanbul to Edirne.⁵⁹ The tale (told by Covel's dragoman) begins with the standard trope of a young woman with an elderly husband and her efforts to avoid his sexual advances.⁶⁰ It continues with a cucumber, and the "witty revenge" this heroine contrived once she discovered the rude joke that Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574) had played on her after a night of drunken revelry. But the story is framed by two intriguing vignettes on the beginning and ending of the relationship between the sultan and the concubine. The first depicts this supposedly married woman seeing the sultan in the Ottoman army camp and laughing at him as he tried, and failed, to get his horse to drink at the local river.

not say a word . . .", to women's behaviour at home. "The reason", he said, "is that throughout Christendom women are in charge, and they have behaved in this disreputable fashion ever since the time of the Virgin Mary". Evliya Çelebi was just as good as the next man (or better) at the telling trope.

59 Covel, Dr. John, *Voyages en Turquie 1675–1677*, Jean-Pierre Grélois (trans.), series *Réalités Byzantines* 6 (Paris: Éditions P. Lethielleux, 1998), pp. 7–8, 72. Covel held a chair in theology at Cambridge and was named chaplain of the English Levant Company in 1669. He lived in Istanbul from 1670–1677.

60 Covel, *Voyages*, p. 72.

Hearing and liking this “merry” observer, the sultan made her his mistress. The second vignette is a comment by Covell’s translator. He told Covell that despite her act of “revenge”, and despite the sultan’s power to punish her for it, instead Selim gave her great “wealth” and dismissed her. Thereupon she settled in the town and gave it her name, Sultana Khavsa.⁶¹ It does not surprise us to find either bawdy stories or accounts of tricky women in the tales narrated to travellers as they settled into their encampments. Such tropes easily pre-date the Ottomans. But the narrative of “Sultana” Khavsa also suggests the camaraderie between Covell and his translator (rather like Wratislaw and his janissary), and conveys the message that Ottoman women were not assumed to be as submissive or as silent as other narratives might suggest.⁶² A story is a story; but beneath its surface is the suggestion of the gendered limits of social behaviour.

Covell also discusses the easy sociability of the traveller and his hosts on the journey from Istanbul to Edirne in 1675.⁶³ Staying in a mostly Greek village outside Edirne to escape the plague, Covell noted that “Turks”, like everyone else, head for the countryside to avoid the plague in the city. Many Turks came out to the town where Covell was staying or sent out their women if they themselves could not leave. That being the case, Covell tells his readers:

I chanc’t to see a couple of very lovely women several times, which came and lived in a fine house just by me, and being under the government of only one poor silly old man, they would get out into a great garden there hard by and romp and play the rogue like little sprites; but more [of] that between ourselves.⁶⁴

This account, with a wink to his readers, may seem just another example of the outsider “peeping” at “Turk” women (who had tricked yet another old codger) and living to tell the tale. It reminds us of the opening tale of the *Arabian Nights* and of Wratislaw’s ‘encounter’ with Turkish women in the garden,

61 Covell, *Voyages*, p. 72. The translator links this story to accounts in Evliya Çelebi of Hafsa Hatun, see p. 73, n. 165.

62 Andrea, Bernadette, *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 103, significantly points out early eighteenth-century challenges to the “assumed tyranny of eastern cultures’ gender norms”, focusing on women playwrights; but the willingness to consider the outspoken female in and outside of the *harem* was a factor earlier on in the early modern era as well.

63 Covell, *Voyages*, p. 88. Covell here is traveling in an English Levant Company entourage.

64 Covell, *Voyages*, p. 88.

although here there is no mention of conversation. Indeed, Covell later claimed that he could tell a “most passionate story” about his landlord’s Greek kinswoman who was both “handsome and ingenious”; so the author’s use of innuendo is nondenominational. But perhaps more interesting is Covell’s summary comment that (in this situation of easy cross-communal sociability) he “every day used to prattle” with his landlady’s only daughter before she was taken by the plague.⁶⁵ What did they speak of? Was there any suggestion of impropriety in their talk? Once again we do not know. But we see that when Covell is not simply looking at women, or hinting at sexual exploits, he proposes that conversation with an Ottoman female could be an everyday thing. Ethnicity and hence commune mattered, of course, when it came to access. The landlady’s daughter was “Greek”, and thus a fellow Christian. But Covell was still a foreign stranger, and thus, at least theoretically, off limits to local women. Here, as elsewhere, one can speculate about how much age mattered. Possibly the more accessible females were ‘middle-aged’ or older. Possibly more females were more accessible than we are inclined to think. In this case, we lack the necessary details when it comes to the parameters of sanctioned vs. unsanctioned conversation.

Chandler

Finally, many years later, in 1765–1766, we have another English scholar, named Richard Chandler, who sojourned into Ottoman lands, and presented a familiar but elaborated vision of the Ottoman female for his English audience. Chandler was sponsored by the academic Society of Dilettanti, and charged with the task of recording classical monuments and inscriptions. His account, like Wratislaw’s, suggests that whom one saw, and how, was in part a function of task, place, and personality. Chandler too repeats the stock story of Ottoman men taking Greek virgins “legally, by force”, with the approval of the *kadı* (Islamic judge). And he notes the approximation of “Christian”, and “Turk” women in dress and manner within the broader sphere of patriarchy.⁶⁶ Chandler sees enough of Ottoman women to provide an ethnographic classification. And he elaborates on the opportunities provided by male friends to see women

65 Covell, *Voyages*, p. 84. We presume the landlady was Christian but he does not say for sure. This was a village that “lived” by the wine trade, drawing “hundreds” of people out from Edirne every day, p. 90.

66 Chandler, Richard, *Travels in Asia Minor and Greece*, new edition with corrections and remarks by Nicholas Everett, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), vol. II, p. 154. This volume covers travels departing from İzmir (Smyrna), August 20, 1765, and arriving finally in Bristol in November of 1766. Chandler was a scholar of classics and theology at Oxford.

in domestic settings, where eating constituted one border between male and female.

Chandler emphasizes the gaze rather than conversation:

The liberty of the fair sex at Athens is almost equally abridged by the Turks and the Greeks. Their houses are secured with high walls, and the windows turned from the street, and latticed or boarded up, so as to preclude all intercourse even of the eyes.⁶⁷

The haram, or apartment of the Turkish women, is not only impenetrable, but must not be regarded on the outside with any degree of attention. To approach them [women], when abroad, will give offense; and in the town, if they cannot be avoided, it is the custom to turn to the wall and stand still, without looking toward them, while they pass. This mode of carriage is good breeding at Athens. . . .⁶⁸

[Greek virgins] walk with their hands concealed in the pocket holes at the[ir] sides, and their faces are muffled. Sometimes they assume the Turkish garb. Neither prudence nor modesty suffers a maiden to be seen by the men before she is married. . . . Her beauty might inflame the Turk, who can take her legally, by force, to his bed, on a sentence of the *cadi*, or judge; and the Greek, if she reveal her face to him even unwillingly, would reject her as criminal and with disdain.⁶⁹

All of these 'observations' are reminiscent of the narratives of other travellers, although Wratislaw and Coval would seem to suggest that the walls between men and women were not so 'impenetrable'.⁷⁰ But even Chandler suggests a degree of 'access' to women when he repeats what seems to be advice he has been given regarding public propriety when it comes to meeting a female on the street. He also suggests that class matters, and that some women in the course of his journey are more visible than others.

The Albanian women are inured early to hard living, labor, and the sun. Their features are injured by penury, and their complexions by the air. . . . Their legs and feet are generally bare; and their heads hooded, as it were, with a long towel, which encircles the neck, one extremity hanging down before and one behind. . . .⁷¹

67 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 153.

68 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 154.

69 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 155.

70 See the chapter by Edith Gülçin Ambros, "Frivolity and flirtation", in this volume.

71 Chandler, *Travels*, pp. 155–6.

This commentary is a standard form of ethnographic description, applied to both men and women in Ottoman lands by western travellers. But it also reminds us that foreign men resident in Ottoman lands were clearly in a position to see working women (both peasants and urban dwellers) whose station precluded them from a life of leisured seclusion. Visibility was conditioned by class as well as by stages of 'entry' from public to domestic spaces.

Chandler had friends, both "Greek" and "Turk" in Athens. And within the domestic space of these friends he got both first and second hand "looks" at women in a casual setting.

The Greek will sometimes admit a traveller into his gynaeceum, or the apartment of his women. These [women] within doors are as it were uncased, and each a contrast to the figure she made when abroad . . . [long description follows].

. . . She is painted blue round the eyes; and the inside of the sockets, with the edges on which the lashes grow, are tinged with black. The Turkish ladies wear nearly the same attire, and use similar arts to heighten their natural beauty. This [makeup] I saw applied, [Chandler goes on to say] by a girl . . . sitting cross legged as usual, on a sofa.⁷²

One is struck here by the words "uncased" and "as usual". They suggest that at least some women are not only seen in glimpses, and that the foreign male can think of seeing an Ottoman female in her day-to-day activities as something usual. Thus the narrator combines what he has learned of the Ottoman female with what he has witnessed in the houses of his friends (or perhaps in his own house). And his commentary moves from a description of dress and makeup, to one of education and mores.

The improvement of the mind and moral[s] is not considered as a momentous part of female education at Athens. The girls are taught to dance, to play on the Turkish guitar, and the tympanum or timbrel, and to embroider, an art in which they generally excel.

[But] A woman skilled in reading and writing is spoken of as a prodigy of capacity and learning. The mother of Osman Aga, a Turk who frequented our house, was of this rare number, and, as he often told us, so terrible for her knowledge, that even Achmet Aga, her kinsman, had been seen to tremble when he received her annual visit.

72 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 156.

Such commentary on the extraordinary female mind notwithstanding, Chandler soon returns his discussion of women's lot to questions of service and food.

In common life the woman waits on her husband, and, after dressing the provisions, which he purchased, eats perhaps with a female slave; the stately lord feeding alone, or in company with men.⁷³

Chandler's entire treatment of such fraternization speaks volumes on the unfamiliar and the familiar where the foreign male traveller and the Ottoman female are concerned. Far from the "peep-hole" stories narrated by various early modern travellers regarding their "views" of the Ottoman *harem*, Chandler's narrative speaks of the ordinary, the ethnic, and the varying limits of sociability. He has been told what constitutes proper behaviour; he passes by women in the streets and steps to the side, averting his gaze. He homogenizes women by ethnicity, but distinguishes them by class, and by their status as "matrons" or "maidens". Greek and Turk women share styles of clothing and makeup. And they are treated by their men in similar restricted fashion (although the "Greeks" somewhat less so than the "Turks").

Like our other travellers, Chandler's informants on the ways of women seem to be predominantly male. But he is not devoid of eye-witness experience, encountering women in both the public and domestic spheres. And those encounters are conditioned by his personality as well as his status. He enjoys the society of Osman Ağa, and listens to him tell humorous stories about his well-educated mother. But he also, supposedly, has watched a young woman in the simple act of applying makeup, viewing it not as a sexual act, but as a scientific one, studying the procedure and noting that the kohl "served as a foil to the luster", of the eye, as well as "contributing, so they say, to its health, and increasing its apparent magnitude".⁷⁴ Chandler is more interested in gendered eating habits than he is in the erotic goings on of the *harem* (whether it be a Christian gynaeceum or a Muslim one). And that takes us back to Lady Tragabigzanda and the question of acquaintance, sociability, and access. Chandler's Ottoman females are objects of the gaze, but Wratislaw's and Covell's are objects of the tongue. Conversation with the Ottoman female is thus clearly something to be remarked upon. In any case, it seems to be a realm in which the possibilities were more expansive than we might previously have thought. Why not?

73 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 157.

74 Chandler, *Travels*, p. 156.

Female Actors, Producers and Money Makers in Ottoman Public Space: The Case of the Late Ottoman Balkans

Svetla Ianeva

An essential role of the Ottoman woman within the public sphere was economic. Based on a variety of primary sources,¹ this chapter will try to investigate the presence and visibility of women as economic actors in the urban as well as in the rural contexts – in cottage industry, factory work, agriculture, trading and money lending, and, to the extent possible, the social impact of women as owners of wealth and as workers in the spheres in which they operated. It aims at questioning how some women became wealthy, the ways in which they used their wealth and the position such women held in society; and that of poorer women who worked to make a livelihood for themselves or as breadwinners for their families. By exploring the roles of Ottoman women as economic producers and entrepreneurs, their charitable work and other engagements in social and economic affairs, the chapter, which focuses on the nineteenth-century Balkans, aims to challenge the popular and stereotypic view of Ottoman women as passive in the economic field and to contribute to a new interpretation of their presence and visibility in the public sphere.

Ottoman Women at Work

Women in Agriculture

Several European travellers, diplomats and residents in the Ottoman empire noted and mentioned in their travel accounts Ottoman rural women working in the fields or selling their production on the local markets and in other public

1 For this chapter a variety of sources has been used: written sources such as consular reports and travel accounts by foreign diplomats and travellers, account books and registers of local merchants, private correspondence (including such by women) and other archival materials, nineteenth century periodicals and memoirs, the *kadı* registers (*sicils*) of the cities of Rusçuk (Ruse) and Vidin from the 1820s to the 1850s, as well as visual material – miniatures, engravings, photographs, frescoes and icons.

locations. Thus the sixteenth-century Flemish writer and Austrian diplomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq noted in his *Turkish Letters* Rumelian women's trade in homemade bread:

After leaving Sofia we journeyed for several days through the pleasant, fertile valleys of the Bulgarians. During this period of our journey we ate bread baked under ashes; the natives call it *fugacia*. It is sold by girls and women, for there are no bakers in those parts. When they hear of the arrival of strangers from whom they hope to earn something, they hurriedly knead flour, mixed with water but without yeast, and put it under the hot cinders, and then bring the loaves for sale at a low price, still hot from the fire.²

The Austrian Gerard Cornelius Drish, secretary to the extraordinary envoy to the Porte count Virmont, whose mission crossed the central Rumelian lands of the empire in 1817, mentioned in his journal “the trade of women” from Harmanlı who visited their camp in order to sell to them cooked eggs.³ Such women were not only visible to foreign travellers and to the locals; they were visualized by their contemporaries in the West through representations such as the one by H. Beck from 1586 of Bulgarian peasant women selling their agricultural products, for example. Felix Kanitz wrote in his traveller account from 1871 that while leaving the village Kistanbul (near Tarnovo), he was given directions by “an Ottoman who, together with five women, was harvesting the crops in his field”.⁴ Several of the illustrations in his books, such as, for example “Threshing near Ogosta” or “Roses collection near Kazanlık”, where women appear as the main protagonists, give us a visual testimony on Ottoman rural women's economic activity and public visibility. The French diplomat Louis-Auguste Felix de Beaujour also reported in his travel accounts that women from the villages around Kazanlık and Islimie, mainly the local young girls, were the main workforce in the cultivation and collection of roses (used for the

² Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin de, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, Edward Seymour Forster (trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 46.

³ *Немски и австрийски пътеписи за Балканите XVII – средата на XVIII в.* [German and Austrian Travellers' Accounts on the Balkans, Seventeenth – Mid Eighteenth Century], Michail Ionov (ed.) (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1986), p. 274.

⁴ Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът. Т. 2.* [Danube Bulgaria and the Balkan. vol. II] (Sofia: Borina, 1996), p. 17.

production of rose oil). According to his testimony, the roses were taken to be sold in the nearby cities by the women themselves.⁵

The results of recent research show that, despite climatic, ecological, economic, cultural and regional differences within the huge empire, women's participation in agriculture and animal husbandry was needed and was an empire-wide phenomenon. Evidence from the Balkan provinces could complement the examples from Anatolia and Ottoman Syria already given in the introduction of this volume.⁶ According to Olga Todorova and Virginia Pakaleva, Bulgarian peasant women from the lower social strata were heavily involved in agricultural activities all through the Ottoman period. They were hoeing, weeding, reaping, threshing, collecting fruits and firewood as well as grazing cattle,



FIGURE 3.1 *Bulgarian peasant women selling agricultural products, miniature from the Central State Archives in Sofia, Microfilms Collection (KMФ) 35, inventory no. 1005/18, from H. Beck, 1586 original in the Austrian National Library.*

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SOFIA.

5 Beaujour, Louis-August Felix, *Voyage militaire dans l'Empire Ottoman ou description de ses frontières et de ses principales défenses, soit naturelles, soit artificielles avec 5 cartes géographiques. v. 1–II* (Paris: F. Didot, 1829), in *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XV–XVIII в.* [French Travellers' Accounts on the Balkans, Fifteenth – Eighteenth Centuries], Bistra Tzvetkova (ed.) (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1975), p. 411.

6 See Introduction, notes 25, 26, 27.



FIGURE 3.2 *Rose collection near Kazanluk, "Collecte de roses près de Kazanlak", engraving in Kanitz, Felix, La Bulgarie danubienne et le Balkan: études de voyage (1860–1880) (Paris: Hachette, 1882), p. 179.*

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and some of them, especially poor women and widows, had sometimes to replace men in ploughing.⁷ Paskaleva quotes a "shameful" example of the later,

⁷ Todorova, Olga, *Жените от Централните Балкани през османската епоха (xv–xvii век)* [Women from the Central Balkans in Ottoman Times (xv–xvii c.)] (Sofia: Gutenberg Publishing, 2004), pp. 388–89; Paskaleva, Virginia, *Българката през Възраждането*

made public in the review *Chitalishte* in 1874, of a poor woman named Ugrina who was put into harness instead of a buffalo⁸ and comments that, unfortunately, such a scene was not an exceptional one to be seen at that time.⁹ Some of the village women were employed in *çiftliks* (large farms in private possession whose production was destined for the market) as seasonal salaried workers. According to the French consul in Thessaloniki (Selanik) E.M. Cousinery, poor young girls from the Macedonian mountain villages around Doiran were regularly hired by *çiftlik* owners from the region of Thessaloniki and Pela. They formed large groups under the supervision of two or three older men and were working during the harvest time in the *çiftliks* on both banks of the river Aksius (Vardar).¹⁰ Their payment was often in kind and helped their families through the winter. What we should note here is not only these young women's economic role and contribution to the family subsistence, but also their public visibility in the fields as well as while travelling on the roads at considerable distances. Women from the mountain areas of Stara Planina and Sredna Gora also migrated in hundreds and worked seasonally on landed estates in Thrace and Dobrudja. Cultural and mentality differences related to this female economic performance, even within the Balkan Ottoman provinces, should nevertheless be mentioned. According to Michael Palairet, unlike in the Bulgarian and Macedonian lands, where this participation of young unmarried women in "harvest gangs" (sometimes also called "*taifa*") was a common practice, in Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro it was unthinkable, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, for a woman to work away from home.¹¹ The demographic factor in migrations should be taken into consideration also from another perspective – female participation in agricultural activities was particularly needed and active when it had to replace male labour force engaged part-time in long-distance professional migrations (of builders, brick makers, potters, gardeners and so on) which were a widespread phenomenon in the Ottoman Balkans¹² as in several other Ottoman regions.

[The Bulgarian Woman during the Revival Period] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Otechestven front, 1984), pp. 10–11.

- 8 Shorov, Atanas, "Състоянието на българската селянка" [The conditions of the Bulgarian peasant women], *Читалище*, 4/20 (1874), p. 582.
- 9 Paskaleva, *Българката през Възраждането*, p. 10.
- 10 Cousinery, Esprit-Marie, *Voyage dans la Macédoine contenant des recherches sur l'histoire, la géographie et les antiquités de ce pays* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1831), in *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XV–XVIII в.*, p. 378.
- 11 Palairet, Michael, "The migrant workers of the Balkans and their villages (18th century – World War II)", in *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa. Mobilität, Vermittlung und Wandel im Handwerk des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts*, Klaus Roth (ed.) (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1987), p. 33.
- 12 Palairet, "The migrant workers of the Balkans", pp. 23–46.

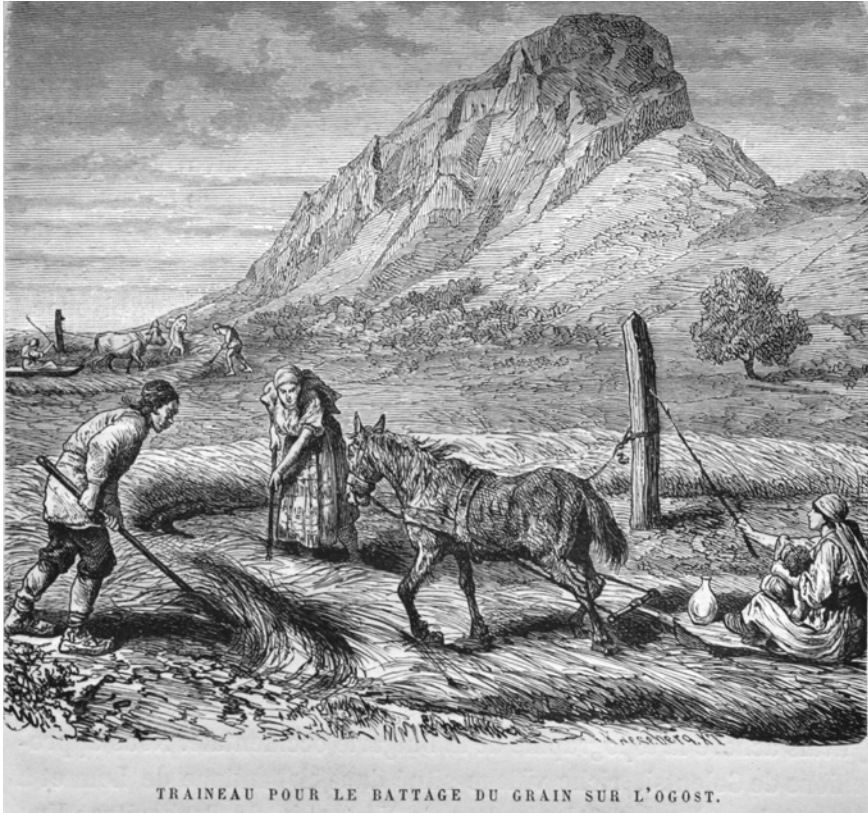


FIGURE 3.3 *Threshing near Ogosta, "Traineau pour le battage du grain sur l'Ogost", engraving in Kanitz, La Bulgarie danubienne et le Balkan, p. 337.*

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Although other examples of the participation of Ottoman peasant women in agricultural activities (sometimes combined with trade in agricultural products, as we have seen) and of their public visibility in the rural space and on urban markets could also be quoted, we should still note that such data are relatively scarce in the sources compared to the testimonies to the performance by Ottoman women of another role – that of protagonists in protoindustrial and industrial manufacturing. In our opinion, this could be misleading if taken without further consideration as a basis for the evaluation of the impact of women in the different sectors of the Ottoman economy. Women's agricultural work on their family plots was probably perceived as more "natural" and, being quite common, was less emphasized and less often reported in the sources. This does not mean that it was invisible for the contemporaries and that it was socially and economically insignificant, quite to the contrary, if we consider

that agriculture was by far the most important sector of the Ottoman economy. Ottoman women's engagement in manufacturing, on the other hand, seems to have been quite surprising for the contemporary foreign observers (and even for some researchers today) and has therefore been more favoured as a subject of records and of study.

Making Money by Manufacturing in Town and Country

While exploring the questions of the impact in the economic field and of the visibility in the public space of Ottoman women performing manufacturing activities in a rural and in an urban environment we should, first, bear in mind that in the Ottoman context the rural/urban divide in certain cases was quite unclear or, rather, flexible. In the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth century several localities were still registered in the official documents as villages while they were becoming or had already developed into urban centres with a typically urban economic and occupational profile. We should also take into account the fact that Ottoman women's manufacturing everywhere in the empire took place entirely outside the guilds,¹³ with a few exceptions – in seventeenth-century Bursa, for example, the women candle-producers had their own *esnaf* (professional corporation, guild).¹⁴ In protoindustries, furthermore, the private/public divide should not be considered only in its strictly spatial dimensions (as explained in the introduction of this volume), since women usually worked mostly at home, but their production was destined for export to distant markets, and so they were part of large and often complex protoindustrial networks.

Women in Protoindustries

According to Olga Todorova, already in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Rumelian women were active in textile production – in dyeing and tailoring – not only for domestic use but also for the market.¹⁵ Busbecq noted in his *Turkish Letters* a similar home based industrial activity of women in Anatolia during the same period: “The thread spun from this [Angora goats’] wool by the women of the district is taken to Angora, a city of Galatia, and there woven and dyed.”¹⁶

13 Faroqhi, Suraiya, “Women's work, poverty and privileges of guildsmen”, *Archiv Orientalni*, 69/2 (2001), pp. 157–8; Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, p. 392.

14 Gerber, Haim, “The social and economic position of women in an Ottoman city, Bursa, 1600–1700”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (1980), p. 237.

15 Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 388–9.

16 Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters*, p. 21.

Scholarly research has further shown a considerable and growing participation of Ottoman women in manufacturing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in the textile branches. This phenomenon has been studied in detail using mainly data from the Anatolian and part of the Arab provinces, the surroundings of the Ottoman capital and parts of Macedonia.¹⁷ Donald Quataert has qualified as a “fascinating part” of his research on Ottoman manufacturing the discovery of the very important presence of women and girls in many areas of manufacturing life, many more than he initially suspected.¹⁸

In the context of the gradual incorporation of several Ottoman provinces and industrial branches within the modern world-economy, Ottoman women became an increasingly notable economic factor. In the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they performed commercial embroidery, spinning, weaving, silk reeling, lace making and carpet knotting, working at home as well as in workshops. Dina Rizk Khoury mentions that in eighteenth-century Mosul, which was a centre of cotton manufacturing directed towards regional markets, as the population expanded, demand also increased and workers outside the guilds, especially women, came to hold an important position as spinners.¹⁹ According to Quataert, Muslim women commercially wove both cotton and linen in a home-industry network in east Anatolia during the 1830s. Women provided mohair yarn to the Ankara guilds during the 1840s; similarly women in the regions of Aleppo and Kayseri spun cotton yarn for the urban male guild weavers. In mid-nineteenth century Aleppo, women had virtually monopolized jobs in silk reeling, processing of wool for felt and wool fabrics, button-and braid-making, embroidery and piecing wool fabric

17 Quataert, Donald, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Quataert, Donald, “Ottoman manufacturing in the nineteenth century”, in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey 1500–1950*, Donald Quataert (ed.) (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994); Khoury, Dina Rizk, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Quataert, Donald, “Industry, labor and technology transfer in the Southeastern Balkans and Aegean coast of Anatolia and Istanbul, 1830–1922”, in *The Economic Development of Southeastern Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, Edhem Eldem and Socrates Petmezas (eds.) (Athens: Apha Bank Historical Archives, 2011), pp. 173–96; Quataert, Donald, “Textile workers in the Ottoman empire, 1650–1922”, in *The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650–2000* Lex Heerma van Voss, Els Hiemstra-Kuperus and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (eds.) (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 477–96.

18 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 174.

19 Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 137–8.

into cloaks. In west and central Anatolia before c. 1825, most of those knotting at home, including in the famous Uşak carpet production, were females.²⁰ Around Ankara during the 1830s in reportedly every village surrounding the town women not only spun wool yarn and wove shirts but also made trousers, *çarşafs* (women overgarments) and felt hats. Women wove commercially, already in the 1830s in the small town of Hınıs and Palu (in east Anatolia). During the 1830s Muslim women participated in a protoindustrial network in the far eastern Anatolian towns of Artvin, Ardaniç and Şavşat and commercially wove both linen and cotton cloth at home. In the city of Trabzon most nineteenth century linen weavers were women, who worked at home,²¹ but for an external, public market.

Donald Quataert provides several testimonies to the expanding number of Ottoman women making a living or contributing substantially to their families' incomes by working in the textile branches during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus in the Trabzon area c. 1870–1900, Muslim women printed headscarves using British muslins and also wove various silk and cotton cloths at home, likely on a putting out basis. While most of the evidence shows women weaving for the market within their homes, they could also be seen in workshops, in Nablus and Thessaloniki for example. In western and central Anatolia in the later nineteenth century an İzmir-based merchant consortium ran 17 workshops to which Greek, Armenian and Muslim women and girls came and knotted carpets, receiving piecework wages. In Aleppo, a significant new cottage industry employed urban women in the mechanized knitting of cotton stockings; by the end of the Ottoman era they supplied one-fifth of the market in Syria.²² Large number of Turkish women in Bosphorus villages near Istanbul worked at home, both full- and part-time, decorating veils and head cloths for sale in Anatolia and Persia. Two hundred young Jewish girls in Silivri laboured full time, engaged in commercial lace making organized by Istanbul merchants who supplied the thread and exported the “Irish” lace to France, Germany and other European locations, while several others made lace in their spare time.²³ In the Antep area local women used Belfast materials, under the direction of American missionaries. At the beginning of the twentieth century the agent of an Irish firm employed several hundred Antep-area girls and women to make linen handkerchiefs and lacework, mostly for export to the United States.²⁴ Embroidery everywhere was an exclusively female occu-

20 Quataert, “Textile workers in the Ottoman empire”, pp. 491–3.

21 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 38–9, 82.

22 Quataert, “Textile workers in the Ottoman empire”, pp. 491–3.

23 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 56.

24 Quataert, “Ottoman manufacturing in the nineteenth century”, pp. 103–4.

pation. In reportedly every village of İzmir province, for example, young girls embroidered, most using threads of silk and gold that were made in Istanbul.²⁵

As far as the relationships of women producers with the merchants-entrepreneurs and their agents in protoindustries are concerned, Quataert illustrates the different forms and stages of dependency of women by the example of the Uşak rug production. In the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of the Uşak women loom owners received cash advances from the merchants, pledging to produce for the agent but otherwise remaining independent. Others received advances and promised to use only the agent's dyeworks while a third kind of operator at Uşak exclusively used the dyed yarn that the agent brought to the house. Earlier in the nineteenth century women at Uşak and Sivas had dyed the yarn but this became a male task as rug production increased and was commercialized. There were centralized dyehouses in Uşak, both merchant-owned and independent by the 1850s. At Kula by contrast dyeing remained a decentralized and female craft until at least the 1880s. Thus loom operators, all women, variously obtained the dyed yarn from the dyehouse of the agents and of the independents. They assigned a few women to regulate the warp and to apportion the design; both tasks received higher wages than knotting. Girls as young as six years learned knotting from their mothers and after about two years apprenticeship began to receive wages. The knitters received piece rates; piece work remained standard throughout the industry in Anatolia.²⁶

In the Balkan provinces of the Empire, which were the first to be integrated into the modern world economic system in the late eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, women were also economically visible actors in proto-industrial manufacturing (presenting the features of *Kausystem* as well as of *Verlagsystem*), mainly in the textile branches, as the results from our research show. In the town of Samako in the 1860s and 1870s nearly 3,000 women were home-based weavers of woollen cloth.²⁷ According to Petar Karapetrov, in Panagurishte widows, orphan and other poor women were feeding their children by producing homespun as well as socks at home, which were exported by local merchants on the imperial markets.²⁸ The few centralized manufactures

25 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 80–2.

26 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 158.

27 Kossev, Konstantin, *За капиталистическото развитие на българските земи през 60-те и 70-те години на 19 в.* [On the Capitalist Development of the Bulgarian Lands in the 1860s and 1870s] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1968), p. 68.

28 Karapetrov, Petar, *Материали за описание на града Панагюрище и околните му села* [Materials for the Description of the Town of Panagurishte and the Surrounding Villages] (Sofia, 1893), p. 41.

in this small town and their owners were also relying mainly on a female workforce to wash the wool, card, spin, weave and full it.²⁹ Such was also the case of the protoindustrial production of woollen fabric organized by Ivan Kalpazanov in Gabrovo employing usually around 100 women for the washing and spinning of the wool as well as in weaving.³⁰ In Atanas Gümüşgerdan's large putting out enterprise for the production of woollen cloth, many peasant households from the Rodopa Mountain were engaged. Within the household, women usually spun the wool, while men wove. As in many other protoindustrial regions with poor conditions for agriculture, these women contributed substantially by their manufacturing activities to the incomes of their often numerous households. We could also argue that, as in the cases from the Anatolian and Arab provinces previously quoted, the industrial development of many Ottoman regions owed much to women's manufacturing activity, which once again demonstrates their economic and social significance and impact. Even the nuns in some monasteries, such as the Kalofer monastery, were regularly commissioned large quantities of woollen cloth by some merchants from Plovdiv (Filibe) and thus were also involved in protoindustrial production. Several contemporary authors – the priest Konstantin (in his account on the diocese of Plovdiv, published in Vienna in 1819), Vassil Aprilov (in 1841), Konstantin Fotinov (in 1843) and Ivan Bogorov (in 1865), claim that this production was one of the main sources of income for the nuns. Furthermore, according to some of these authors, the skills of Kalofer women spinners, braid and *shaiak* (finer woollen cloth) producers made their articles famous all across the empire;³¹ they thus gained a good “professional” reputation.

Nikola Nachov explicitly notes that many women in Kalofer, and especially widows and those whose husbands were absent for long periods of time from this small mountain town, were providing for their family incomes through spinning and weaving and that some of them were managing even to cover in that way their husbands' tax duties or debts. For that purpose women were spinning wool even while walking on their way back from the fields; this, according to him, was a usual scene to be observed.³² This testimony supports Beck's representation of peasant women (one of them is represented spinning while walking); it also indicates another public location where women at work were visible.

29 Vlaikov, Todor, *Бележки върху икономическото положение на гр. Панагюрище преди и след въстанието* [Notes on the Economic Situation of the Town of Panaguirishte before and after the Uprising] (Plovdiv: 1904), p. 19.

30 Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, p. 75.

31 Nachov, Nikola, *Калофер в миналото. Книга Първа* [Kalofer in the Past. vol. 1] (Sofia: Zemizdat, 1990 (first published Sofia: 1927)), pp. 69–75.

32 Nachov, *Калофер в миналото. Книга Първа*, p. 112.

Through Nachov's memoirs we can trace several aspects of the performances of women from Karlovo, Sopot, Gabrovo, Kalofer and the surrounding villages as economic actors and their specific place in the protoindustrial networks. Some of the local women were buying wool, then spinning it and further either selling it to the *gaytan* (woollen braid) merchants or producers or weaving *shaiak*, which they then sold to the woollen cloth merchants who exported it to the distant imperial markets. Every Friday night, on the eve of the weekly market, at the market-place Azmaka in Kalofer long lines of sitting women, with their weekly production – fine, “Spanish looking” white wool yarn – on the ground in front of them could be seen. The sale of *shaiak* happened either on the local market (for urban women) or while the merchants visited the producers' homes (for peasant women mainly). Sometimes the merchants were providing some of the women spinners and weavers with raw wool and commissioning the production of woollen braid or fabric and occasionally advancing them with money. At home, women from all generations (“mothers and mothers-in-law, daughters and grand-daughters”) were spinning or weaving the wool distributed.³³ This pattern seems to have been common for the protoindustrial woollen production in the mountain areas of the central Balkans.

With the development of new forms of communication in the empire, female industrial (and more generally economic) activities became publicly visible also through the periodical press. A correspondence from Islimie to the newspaper *Levant Herald*, dated 20 September 1875 reported that the tax-collectors and their agents in the region attempted to levy the *temettuat* (the tax on industrial and commercial profits) from the women from the mountain villages surrounding Islimie, “putting them in the number of the merchants, because they were trading with *aba* (coarse woollen cloth) and *shaiak*”; the tax agents apparently considered that these women's production, taken by them to the market, was important enough to be subject to *temettuat* taxation. After a complaint to the local *mutassarif* (administrative governor), this taxation was not allowed.³⁴ Similarly, from a correspondence from Kalofer to the newspaper *Svoboda* in January 1872 it appears that poor women spinners from this town attacked with their distaffs in the market place the local notable (*çorbaci*) hadji Nedelcho Kioibashiiski, who wanted to tax their production at 20 *para* of *damga parası* (market tax) per distaff and five *para* on every bale of yarn.³⁵ These publications in the press could be interpreted, in our opinion, as testimonies to the importance of women as economically notable subjects and on their active and socially visible position as protestors defending their rights

33 Nachov, *Калофер в миналото. Книга Първа*, pp. 407–8.

34 *Istочно vreme (Levant Herald)*, issue 33, 27 September 1875.

35 *Svoboda*, issue 30, 8 January 1872; Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, p. 154.

and interests. Women engaged in protoindustrial woollen cloth production were also the protagonists of a sort of Luddites protest, the first in the region, which happened in 1861 – a carding machine installed in Samakov by the local Jewish merchants and entrepreneurs Arie was attacked and broken by local poor women who perceived it as a threat to their jobs and incomes.³⁶

We could also find evidence on the relations of women – wool carders and wool spinners – with the *gaytanci* guilds in the Stara Planina and Sredna Gora protoindustrial region. The *gaytancis* from Karlovo, Sopot, Gabrovo and Pirdop who were exporting wollen braid almost everywhere in the empire, employed an impressive number of home-based salaried urban and rural women – 1,700 to 2,000 in each town. Women carders' and women spinners' remunerations were discussed by the masters – guild members and then fixed upon a common agreement at three or four *guruş* per day (as, for example, in Gabrovo in 1866 and 1869).³⁷

In the town of Lom (on the Danube river) nearly 100 girls were seasonally hired by each of the 20 local large scale merchants exporting wool from the region to Central Europe as well as to the Ottoman capital; these girls, under the supervision of special agents, were washing, cleaning and carding the wool from June to the end of August.³⁸

In the Balkans, as in other Ottoman provinces, women also undertook other manufacturing jobs, full-time or part-time, such as woollen yarn and woollen cloth dyeing, carpet weaving, silk thread, handkerchief, towels, cotton cloth and walnut oil production, contributing to their families' incomes as well as to the industrial development of the region. Not all of these women remain anonymous; the sources reveal, for example, the names of some of the women carpet weavers – Tzana Tzuponina from Piroto, Elenka Brazanova from Samokov, Pena Strandjova and Kera Istikera from Kotel – famous for the excellent quality of their carpets (exported by merchants to distant markets) and for their skills.³⁹ It seems significant also that sometimes the occupation became part of the name

36 Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, p. 35.

37 Undjiev, Ivan, *Карлово. История на града до Освобождението* [Karlovo. History of the Town before the Liberation] (Sofia: Balgarska Akad. na Naukite. Institut za istoria, 1962), p. 55; Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, pp. 78, 82, 135; Tsonev, Stefan, “Към въпроса за разложението на еснафските организации у нас през периода на Възраждането” [On the question of the decay of the *esnaf* organizations during the Revival period], *Trudove na Vischia ikonomicheski institut za narodno stopanstvo na grad Varna*, 1 (1956), p. 20.

38 Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, p. 86.

39 Manalov, Ivan, *Килимената индустрия в Чипровци* [The carpet production of Chiprovtsi], *Spisanie na Balgarskoto Ikonomichesko Drujestvo*, 4–5 (1901), 264–72; Paskaleva, *Българката през Възраждането*, pp. 29–30, based on Veleв, Dimitar,

or a pseudonym for some of the women performing manufacturing activities as, for example, Pena Sinachkata (meaning “The blue dyer”) from Gabrovo, which indicates their public visibility and reputation as professionals.⁴⁰

Women were the main workforce in home-based protoindustrial silk thread production in several regions. Their names appear, for example, in the commercial registers from 1806–1824 of several Vratsa merchants-entrepreneurs, organizers of a vast network for the production and exportation to foreign markets of the raw silk from the region.⁴¹ Women were visible as providers of silk thread in another protoindustrial enterprise, that of Hadji Hristo Rachkov in the Gabrovo and Tarnovo region. From the records in his account book from 1800 we learn their names, the quantities of silk delivered and the money received for it as well as that some of them were probably not only silk thread producers but played also the role of intermediaries between the merchant-entrepreneur and the village households.⁴² Women were also engaged in home-based silk-worm breeding and cocoon production in several towns and villages in these two regions as well as in Filibe, Eski Zağara, Edirne, Thessaloniki and their surrounding villages.⁴³

In some villages in west Macedonia, as for example Tresonche, poor women, widows and deserted women produced fine woollen cloth (*sukno*) and striped cloth (*klašni*) for the market⁴⁴ while in Serres, according to the authors of *Geography of the Four Parts of the Universe* (published in Venice in 1804), the Armenians Hugas Indjedjian and Stepanos Cuver, who travelled across the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century, Greek women were the main protagonists in the production of beautiful towels,

Български килими до края на XIX в. [Bulgarian Carpets of the Nineteenth Century] (Sofia: Balgarska Akad. na Naukite, 1960), pp. 27, 48–9, 52.

40 Tzonchev, Petar, *Из стопанското минало на Габрово* [On the Economic Past of Gabrovo] (Sofia: 1929), pp. 56, 61–2.

41 Vazvazova-Karateodorova, Kirila and Zina Markova (eds.) *Семеен архив на Хаджитошеви: Т. I. (1751–1827)* [Family Archives of Hadjitoshevi. vol. 1. 1751–1827] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1984), pp. 386, 435, 439.

42 Национална Библиотека „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий“, Български Исторически Архив [National Library St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Bulgarian Historical Archives, hereafter НБКМ, БИА], II А 7807, pp. 138–9.

43 On Greek women as silk-worm breeders and cocoon producers in the villages around Thessaloniki see the testimony of the French consul in Thessaloniki in the 1780s and early 1790s, Cousinery, Esprit-Marie, *Voyage dans la Macédoine contenant des recherches sur l'histoire, la géographie et les antiquités de ce pays* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1831), in *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XV–XVIII в.* Bistra Tzvetkova (ed.) (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1975), p. 370.

44 Palaret, “The migrant workers”, p. 39.

handkerchiefs, linen towelling with different ornaments and other bath accessories.⁴⁵ According to Hristo Makedonski's memoirs, in Bitola in the years immediately preceding the Crimean War, nearly 50 women worked in a cotton cloth weaving manufacture with 42 looms, owned by his father.⁴⁶



FIGURE 3.4 *Bulgarian silk manufacturer in Triavna, "Pasementier bulgare à Triavna", engraving in Kanitz, La Bulgarie danubienne et le Balkan, p. 189.*

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45 *Арменски пътеписи за Балканите XVII–XIX в.* [Armenian Travellers Accounts on the Balkans, Seventeenth – Nineteenth Centuries], Agop Ormandjian (ed.) (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1984), p. 77.

46 Makedonski, Hristo, *Записки на Христо Македонски 1852–1877* [Memoirs of Hristo Makedonski (1852–1877)] (Sofia: Otechestven front, 1973), p. 12.

Ottoman Women Factory Workers

The involvement of Ottoman women from several villages, towns and cities across the empire in factory production during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries allows us to claim that they contributed greatly to one of the most important processes of modernization – that of industrialization. Although it could be argued that women played a rather passive part in this process being recruited and organized by the factory entrepreneurs, we should also take into consideration their personal decision or consent to engage in factory work, away from home and in order to provide for the family subsistence, and their further new social and economic experiences and behaviours (including going on strike on occasions). The sources examined reveal the decisive role of female participation in factory production for Ottoman industrialization as well as women's higher visibility in new public locations and social situations.

Donald Quataert regards as a false assumption about Middle East privacy norms the view that factories in the Ottoman empire employed only men and provides several examples of the predominance of female workers in the mechanized cotton spinning and silk reeling mills. His research demonstrates that women were an important, likely major part of the workforce in Uşak wool yarn factories too, in the Istanbul spinning factory, in the wool cloth factory at Eyüp and in the umbrella workshops in the capital, in the Mavrumihali mill in the Adana area in the early 1890s, as well as in the first mill in Niausta founded in the 1870s⁴⁷ and in the tobacco monopoly cigarette factories in Thessaloniki and in Istanbul.⁴⁸ The vast majority of the workforce in the silk reeling mills of Lebanon, west Anatolia (Bursa, İzmir), the Thessaloniki region and elsewhere were girls,⁴⁹ usually unmarried, who often lived in dormitories. The Greek and Turkish girls working in the state rug factory in Hereke also stayed in dormitories, separate for the two groups. At Bursa in 1850, hundreds of *reaya* (mostly Greek and Armenian) women had a further recent resource for employment at the silk filatures. In 1863 the mills of Bursa employed 3,300 individuals, mills in immediately adjacent villages – 400 persons and factories elsewhere in the region – 2,500, or 6,200 altogether and only the 400 directors and engineers were male. There were also some “imported” French skilled women reelers to instruct the local workers in the new technology (such as

47 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 47–8, 80, 175.

48 Quataert, “Industry, labor and technology transfer”, pp. 188–9.

49 In the 1850s the Pope, as well as archbishops and *ulema* in Bursa and Lebanon affirmed, by special decrees, the morality of labour in the mills in order to facilitate the employment of Greek, Armenian and Muslim women. See Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 129.

Marie-Blanche, a 32-year-old widow with a child from Loriol (Drôme). At the beginning of the reeling season women recruited in the villages could be seen arriving in caravans in Bursa where they were housed in dormitories. Most women were unmarried girls, only a few were married. Similarly, mostly young girls worked in the steam-powered yarn factories in Karaferye, Niausta and Vodena in Macedonia.⁵⁰ In the central part of the Balkans, women were notably present in the private woollen cloth factories and in the modern *shaiak* weaving factory working on state command and for the army which opened in Islimie in 1836 where mainly poor women and girls, including many gypsy women and some Turkish widows, were employed.⁵¹ The silk reeling factory established in Tarnovo in 1861 by the Italian Doino Vichenti from Bergamo and his Bulgarian partner Stefan Karagiozov relied entirely on female labour – 50 to 65 permanent female workers and 200 to 300 seasonal ones initially and 450 permanent reelers and cocoon processors, mostly young girls, later. Another cocoons' processing and silk reeling factory, opened in Gabrovo by the French Spensen in 1862, employed 20 to 25 experienced Italian female workers, together with local women. In the factory established by the French company "Frères Bonnal" in 1858 in Eski Zağara, which functioned for 12 to 13 years, female labour force, mainly girls, accounted for 87.5 per cent of the personnel.⁵² These data confirm Quataert's conclusions that female labour was an integral part of nineteenth-century Ottoman manufacturing, not a remarkable and unusual phenomenon but rather a central, everyday, recurring and sometimes even dominant presence.⁵³ We could add that Ottoman women factory workers not only performed an active part in the economic field but also populated new sectors of the public space – "modern" locations such as factories and factory dormitories; they were also visible on the roads and in the streets on their way to and from work.

The analysis of the data on the remunerations and on the working conditions of Ottoman women factory workers allows the assertion that they were highly exploited. In the Bursa silk reeling industry in the 1850s and 1860s apprenticeships begun at 10 to 12 years of age and during that period the girls received only half of the regular spinners' wage. At the end of the reeling season they returned home with almost all their wages, mainly to help support

50 Quataert, "Textile workers in the Ottoman empire", p. 493; Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 127–8.

51 Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 3. [Danube Bulgaria and the Balkan. vol. 3] (Sofia: Borina, 1996), pp. 40–1.

52 Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, pp. 88–91.

53 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 174.

the family. The reeling girls' families as well as the cocoon raising households began to spin and weave less for home use, they were buying dress fabrics and luxuries, such as sugar and coffee, and became reliant on cash wages and more vulnerable to the fluctuations in this volatile industry when it was attacked by the pebrine disease in the 1860s. The workday in Bursa filatures was 13.5 hours on average in summer and 7.5 hours in winter. In the silk mills in Thessaloniki in the mid 1840s poor girls worked about 14 hours per day.⁵⁴ As far as the level of women's wages is concerned, in most factories in the Balkans, for example, women's daily salary was usually three to five *guruş*, while male workers were remunerated at seven to eight *guruş* per day.⁵⁵ Quataert has claimed that these lower wages explain to a large extent, from a macro economic point of view, the massive participation of women and girls in the expanding sectors of industrial production. The concomitant growth of several textiles sectors and of their female labour force was part of the process of lowering labour costs in the struggle for competitive survival. The combination of very low-wage households and female labour best explains, according to him, the continuing ability of Ottoman industry to compete for the domestic market and to sell products abroad.⁵⁶

From another perspective, we could also claim that, although the salaries that women factory workers received were seen as an important supplement to be added to the family incomes or even as decisive in the support of their families, they on occasions took the risk and reacted to exploitation or to insecurity of work and could be seen protesting on the public scene. In 1862, for example, most of the Bursa silk mills had closed because of the pebrine disease, and towards the end of the cocoon harvest season workers resentment exploded, taking the form of inter-communal violence. An Armenian mill operator had purchased land covered by mulberry trees from its owner, a Turkish woman, and after obtaining permission he built and opened a new mill, adding to the growing over-capacity of the crisis bound-industry. Some Turks alleging that the building rested on an abandoned and no longer visible Muslim cemetery, they demanded that the authorities have it demolished. On 24 July 1862 a large mob marched to the mill, pulled it down and next set fire to the mass of levelled ruins. The real reasons for these actions were low wages and unemployment and an attempt to save jobs by eliminating a source

54 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 127–9.

55 Kanitz, Felix, *Дунавска България и Балканът*. Т. 3., pp. 40–1; Kossev, *За капиталистическото*, pp. 88–91, 128.

56 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 175; Quataert, "Textile workers in the Ottoman empire", p. 493.

of employment for rival workers.⁵⁷ In 1910 the silk factory workers in Bursa, mostly women, demanded a decrease in their working hours, an increase in their wages and exemption from paying the profit tax and since their arguments were not accepted either by the factory owners or by the authorities (which they addressed several times), they went on strike.⁵⁸

Female Entrepreneurs and Managers

Some Ottoman women – owners of workshops or small enterprises – acted as managers of their production. Such was the case of Mariika Petrova from Gabrovo, owner of a workshop for the production of woollen cloth (*shaiak*). As her correspondence with the merchant and entrepreneur Stefan Karagiozov from 1860 shows, this merchant from Tarnovo was commissioning her regularly with orders and then exporting the *shaiak* to distant markets, Mariika Petrova being thus involved in a protoindustrial network. The scale of her production was non negligible since she mentions in one of her letters that at that moment she had fabric in stock worth over 2,500 *guruş* and in another letter that her profit was worth nearly 2,000 *guruş*.⁵⁹ We should note also that her business correspondence shows a high level of literacy and command of the written language, together with the command of entrepreneurial skills.

We could argue furthermore that some women performed a specific role which we could call “entrepreneurs in the shadow” and which is quite difficult to trace in the primary sources. Mihail Madjarov (born in 1854) in his memoirs recalls his grandfather’s impressions of his own mother (Mihail Madjarov’s grand-grandmother), the wife of a small merchant-entrepreneur from Koprivshtitsa who was importing cotton from the region of Serres and Thessaloniki and producing towels in his home town, located quite far away – in the Stara Planina mountain. According to her grandson’s recollections, she was the real businessman in the family since, being quite “energetic and experienced” (unlike her rather “careless” husband), following “the economic interests of the family”, she was the one to control the capital, to advise her husband on what to sell and to buy and approximately at what price and to run the workshop while he was away buying the raw material or selling the finished product. At the same time, in a traditional environment (probably of the end of the eighteenth century), she did not publicly demonstrate her status, on the contrary, she showed some “subordination, which was useful, conscious

57 Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 129–30.

58 Çelik, Birten, “Sweatshops in the silk industry of Bursa region and the workers’ strike in 1910”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 4/1 (2013), pp. 26–56.

59 НБКМ, БИА, ф. 407, а. е. 1, р. 2; Kossev, *За капиталистическото развитие*, p. 46.

and voluntary”.⁶⁰ The same author reports another illustrative case, this time from the second half of the nineteenth century, of which he was the direct witness. The main protagonist this time was the wife of a business partner of Madjarov’s father (who was an important merchant exporting woollen cloth and socks from Koprivshtitsa to the Ottoman capital and Egypt). She was “more literate and more advanced” than her husband and was always present at the conclusion of his deals, which she had to approve. The only time her husband made a contract without consulting her, after giving her the money received as an advance payment, she calculated that the deal was not a good one, refused to deliver the stock promised, went to Madjarov’s house, returned the money given as an advance and insisted on a new “pazarlık” (deal). Apparently she managed to convince the major merchant since the deal was concluded in a few days in her presence and with her consent. It is significant, in our view, to note however that both women do not appear in Mihail Madjarov’s memoirs with their personal names, but under the names of “the wife of . . .”, followed by the names of their respective husbands!⁶¹ Nevertheless, the second case examined shows that in the second half of the nineteenth century some women dared to demonstrate openly their entrepreneurial activities and superiority becoming thus more visible on the public scene and more influential in the business milieu.

In the Ottoman empire there were women who acted as managers of their family capital, especially in case of widowhood. A testimony at the micro-historical level to this role is, for example, the activity of Doda Georgova from Kalofer. She was married to a local *abacı* (tailor of *aba* clothes), Petko Stoianov, who was also owner of a tavern and a shop in Kalofer, traded in *aba* in Istanbul and İzmit and died in 1822 leaving to his heirs 18,430 *guruş* in cash, a considerable sum. After his death Doda Georgova went to İzmit to repay her husband’s debts and to collect his unsold merchandise.⁶² At that time, their sons Stoian, Hristo and Nikola were minors, being between 15 and five years old. Doda Georgova gave to her elder sons (Stoian and Hristo) half of the family capital and encouraged them to continue their father’s long-distance *abacı* trade “under her guidance” and “watching closely that they added all the profits to the initial capital”. Four years later she consigned three quarters of the family capital to her sons, on the same conditions, and waited two more years before giving them the entire sum. In that way, in eight years the family capital grew to 25,732 *guruş* (or nearly 40 per cent over the initial sum). According to the

60 Madjarov, Mihail, *Спомени* [Memoirs] (Sofia: Damian Iakov, 2004), p. 20.

61 Madjarov, *Спомени*, pp. 21–2.

62 Davidova, Evgenia, *Balkan Transition to Modernity and Nation-States: through the Eyes of Three Generations of Merchants (1780s–1890s)* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 103.

local historiographer Nikola Nachov, in the meantime she several times provided her sons with credit for running and enlarging their trade operations. Pretending to borrow the money from a close friend (also a widow!) whose name she did not reveal to her sons, in fact she invested part of the remaining family capital in her sons' deals which, most of the time, went well. Only when the sums "borrowed" reached 7–8,000 *guruş* and the sons started to worry that in case the unknown creditor asked for settling of their accounts at once this could harm their current operations, she revealed that in fact she was the creditor and that she was operating with the rest of their family capital which she had not yet entirely consigned to them before being sure that they were prepared and mature enough to make good use of it.⁶³ The role of Doda Georgova in starting and managing the beginning of the carrier of her sons could be probably considered as crucial and her approach to (or "business strategy" in dealing with) the family capital as successful, if we take into account the final results. From the 1840s to the 1870s her sons became important international merchants (*Avrupa tüccarları*) based in the Ottoman capital, trading all across the empire and with several European countries in various commodities. One of them, Hristo Trpchileshtov, was also supplying the Ottoman government on state orders, he was an important money-lender and was also a well reputed intermediary and creditor in large tax-farming operations.⁶⁴

In her recent research Evgenia Davidova has argued that, while in the late eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth century some Balkan women participated (albeit often discretely) in various phases of the enterprise and performed male entrepreneurial activities (due also to the fact that the skill level of accounting was not extraordinary complex at the time), towards the mid nineteenth century and afterwards, with the complication of business accounting and practises, the institutionalization of financing and the advancement of the modern legal system, the direct female economic involvement in entrepreneurship decreased, certain trends of pre-modern female entrepreneurship were disrupted and women remained economically visible mainly as property renters, as lenders and as teachers.⁶⁵ Indeed, the examples of direct engagement of women in entrepreneurship during that period are scarce in the sources that we have studied. Apparently this activity was relatively rarely undertaken by Ottoman women as a way of making money.

63 Nachov, *Калюфер в миналото 1707–1877. Книга Втора* [Kalofer in the Past 1707–1877. vol. II] (Sofia: ИСМ Компану, 2003) (first published Sofia, 1927), pp. 223–4.

64 Davidova, Evgenia, "Тъпчилещови", in *Кой кой е сред българите XV–XIX в.* [Who is Who Among the Bulgarians, Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries], Ilia Todev (ed.) (Sofia: Anubis, 2000), pp. 270–1.

65 Davidova, *Balkan Transition to Modernity*, pp. 126–7.

Women Teachers

The analysis of the sources allows us to claim that the social impact of Ottoman women as well as their public presence and visibility in the field of education grew over time. A limited number of women “of a certain age, who were knowledgeable, experienced and had memorized the Holy Koran” taught in the *sibyan mektepleri* (primary schools) for girls all through the Ottoman period.⁶⁶ During the early modern period, however intellectual and educational activities were almost never undertaken professionally by women to earn them income.⁶⁷ During the Tanzimat era women started to teach also in the *rüşdiyye* schools, the first *rüşdiyye* (secondary) school for girls with women teachers opening in 1858. According to the State Yearbook (*Devlet Salnamesi*) of 1906–1907, at that time the number of these schools was 25 in the Anatolian provinces, 23 in the Rumelian provinces, eight in the Arab provinces, three in the islands and prior to the Second Constitutional period their number was already 74 in the whole empire. In 1870 a teachers’ training college for girls (*darülmualli-mat*) with a capacity of 45 students and three male and three female teachers (two of whom were foreigners) opened at Ayasofya. Some of its first graduates were later appointed in this school as teachers. The school graduated its first students in 1873 and trained 737 female teachers over a period of 39 years.⁶⁸ The famous novelist Halide Edip taught pedagogy, ethics and history in various schools as well as, later, at Istanbul’s Faculty of Letters. She was also in charge of the reform of girls’ schools in the capital and worked with Nakiye Hanım on curriculum and pedagogy changes and later, in 1916–1917, acted as Ottoman inspector for schools in Damascus, Beirut and Mount Lebanon.⁶⁹

In the nineteenth century thus, women started to be more present in the “modern” profession of teacher. Although the Ottoman educational system in the Tanzimat period was open to all Ottoman subjects, the non-Muslims in the empire built their own educational systems in which more girls started to be included and women teachers began to be employed. The first Bulgarian women teachers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, were mainly nuns from the monastery of Kalofer, Makrina, Nikifora, Efrosinia, Taisia, Evdokia and from the convent in Samokov, Hacı Fota Iovcheva, sister Evantia,

66 İhsanoğlu, Ekmeleddin, “Ottoman educational institutions”, in *Ottoman Civilization*, vol. 1, Halil Inalcık and Günsel Renda (eds.) (Ankara: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture, 2004), p. 346.

67 Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, p. 512.

68 İhsanoğlu, Ekmeleddin, “Ottoman educational institutions”, pp. 374–6.

69 Erol, Sibel, “Introduction”, in *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Turkey Old and New* by Halide Edip Adivar (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 8; Adivar, Halide Edip, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York-London: The Century, 1926), pp. 431–71.

sister Apolinaria, the sisters Smrikarovi, Hacı Mitodora, as well as wives and daughters of priests and teachers (such as Trendafile Dobroplodna, wife of Hacı İlia Dobroplodni, teacher in Sliven, the wife of pop Simeon in Gabrovo, Ekaterina Nedeva, sister of the coadjutor Kiril Nekrtariev and Hristina Petrova, nephew of the teacher Botio Petkov in Karlovo). From the 1840s secular women's education started to spread among the Bulgarians owing to the efforts of women teachers such as Anastasia Dimitrova who founded the first secular school for girls in Pleven in 1840, Elena Zlatareva, Ivana Hacı Gerova, Zarafina Iandova and Anastasia Dimitrova's students Tzveta Krasteniakova and Parashkeva Neikova. These primary school teachers were followed in the second half of the century by Anastasia Tosheva, Anastasia Paskaleva, Tzarevna Miladinova, Nedelia Petkova, Iordanka Filaretova, Rada Gugova-Kirkovich and several others who were teaching in secondary schools for girls.⁷⁰ Thus women (most of whom were young, unlike in previous times) became visible and socially quite influential in a new public institution and location – in modern schools. According to data on women's education collected by N. Nachov in the town of Kalofer alone (4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants in the 1870s), for example, eight women teachers worked during the period from the late 1860s to the mid 1870s. In 1875 there were five women teaching at the local school for girls and two of them were in charge of the school's management. Some of them were also active in translating books and manuals and in introducing new courses in the school's curriculum, as, for example, handiwork. The annual salaries of these women teachers, provided by the local community, varied between 6,000 and 7,000 *guruş*.⁷¹ From two letters of the teacher Parashkeva Shushulova from September and October 1870, we can further see that women teachers took an active part in the negotiation of their salaries. This young woman, for example, after teaching for three years in Kalofer and receiving a salary of 6,750 *guruş*, asked for a salary of 7,000 *guruş*, and since the local community at first did not agree, she expressed the firm intention to look for a job in another city. The local community finally raised her salary.⁷² The sources examined show that women teachers were very much "in the public eye"; their professional activities, everyday life and social attitudes were carefully observed by their fellow-townsmen (who were paying their salaries and were expecting them to be an example for their children). Most of them earned themselves good social reputations although some had to stand their ground on several occasions, as we have seen, for better remuneration or against conservative prejudices.

70 Paskaleva, *Българката през Възраждането*, pp. 21–5; 39–48.

71 Nachov, *Калофер в миналото. Книга Първа*, pp. 312–32.

72 *Из архивата на Найден Геров. Кн. II*. [From the Archives of Naiden Gerov. vol. II] Todor Panchev (ed.) (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1914), pp. 919–21.

Women were not only teachers and among the organisers of women's education, they also financially supported education. In an incomplete list of the sponsors for the opening of the new school for girls in Kalofer in 1870–1871, published in the newspaper *Pravo*, for example, we find the names of six women, who contributed with sums varying between 50 and 208 *guruş*. Women's names appear also among the sponsors for the publishing of books (mainly text-books). These were, for example, the teachers Anna Petrova, Ekaterina Nediuva, Taisia and Evdokia (the last three of them were teachers and nuns) from Kalofer who contributed with different sums of money to the publishing of *Critical Research on Bulgarian History* by Yuri Venelin in 1853 and a geography book and other books, published in Belgrade and Bucharest. Nikola Nachov enumerates the names of more than 20 women from this small town who were sponsors of the publishing of books. In 1869 women from Kalofer founded a women's society called "Prosveshtenie" [Enlightenment] whose purpose was (according to its statute) to supervise and financially support the local school for girls, to provide the school with educational aids such as maps, books, textbooks, newspapers and journals for the school's library and to collect money to support the education of poor girls as well as to organise public lectures and readings. According to a list published in the newspaper *Macedonia* in January 1870, 69 local women contributed financially to this initiative (with sums of money varying between 1,040 and five *guruş*) and as a result a very important fund of 11,306 *guruş* was created. The members of the society engaged themselves furthermore to contribute annually to the fund with sums varying between five and 20 *guruş*. The management of the society was run by a board of ten women trustees. In 1870–1871, 19 other women, including teachers and nuns from the Kalofer convent and women from other cities also gave money to the local women's organisation.⁷³

We can thus conclude that women teachers became highly visible (physically in the schools, in the press and in public opinion). They had a notable social impact by spreading literacy and knowledge and contributed to changing the life prospective of their female pupils. Women teachers thus enhanced the processes of modernization not only in the field of education but also in several other spheres of public life, as founders of women's societies or as promoters of new fashions and of new ways of everyday life, for example.

73 *Macedonia*, IV, issue 15, 28 December 1869, issue 16, 4 January 1870, issue 86, 26 September 1870; *Macedonia*, V, issue 17, 27 March 1871; *Pravo*, V, issue 41, 25 November 1870; Nachov, *Калюфер в миналото. Книга Първа*, pp. 171, 173, 309, 327–8, 373–9; Nachov, *Калюфер в миналото 1707–1877. Книга Втора*, pp. 76–7.



FIGURE 3.5 *Teachers with their pupils in the Sofia secondary school for girls in 1875, in Paskaleva, Virginia, Българката през Възраждането [The Bulgarian Woman during the Revival Period] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Otechestven front, 1984), after page 224.*

COPY OF THE PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE PERSONAL ARCHIVE OF BOIKO KIRYAKOV, REPRODUCED WITH HIS PERMISSION.

Ottoman Women and Wealth

After examining the notable presence and the growing social and economic impact of working women in the Ottoman world, we have also to consider women as owners of wealth and to try to trace its composition and sources. We will also discuss the use women made of their wealth for public purposes and the effect this had on their social visibility and prestige and on public life more generally.

We should recall first that, in the Ottoman empire free adult women, regardless of their confession, social and family status, were guaranteed by Shari'a law the right to own fully both movable and immovable property and to dispose of it without restrictions. In fact, different systems of inheritance of *mülk* property (full private property) were practiced by the members of the different ethno-religious communities of the empire. While Shari'a law of inheritance

was applied to all Muslims as well as to those non-Muslim subjects who brought their inheritance and trade transaction cases to the *kadı* court, non-Muslims could choose among the norms of inheritance of Shari'a law, those of customary law and, in the case of Christians, those of Christian canon law. These laws' dispositions regarding inheritance were quite different: under Shari'a law women could inherit immovable property, but their inheritance shares were to be two times smaller than those of men of the same degree of kinship; Christian church law offered equal partitioning between sons and daughters, and customary law in some of its local applications excluded women completely from inheriting immovable property. Unfortunately for our research, the only systematic registration of the transfer of property (inheritance matters, sales and purchases etc.) was that of the *kadı*s; we do not dispose of systematic registration of inheritances by the local Christian church authorities (unlike, for example, the ecclesiastical records in most European countries). The number of non-Muslim inheritances registered in the *kadı* registers (*sicils*) is clearly inferior to that of Muslim inheritances, even in areas with predominantly non-Muslim population, which testifies that Christian canon law and customary law were apparently widely applied in these matters. Nevertheless, bearing this disproportion in representativeness in mind, we should carefully examine the data from the inheritance inventories (*tereke*s) and *hüccets* (protocols) for sales and purchases recorded in the *kadı* registers as some of the most important sources on urban women's wealth, its value, acquisition, composition and use.

As several empirical studies of *kadı* records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show, among the different types of immovable property, houses appear as the most attractive for the women. An average of 30 per cent of Rumeli women as well as one third of those in Bursa owned such property.⁷⁴ Commercial, industrial and agrarian properties were objects of lesser interest. As for the sources of women's wealth, *kadı* registers show that inherited property contributed the lion's share to what was owned by women. The *kadı* registers and other sources from this period testify furthermore that all across the empire on the market of real estate women appear most often as sellers rather than buyers.⁷⁵ During that period, movable property prevailed in most

74 Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 339–40; Gerber, "Social and economic position of women", p. 233.

75 Jennings, Ronald, "Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records. The Sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 18/1 (1975), pp. 99–101; Jennings, Ronald, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the*

women's inheritances, independently of class and confessional belonging. Even rich women preferred to invest their capital in household articles, expensive objects, clothes and jewelry rather than indulge in risky financial transactions or acquisition of real estate, an attitude characterized by Olga Todorova as a "risk-free model of economic behaviour".⁷⁶

Examining the value and the composition of deceased Damascene women's estates registered in two local *qassam* registers (respectively from 1755–56 and 1842–43), in a recent study Abdul-Karim Rafeq also offers a varied picture of women's economic status. He quotes several cases of modest Muslim and non-Muslim women's inheritances but also the case of the minor Esther, daughter of Musa Farhi, whose fortune at the time of her death in 1842 amounted at 26,243 *guruş* (23,451 of which were inherited from her father and the rest came from profits from the investment of this money by her guardian) as well as the example of the estate of Nabihah Khanum bint 'Abdallah, registered in December 1842 with a total value of 223,027 *guruş*. Over half of the value of her inheritance was the price of real estate, it also included a whole range of jewellery (such as diamonds whose price totalled 18 per cent of her estate) and a black maid valued at 1,400 *guruş*. Rafeq further observes that bedding had, in both periods, the most important share in Damascene Muslim women's movable belongings, followed by jewellery, kitchen equipment and clothing in the eighteenth century, while in the nineteenth century the importance of owning jewellery seems to have decreased at the expense of that of kitchen equipment. The author further points out that the average value of a woman's movable estate in the sample from 1755–56 is 257.21 *piasters* whereas it goes up to 1,648.75 *piasters* in the sample from 1842–43 and that this increase of about six times could be due partly to the depreciation in the value of the *piaster* and partly to the growing wealth of women, both Muslim and non-Muslim, at the time.⁷⁷

The nineteenth century *sicils* of the cities of Rusçuk and Vidin, which we were able to study, proved to be also a rich source of information for the

Mediterranean World, 1571–1640 (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993), p. 21; Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia. Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting 1520–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 254–5; Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Men of Modest Substance: House Owners and House Property in Seventeenth Century Ankara and Kayseri* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 180, 195–9; Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 326–7.

76 Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 346–9; 510–11.

77 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, "Women in Shari'a court records of Ottoman Damascus", *Turkish Historical Review*, 3/2 (2012), pp. 125–9.

composition and the value of women's properties and wealth and for women's participation in the trade with real estate.

The records of women's inheritances in the Rusçuk *sicils* from the late 1820s, the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s⁷⁸ represent between 22,59 per cent (in 1245–55/1829–39) and 38,66 per cent (in 1268–71/1852–55) of all the inheritance inventories registered. They thus form between roughly one fourth and one third of these records and their share tends to grow towards the mid nineteenth century. The large majority, more than 90 per cent, of these inventories are *terekes* of Muslim women, the inheritances of only six Armenian and of 23 Bulgarian women were registered in the local *sicils* during the period examined. As for the values of women's inheritances from the late 1820s to the end of the 1850s, they vary in very large margins, between 206 *guruş* (the value of the inheritance of Tanasa veledet Ivan, registered in 1272)⁷⁹ and 66,881 *guruş* (the inheritance of Habibe Hanım bint Hasan Bey, registered in 1271).⁸⁰

Women owners of real estate represent 28 per cent of all deceased women registered in the late 1820s and in the 1830s. In most cases these women owned houses; only one of them, Şerife Hatun wife of Hacı İsmail Efendi, had also a shop (*dükkan*) located in Cami Cedid *mahalle*.⁸¹ The only immovable property owned by Fatma Hatun bint Mehmed Memiş (whose inheritance was valued at 5,089 *guruş*) on the other hand consisted of a *tuzcu dükkan* (shop for selling salt), located in the port area.⁸² The largest woman's estate by value (20,039 *guruş*) in these registers belongs to Esmâ Hanım bint Elhac İbrahim from Elhac Musa *mahalle*. She seems to have been a wealthy woman with a house valued at 4,500 *guruş* and a considerable amount of money left after her death (*mecidiyes* and "macar altınları" with a total value corresponding to 1,936 *guruş*).⁸³ The two Armenian women in these registers seem to have belonged to the middle classes while the three Bulgarian women, to the lower social milieus and only one of them, a Bulgarian woman from Varoş, was owner of real estate – a vineyard with the modest value of 150 *guruş*.⁸⁴

78 Национална библиотека "Св. Св. Кирил и Методий", Ориенталски отдел [National Library St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Oriental Department, hereafter НБКМ, ОО] R 20 (1245–46/1829–30); R 21 (1246–49/1830–33); R 22 (1249–55/1833–39); R 23 (1261–65/1845–48); R 25 (1268–71/1852–55); R 26 (1271–75/1855–59).

79 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 4 b.

80 НБКМ, ОО, R 25, f. 89 a.

81 НБКМ, ОО, R 22, ff. 102 b–103 a.

82 НБКМ, ОО, R 22, f. 72 a.

83 НБКМ, ОО, R 22, ff. 15 a–b.

84 НБКМ, ОО, R 20, ff. 29 b, 30 a; R 21, f. 47 a; R 22, ff. 14 a–b; 16 b.

The *kadı* registers from 1261–67/1845–52 show a remarkable growth in the number of women owners of real estate in the second half of the 1840s and in the early 1850s. 45,52 per cent of all the women from Rusçuk whose inheritances were registered during this period possessed immovable properties. These were, again, mainly houses, accompanied sometimes by vineyards or gardens and, in only one case, of a shop and two vineyards.⁸⁵ The real estate of Fatma, daughter of Ahmed Bey, on the other hand consisted of two *dükkans* – one with four shutters valued at 4,610 *guruş* and a *çibukçu dükkân* located in Büyük çarşusu. Her inheritance amounted to 19,521 *guruş*⁸⁶ and she seems to have been among the well-to-do women in the city. In the largest woman's inheritance (with a value of 42,480 *guruş*), we find an important amount of money – golden coins (*altıns*) equivalent to 6,600 *guruş*.⁸⁷ The composition of the inheritances examined seems to testify that real estate was particularly attractive for women, not only for the wealthy, but also for women with average and even modestly valued estates.

The share of real estate in Rusçuk women's possessions grows further in the 1850s – more than half of them⁸⁸ appear in the *tereke* records as owners of immovable properties. The large majority had only houses. Some owned also a vineyard or, more rarely, a garden, usually of modest value. But, for example, Pena veledet Ivan was registered as the owner of three vineyards (valued respectively at 300, 630 and 100 *guruş*), a garden (*bostan*), an *araki kazan* (*rakı* distiller) with a value of 800 *guruş* and a house (900 *guruş*) and, with a total estimation of her inheritance at 4,384 *guruş*,⁸⁹ seems to have belonged rather to the middle classes. Almost half of the value of the inheritance of Gülsüm bint Hüseyin ibn Ali (altogether 12,606 *guruş*) came from a garden valued at 5,000 *guruş*.⁹⁰ The analysis of the composition of Rusçuk women's real estate shows its diversification in type and a larger presence of shops and workshops in the 1850s in comparison with previous decades. Thus the immovable property of Zeynep Hanım bint Mehmed Ali, valued at nearly 26,000 *guruş*, included a coffee-house (*kahvehane*) (1,700 *guruş*) and three *demirci dükkans*, the last with an aggregate value of 2,500 *guruş*.⁹¹ Saide Hatun bint Ahmed from the *mahalle* of Kaik Paşa with a total value of the inheritance of more than 11,127 *guruş* was owner of a house, valued at 3,600 *guruş*, of a *hafaf dükkân*, valued at 2,000 *guruş*, which she was renting

85 НБКМ, ОО, R 23, f. 59.

86 НБКМ, ОО, R 24, f. 57.

87 НБКМ, ОО, R 24, f. 28.

88 49.33 percent in 1268–71 (1852–1855) and 52.86 percent in 1271–1275 (1855–1859).

89 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 97 a.

90 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 70 a.

91 НБКМ, ОО, R 25, f. 50 b.

to Laz Ahmed Ağa and of another *dükkan* in Arasta valued at 1,320 *guruş*.⁹² We should thus note and take into consideration the renting of urban immovable properties, houses as well as “commercial and industrial property” (shops and workshops), as one of the sources of urban women’s wealth.

The pattern of Ottoman urban women as owners of houses (in the first place) and of other real estate, with Muslim women owning mostly shops, sometimes of significant value, and non-Muslim women, mostly owning vineyards, could also be observed in the *sicils* of the city of Vidin from the 1820s and 1840s.⁹³ A comparison by confession shows furthermore that, at least in the records of inheritances from the central Rumelian provinces of the Ottoman empire, wealthy women, in whose inheritances money in cash as well as expensive clothes and furniture are quite notable, together with real estate, were overwhelmingly Muslim. Thus, for example, the inheritance of the wealthiest women registered in the Rusçuk *sicils* from the 1850s, Fatma bint Ibrahim from the Kara Mustafa *mahalle*, who definitely seems to have belonged to the most affluent milieus in the city, was valued at 43,164 *guruş* and was composed of part of a house (with a value of 2,875 *guruş*), a *dükkan* (with a value of 5,000 *guruş*), expensive clothes, furniture, household articles and jewellery as well as of a large amount of money in cash with a total equivalent of 16,032 *guruş*, mainly in golden coins (*altıns*, *mahmudiyes* and *macars*) a considerable part of which apparently came from her *mehr*.⁹⁴

Part of Ottoman women’s possessions was acquired in relation to their marriage, as *mehr*,⁹⁵ in the case of Muslim women, or as dowry and matrimonial presents, for non-Muslim women. The latter, unlike *mehr*, were not subject to official regulation and registration but depended very much on tradition and custom and therefore could vary considerably in type and are very difficult to trace in the sources. This is why we are tempted to present here data from a rare case of serial registration of such items in the register of the Christian community of the city of Pleven from 1831–83 in order to complement the information from the *sicils* regarding the sources, amount and composition of women’s wealth. The dowry given by the father of the bride⁹⁶ contained

92 НБКМ, ОО, R 25, f. 79 b.

93 НБКМ, ОО, S50, S84, S309bis/11.

94 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 78 b.

95 The compulsory marriage present consisting of money in cash and/or different kinds of movable and immovable property that, according to *Shari’a* law, the husband had to give to his bride and that remained her full property.

96 Actually, although the parents provided the financial means for it, a large part of the trousseau was manufactured by the bride herself (helped by other women in the family) while she was still a young girl.

usually male and female clothes, kitchen equipment and bedding (such as a mattress, a quilt, a lamp, a chest, pillows, sheets, towels, rugs, trays and other kitchen utensils), whose number and quality varied considerably depending mainly on the economic status of the bride's family, sometimes a few golden or silver coins, quite rarely jewellery and, exceptionally, only in a few cases, immovable property. Thus Getza, daughter of *terzi* (tailor) Tzoko, received as dowry in 1845 a vineyard of four *dönüms*,⁹⁷ apart from clothes, household goods, a belt buckle, a pair of earrings and three *rubbies* (quarters of golden coin).⁹⁸ Money and different kinds of jewellery were the usual marriage presents for Bulgarian women from this city by their future husbands. The marriage presents, recorded in this register, vary to very great extent as far as their value is concerned and therefore we can assume that they had quite a different impact on the brides' economic status and wealth. Thus Paraskeva Dimchova, at her second marriage in 1849, received from her husband, the furrier Koicho Karlukovalı, only 100 *guruş* and a belt buckle.⁹⁹ In 1849, the marriage present of Neiko *abacı* for his bride Paraskeva consisted of 550 *guruş* (in different coins), a ring, a silver belt buckle and earrings.¹⁰⁰ Evdokia, daughter of Konu *çuhacı*, on the other hand, received from her husband as marriage presents in 1856 different kind of coins with the equivalent of 2,200 *guruş* as well as coral and gold-plated pieces of jewellery.¹⁰¹ Jewellery should, of course, be considered not only for its nominal value but also as a visible social marker for wealth, which well-to-do women displayed publicly, though mainly on special occasions. The marriage presents from the husbands seem to have been very rarely a source for the acquisition of immovable property for the women from Plevne; real estate appears only exceptionally as a component in the records examined. The wife of Velko Peikov was given in 1851 as a marriage present, apart from a silver ring, a pair of bracelets and a belt buckle, a vineyard with 25 rows of vine and acquired thus a non-negligible piece of immovable property.¹⁰² In 1846 Valcho Raikov Selveli gave to his wife half of his *abacı dükkân* as a marriage present, together with a small amount of money (less than 100 *guruş*) and some jewellery.¹⁰³

97 One *dönüm* = 918.393 m².

98 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 297 b.

99 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 309 b.

100 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 316 a.

101 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 347 a.

102 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 317 a.

103 НБКМ, БИА, II А 7779, f. 300 b.

Women on the Real Estate Market

Ottoman women's wealth came not only by inheritance and as *mehr* or dowry but also as a result of purchase-sale trade. As the *sicils* of the cities of Rusçuk and Vidin testify, women were present (not necessarily particularly active, but still – quite visible) on the market of real estate, selling and buying immovable properties. These properties were, again, mainly houses that Muslim as well as non-Muslim women were selling as well as buying. They acted through intermediaries but also, quite often, by appearing themselves in the *kadı* courts. It is noteworthy that the values of the houses that women sold or purchased vary considerably. Part of the records testifies nevertheless to the important financial resources of some of the women active on the real estate market. We can quote here the purchase by an Armenian woman from the Varoş of Rusçuk of a house with a considerable value, 20,200 *guruş*, from Marin veled Toma in 1273.¹⁰⁴ As *hüccets* from the *sicils* of Vidin and of Rusçuk show, urban women approached the *kadı* courts for commercial deals with workshops, vineyards and gardens too. For example, in 1265/1841, Saliha Hatun from Vidin sold a *dükkan* with two shutters to Molla Mehmed and his brother Molla Ahmed for 7,600 *guruş* and the wife of *mumcu* (the candle maker) Dragan from Rusçuk sold in 1268, after her husband's death, a garden and a vineyard valued all together at 650 *guruş* to the furrier Ivan veled Nikola from the same city.¹⁰⁵ We can observe that women selling and buying urban immovable property belonged to different social and professional milieus, but wealthy women were apparently the most active and visible on the market of urban estate. We could also calculate that the number of sales of immovable properties by women registered in these *sicils* is almost double the number of purchases of real estate by women. There are several cases of deals with women involved on both sides, in the roles of sellers as well as of buyers of real estate, as, for example, that between Rafiye bint Mehmed from the *mahalle* of Cami Cedid in Rusçuk and Anastasia veledet Dragni in 1272 for a large shop with six shutters, priced at 14,800 *guruş*.¹⁰⁶ Other such cases are the sale of a house and a workshop for the total price of 12,500 *guruş* by Nanka veledet Marcho, to Sia nasranie in 1271¹⁰⁷ and the deal with an *abacı dükkan* valued at 1,000 *guruş* between two Turkish women from Vidin in 1242.¹⁰⁸ The *hüccets* examined give a bigger portion of wealthy non-Muslim women selling and buying property compared to their presence in the *terekes* registered in these *sicils* in which, as we have seen, non-Muslim women

104 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 104 a.

105 НБКМ, ОО, S 309 bis/11, f. 10, НБКМ, ОО, R 25, f. 26 a.

106 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 48 b.

107 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 17 b.

108 НБКМ, ОО, S 50, f. 118.

in general rarely appear. This could probably nuance the impression of the decisive outnumbering of Muslim women over non-Muslim women as owners of wealth. It seems also that the non-Muslims in general were less hesitant to approach the *kadı* court for the registration of their sales and purchases of immovable properties than in order to register inheritance.

We should also note that the social position and prestige of several of the women whose inheritances and deals with real estate were recorded in the Damascus, Rusçuk and Vidin *sicils* are also reflected in the titles they were given in these registrations. Many of the wealthy Muslim women were referred to as *hatun* or *hanum*, which, according to Abdul-Karim Rafeq, had the meaning of *lady* and were titles given to highly respectable woman,¹⁰⁹ to women with good social standing and reputation.

Women as Beneficiaries of Vakıfs

The access of Ottoman women to wealth could also be through family endowments (*vakıf ahli, evlatlık*). As Gabriel Baer's, Haim Gerber's, Olga Todorova's and Margaret Meriwether's research shows, in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries in the Ottoman capital as well as in the Ottoman provinces (in Edirne and in other Rumelian cities as well as in Aleppo) several women appear as beneficiaries of such endowments.¹¹⁰ In Damascus, according to Abdul-Karim Rafeq, during the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, Muslim women who owned real estate usually turned their property into family *vakıf* to benefit from it during their lifetime and assign it to their descendants after their death.¹¹¹ In Aleppo, at that time, the *vakıf* was more often used as a way of giving females greater access to family resources included in the endowments rather than as a way of disinheriting them since, overall, male and female beneficiaries received equal shares in most of the endowments.¹¹²

Women as Money Lenders

Money lending, as one of the aspects of women's economic activities, as well as a testimony to certain Ottoman women's wealth and the ways they used

109 Rafeq, "Women in Shari'a court records", p. 133.

110 Gerber, Haim, "The waqf institution in early Ottoman empire", in *Studies in Islamic Society. Contributions in Memory of Gabriel Baer*, Gabriel Warburg and Gad Gilbar (eds.) (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1984), p. 37; Baer, Gabriel, "Women and waqf: an analysis of the Istanbul tahrir of 1546", *Asian and African Studies*, 17 (1983), pp. 25–7; Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 357–60; Meriwether, Margaret, "Women and waqf revisited: the case of Aleppo, 1770–1840", in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 132.

111 Rafeq, "Women in Shari'a court records", pp. 129–33.

112 Meriwether, "Women and waqf revisited", p. 138.

their wealth, is particularly difficult to trace in the sources. One of the reasons for this lies in the disapproval of money lending by religion, and especially by Islam, leading to the disguise of such activities under other forms. Nevertheless cases of money lending by women could be found. Olga Todorova, Suraiya Faroqhi and Yvonne Seng observe that during the early modern period upper-class women in the Ottoman capital as well as some female representatives of the provincial elites did not hesitate to indulge in money lending and could be sometimes seen as members of commercial partnerships of the *mudaraba* type, mostly as 'sleeping partners'.¹¹³

Ottoman urban women money-lenders appear also in the Rusçuk *sicils* from the 1850s. As the inheritance inventory of the daughter of Hacı Süleyman and mother of Deli Mehmed from Kaik Paşa *mahalle* shows, in which four *temessüks* (bills acknowledging a debt) were registered, three fellow-townsmen, *halaç* Derviş Ağa, *fuçeci* İsmail and *mumcu* Hasan Usta, owed her money, more than 1400 *guruş* in total.¹¹⁴ Gita bint Tanas had lent to the furrier Gancho veled Tzonko a quite large sum of 2,280 *guruş*.¹¹⁵ The main component of the inheritance of another well-to-do woman from this city, Cemile Hanım bint Ahmed from the *mahalle* of Arik Ramazan (valued at 9,400 *guruş* in total) consists of 5,030 *guruş* that three people, among whom Yordan *zimmi* and Avram Yahudi, owed to her.¹¹⁶ In the last case we could also observe that apparently money-lending practised by Ottoman women was not restricted to members of the same ethno-confessional (and more generally, social) milieu.

Evgenia Davidova has also noted a few cases of women involved in lending and borrowing money in the records of the Greek bishopric of Tarnovo from the 1820s. From 1823 to 1827 three affluent local women provided modest loans (500 to 800 *guruş*) while 15 women borrowed small amounts of money (170 *guruş* on average) during the same period. According to the same author, in Plovdiv during the period 1781 to 1845, there were 39 women creditors registered in the chronicle of the local archbishop with loans varying from 400 to 17,187 *guruş*, provided at an interest of 10 to 20 per cent.¹¹⁷ Another quite curious case, deserving a brief analysis at the micro-historical level, appears

113 Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, p. 512; Seng, Yvonne, "Invisible women: residents in early sixteenth-century Istanbul", in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World. Power, Patronage and Piety*, Gavin R.G. Hambly (ed.) (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 255–6; Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Subjects of the Sultan. Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 112–13.

114 НБКМ, ОО, R 25, f. 51 b.

115 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 102 b.

116 НБКМ, ОО, R 26, f. 114 a.

117 Davidova, *Balkan Transition to Modernity*, pp. 106, 112.

in the correspondence between members of the community of the small town of Kalofer and Bulgarian notables from the *sancak* centre Plovdiv (members of the local town council, the *meclis*). The later were addressed twice in August 1860 by the notables from Kalofer in connection with the acts of the nun Teofania who had raised claims against nuns from the local convent as well as against other local citizens related to sums she had given to them on credit. The nun, on her part, had also previously addressed, several times, the Plovdiv notables regarding the matter and had even threatened that she would inform higher Ottoman authorities about the case. According to the Kalofer notables however the nun Teofania had signed a letter of agreement showing the settlement of the debts with her “clients”. The notables enclosed this letter of agreement in their correspondence with the Plovdiv *meclis* and asked its members to prevent the eventual actions of nun Teofania in front of higher Ottoman authorities. They mentioned also that they had already informed the local bishop about the nun’s actions.¹¹⁸ The sources do not allow us to find out how important the sums given on credit by sister Teofania to other nuns as well as to other local people were, nor how the case finished. Still, they clearly testify to the practice of money lending by a woman (and a nun!) as well as to the public attention this women money-lender attracted and to her socially very active and visible attitude, raising claims, pulling strings, addressing different administrative authorities.

Ottoman Women and Charity

Charity, as an element of both male and female social behaviour, prescribed by religious and moral norms but also inspired by altruism, has always been also an effective way to acquire social prestige and visibility. All through the period examined, Ottoman women acted and were highly visible in the public sphere as sponsors of religious and public facilities. Several of them regularly devoted money to cult centres, mosques and *mescits*, churches and monasteries, for the maintenance of the infrastructure (fountains, roads, bridges, wells), for the alleviation of tax burdens of their communities, for poor people and so on. In Olga Todorova’s research, based on the study of the *kadı sicils* of the towns of Sofia, Bitola, Ruse and Vidin and on a *vakıf* register for Varna, Provadia, Yambol and Karnobat, dating from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, the average share of women’s *vakıfs* in Rumeli at that time is calculated to have varied between 20 and 30 per cent. Independent female patronage over major projects was however a rarity for the female members of the provincial elites, while this was typical for women from the central elite and from the royal family. In most cases, Rumelian women

118 Natchov, *Калофер в миналото. Книга Първа*, p. 179.

appear as contributors to already existing *vakıfs*. Only in relatively few cases they acted as *mütevelli*s (administrators) of *vakıfs*,¹¹⁹ they usually delegated their powers to male proxies.¹²⁰ Ottoman women set up 61 pious foundations in Edirne during the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.¹²¹ More than one third of the *vakıfs* in the Ottoman capital, registered in 1546, were also founded by women.¹²² In Aleppo, women's presence among the *vakıf* founders grew from 6,5 per cent in the sixteenth century to 26 per cent in the seventeenth century, 37 per cent in the first half of the eighteenth century and 51 per cent in the period 1770–1840. As for the impact of Ottoman women's charity on social life in this city, it is worth noting that at the end of the eighteenth and in the first four decades of the nineteenth century women in Aleppo set up proportionally more public *vakıfs* (*vakıf hayri*) than did men: 64 per cent of the women's endowments were designated for the upkeep and maintenance of religious institutions such as mosques, *medreses* and *zaviyes*, to pay salaries of religious officials and to feed the poor of Aleppo or the Holy Cities. Most of the assets for the Aleppo women's endowments were urban real estate, rather than cash or goods, primarily residential property (71 per cent), commercial properties (19 per cent), only three per cent consisted of *mülk* land (orchards and gardens in and around Aleppo) and seven per cent combined different kinds of property. The largest woman's *vakıf* was established in 1794 by a woman from a wealthy merchant family, Afifa Ghannam, and included 15 properties, most of them commercial buildings. The majority of Aleppo women (60 per cent) had acquired most of the property that they endowed through purchasing it rather than inheriting it.¹²³ In Damascus at that time, according to Abdul-Karim Rafeq, while Muslim women founded mainly family *vakıfs*, Christian women dedicated most of their *vakıfs* to the poor of their communities.¹²⁴

119 Such were, for example, the cases, dating from the early nineteenth century, of Rabiya Hatun bint Mehmed, hereditary *mütevelli* of the *vakıf* of the *medrese* in the *mahalle* Cami Cedit in Rusçuk and of Ayşe bint Ahmed, designated by her husband Şeyh Ahmed Baba to administrate after his death the *vakıf* of the derviş *tekke* in the *mahalle* Hacı Musa in the same city. See Radoshev, Evgeni, Svetlana Ivanova and Rumen Kovachev (eds.), *Inventory of Ottoman Turkish Documents about Waqf Preserved in the Oriental Department at St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library. Part 1 – Registers* (Sofia: National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius, 2003), pp. 184, 199.

120 Gerber, "The waqf institution in early Ottoman empire", pp. 29–45; Baer, "Women and waqf", pp. 9–24; Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 354–61, 411–15, 421–4.

121 They represent more than 20 per cent of all the endowments. See: Gerber, "The waqf institution in early Ottoman empire", p. 37.

122 Baer, "Women and waqf", p. 10.

123 Meriwether, "Women and waqf revisited", pp. 128–35.

124 Rafeq, "Women in Shari'a court records", pp. 129–33.

As in Rumeli, most Aleppo *vakıfs* were administrated by men but women could also be seen in the role of *mütevellıs*, controlling endowments of both men and women. Women in Aleppo who founded endowments almost always appointed themselves as the initial administrator to serve in that capacity until they died (both in the family endowments and in the public ones). In the public endowments after the death of the founder the control was usually given to the religious officials related to the institution. In the family ones overall half of the individuals chosen to follow the endower as *mütevellıs* in the later generations were women. In male endowments males were preferred but women were not excluded; they were considered suitable candidates by men to serve as administrators of family as well as public endowments. While most women in Aleppo controlled small endowments, a number of women *mütevellıs* served as administrators for mosques and other religious institutions (as, for example, the mosque of ‘Uthman Pasha in Dakhil Bab al-Nasr, the last of the large Ottoman mosques built in the city) and for large family endowments. In these positions they controlled significant economic resources and played an important role in public life. As the Aleppo *sicil* records show furthermore, women *mütevellıs* centred their efforts on making sure that sufficient income was being produced to fulfil the obligations of the *vakıf* and that the beneficiaries of the endowment received their proper due, so they had to deal with issues such as rental agreements, payments of rents and exchange of ruined property,¹²⁵ which made them publicly visible and socially notable.

There are also numerous testimonies of Christian women’s wills and donations (in cash money as well as in revenues from their immovable properties) going to churches, monasteries, schools, orphanages, hospitals and, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, to women’s societies.¹²⁶ As was the case with Muslim women’s endowments, these women’s charitable work created an important impact in the public arena and enhanced their social prestige. It contributed to increasing women’s social, sometimes even physical, visibility: some of them were portrayed as donors on frescoes in the churches for which they donated. The portraits of the nun Melania as donor of the Rojen monastery (from the eighteenth century) and of Rada Çalıkova from Koprivshtitsa, together with her son Todor Doganov, sponsors of the Rila monastery (from 1844), are just two random examples. The names of women appear, often together with those of relatives, on icons donated to churches as well as in lists of pilgrims in monastery chronicles (kept open to the public). The names

125 Meriwether, “Women and waqf revisited”, pp. 143–52.

126 Radkova, Rumiana, *Посмъртни материали за български възрожденски дейци. Т. I–II* [Posthumous Materials about Bulgarian Revival Figures, vols. I–II] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2003, 2008); Davidova, *Balkan Transition to Modernity*, p. 124.

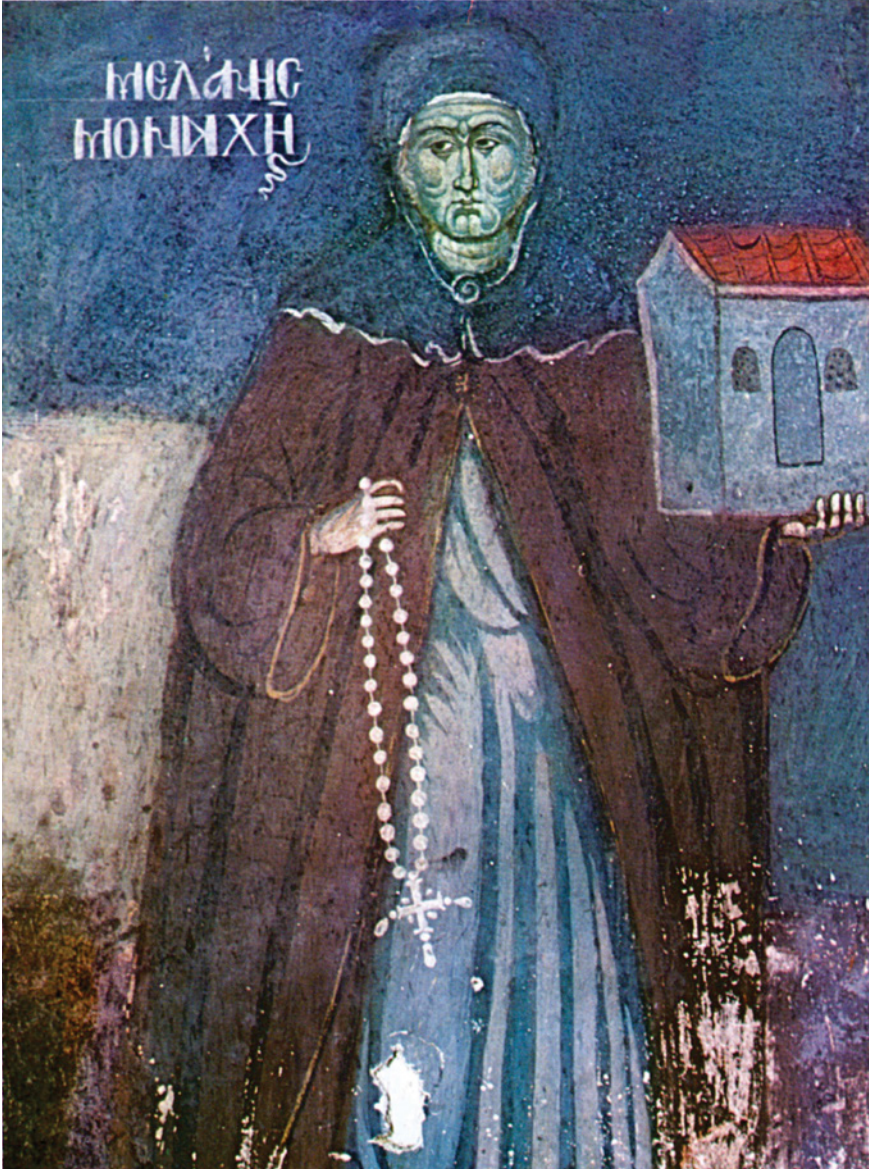


FIGURE 3.6 *The nun Melania, donor to the Rojen monastery, in southwestern Bulgaria, anonymous eighteenth-century fresco from the Rojen monastery. PHOTOGRAPH BY SVETLA IANEVA.*



FIGURE 3.7 *Portrait of Todor Doganov and his mother Rada, donors to the Rila monastery, fresco by Zahari Zograf from the main church "Virgin Mary" of the Rila monastery, 1844. The inscription on the right top side of this fresco bears also the names of Teodora, wife of Todor Doganov, and of Stoicho Karavela and his wife Nedelia (daughter of Rada), also donors to the Rila monastery.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY SVETLA IANEVA.

of women donors could be mentioned in sermons and thus also heard in public during festive or memorial services. In the nineteenth century women's charitable acts became public furthermore through publications in the press. Women were not only publicly recognised and prized for their charity during their lifetime; they were also remembered for it for generations after their death.

Women's Wealth and Prestige as a Factor in Marriage Strategies for Social and Economic Mobility

Ottoman women's wealth is an important indicator of the place they occupied in society. The use of their wealth for social benefit increased the social weight, the respectability and public visibility of those who practised it. We should, at the same time, bear in mind that the social position of Ottoman women depended not only on that, but also on law, tradition, religion, as well as, often, on the social standing of their husbands and/or fathers.¹²⁷ Even in the late Ottoman empire advantageous marriage remained one of the effective ways for social re-categorization for women. At the same time, unlike in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the status of wives did not quite affect, positively or negatively, the status of their husbands, there are numerous examples of men in eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Ottoman society owing at least the initial push but quite often also much of their career, social position and wealth to a successful marriage to a respectable and wealthy woman. We could argue that women's standing, public behaviour and reputation acquired greater significance in the building of family and social networks during that period of intense social transformations.

Thus, for example, Hristo Rachkov from Gabrovo, whose father was a furrier, started his professional activity as a merchant of different commodities on the local market in the early 1780s. The scale of his trade operations as well as his social prestige grew considerably towards the turn of the century not only because of his successful business strategies but also after his marriage to the only daughter of the most eminent local notable Hacı Dragan in 1794.¹²⁸ The members of the Çalıkov family¹²⁹ also used marriage to wealthy women from

127 For the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries on this subject see Todorova, *Жените от Централните Балкани*, pp. 271–2, 509.

128 Ianeva, Svetla, "The commercial practices and protoindustrial activities of Hacı Hristo Rachkov, a Bulgarian trader at the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century", in *The Ottomans and Trade*, Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (eds.) (*Oriente Moderno* 25/1 2006) (Rome, 2006), p. 77.

129 The Çalıkovs came originally from the small but economically very dynamic town of Koprivshtitsa and were engaged in *abacı* craft, sheep breeding, tax-farming and trade.

prestigious Plovdiv families or marriage bonds of women from their family to partners from influential milieus as part of their strategy for social and economic advance. The notable economic and social positions of this family were mainly due to their very successful trade, manufacturing, tax-farming and other business activities, to the good relations established with the local Ottoman authorities but also, last but not least, to the building of an impressive network of social connections in which marriage to women with good economic and social standing played a significant role. Thus Stoian Çalikov, a widower from a first marriage with a woman from Koprivshtitsa, soon after moving to Plovdiv married Elena Politis, also a widow, daughter of the prominent member of the Plovdiv *abacı esnaf* Hacı Sotir Kendindengoglu. The marriage of his cousin, Mali Valko Çalikov, to Elisaveta Hacı Kostova on the other hand connected the family to one the most prominent merchant and tax-farmer's families of the city of Samoko.¹³⁰ Women from the Çalikov family, enjoying considerable wealth and impeccable social reputation, played an important role in uniting the connections with other important local families. The sisters Gruda Todorova Çalikova and Rada Todorova valikova were central figures in establishing the ties with the Chomakov and the Doganov families, Haritina Neshova Çalikova with the Geshovs and Rada Valkova Çalikova, with the Kableskovs. The marriage of Petra, daughter of Todor Çalikov, resulted furthermore in establishing a family link with the rich and influential Gümüşgerdan family of Filibe.¹³¹ It is interesting to note here that, despite the fact that the Çalikovs were the leaders for the national emancipation of the Bulgarian community of Plovdiv within the *Rum millet* (the community of all the Orthodox Christians), supporters of the movement for an independent Bulgarian Church, and that they invested a lot of efforts and money in the building of an independent Bulgarian educational system, notwithstanding also the fact that their view was that “one does not need to be Greek in order to be rich and influential in Filibe”, they did not hesitate to marry not only Bulgarian, but also wealthy and respectable women of Greek origin, as part of their social strategies, in order to get into the most important local social networks. On the other hand, for the local Greeks (including for Greek women), whose positions were to a certain extent affected by the negative attitude of the Ottoman authorities to them after the Greek revolution of 1821, a marriage connection to a member of this rich, socially and economically very dynamic family was apparently also quite

In the very beginning of the nineteenth century most members of the family gradually moved to the large administrative and economic centre Filibe (Plovdiv).

130 Mircheva, Keta, “Чалъкови” [The Çalikov family], in *Кой кой е сред българите*, p. 292.

131 Mircheva, “Чалъкови”, pp. 293–5.

appealing. Thus female wealth and prestige were used to enhance economic power and advance in social positions through marriage alliances.

Conclusion

The varied sources examined, from a macro-historical and micro-historical perspective, testify that Ottoman women, both working women and women owners of wealth, were active participants in the economic and social life and that they were present and visible in different public locations. Lower-class women of all ages could be seen working in the fields on their family plots. Among them widows (and especially non-Muslim widows who could not draw support from sources other than land cultivation and animal husbandry such as *mehr* and income from a *vakıf*), had the heaviest responsibility in securing their families' survival. For this purpose women sometimes went to the urban markets to sell part of their production. Poor rural young girls contributed too to their families incomes by working part-time in *çiftlik*s; they were publicly present travelling long distances in large groups during their seasonal migrations. Ottoman women of all ages, married as well as unmarried, were particularly active in cottage industry, especially in textile protoindustrial productions destined for the imperial markets as well as for export and thus had their share in the economic development of several regions. Female protoindustrial manufacturing usually took place at home, as we have seen, both in an urban and in a rural environment, but 'home' in this case was not quite a private space, it was rather a work space, part of an extensive protoindustrial network. Manufacturing women could be on occasion also seen in typical public locations, in centralized workshops, in the urban markets selling their produce to the merchants or spinning even while walking along the roads. In areas with limited local agricultural resources, women's earnings from protoindustrial manufacturing represented a substantial part of the households' budgets. Protoindustrial work, as has been demonstrated in specialized research, had also demographic consequences for it was related to population growth. Female factory workers were predominantly poor young girls from disadvantaged social milieus who played the role of important breadwinners for their families. We could argue that the concept of participation of women in contributing to the family income was, surprisingly from a traditional European gender stereotype point of view, not at all unusual in the Ottoman world. Women factory workers appear as the main labour force in most Ottoman factories; they were not only economically significant, they also added new aspects to women's public presence and visibility, in new public locations such as factories and factory dormitories or in the "caravans" arriving from the rural areas where they were recruited to the industrial centres. Women teachers in

modern schools enhanced social transformations. Their activities in the field of education had clearly the financial purpose of earning them income but resulted usually in gaining them also greater social visibility and prestige. The cases of Ottoman women running workshops on their own or engaged directly in entrepreneurship and trade were rather exceptional, but the sources examined have revealed that women acted also as “entrepreneurs in the shadow” (managing their family fortunes and continuing the family business in case of widowhood, advising or even guiding their husbands and sons in economic matters). Ottoman women were no strangers to money lending. Women’s charity work and their roles as founders and administrators of *vakyfs* made their names circulate in public, during their lifetime as well as, often, long after that. The *sicil* records examined testify to a growing diversification in the levels of Ottoman women’s wealth during the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth century. They also show that a stratum of well-to-do women became more visible on the market of real estate. The economic activity, wealth and prestige of several Ottoman women not only seem to have influenced more the marriage choices and the social appearance and positions of their husbands; these women acquired more economic and social weight and public visibility on their own.

The Powerful Public Presence of the Ottoman Female Consumer

Kate Fleet

Any discussion of the Ottoman empire in general is fraught with pitfalls. The empire was, after all, huge in geographical extent and immensely long-lasting in time, surviving from the early fourteenth century to the early twentieth. To attempt to generalise about conditions in the empire is therefore clearly an exercise to be undertaken with caution. This said, however, it is possible to make certain points that do apply throughout the region and time period of the empire's existence and which call into question the idea of women either as passive or absent from the public sphere. In the first place, regardless of period or place (though, given the vastness of the empire, there were, of course, considerable regional variations as to degree and class), women shopped. They could protest vociferously if the market failed them in some way. And, given their impact both as consumers and as drivers of consumption, they were both highly attractive to the market and highly worrying to the state.

The Constant Consumer

Characterised by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as passing their time in “the agreeable Amusement of spending Money”,¹ represented in both Ottoman miniatures and European illustrations as shoppers, and satirized in Ottoman press cartoons as excessive consumers,² Ottoman women were a major component of the consumer market, shopping for basic foodstuffs and household

1 Halsband, R. (ed.), *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965–1967), vol. I, p. 406.

2 Brummett, Palmira, “Gender and empire in late Ottoman Istanbul: caricature, models of empire, and the case for Ottoman exceptionalism”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27/2 (2007), p. 295. Brummett notes that in many of these cartoons which portrayed women “a subtext is that the modern female (just like her more traditional sisters) is a conspicuous consumer”.

fuel at one end of the spectrum to high end fashion, jewellery and luxury items at the other. They invested their wealth, bought real estate, and spent on entertainments, the public baths (the *hamam*) and soothsayers, such as the man described by Charles White as “in great repute” with the women of Galata in Istanbul whom “elderly dames” consulted over lost or stolen items and to whom younger women turned when they either had no husband or had one who was unfaithful.³

Women were an ever present feature of the Ottoman market place but which women and which markets varied region to region, period to period and, of course, income bracket to income bracket. While women in sixteenth-century



FIGURE 4.1 *Market place in Tophane, Istanbul, in Walsh, Robert, Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor (London and Paris: n.p. [1839]), frontispiece.*

REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE SKILLITER CENTRE FOR OTTOMAN STUDIES LIBRARY, NEWNHAM COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

3 White, Charles, *Three Years in Constantinople, or, Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*, 3 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1845), vol. 1, pp. 15–16. Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 277–80.

Cairo apparently simply never stayed home, or even cooked there, but, taking money from their husbands, passed their time from morning to night outside, eating heavy and indigestible food cooked in the markets,⁴ the “covered and modest ladies” of Sofia “never go out into the marketplace unless there is dire necessity”. The female household servants did, however, frequenting the markets with their faces uncovered.⁵ Women in general watched shadow plays (*Karagöz*) and popular theatre (*orta oyunu*), women in Istanbul in the nineteenth century following the performances either from boxes or in a segregated crowd, women on one side, men on the other,⁶ and women from the upper echelons went with their families to the theatre, the famous novelist Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil, for example, taking his daughter to theatre performances, while his friend also took his family.⁷ It was again privileged and educated women who bought books, as women did in Pera in Istanbul,⁸ or had subscriptions to newspapers and journals, as did the family of the Turkish novelist and poet Halide Nusret Zorlutuna whose mother read through *İkdam* (Perseverance), *Sabah* (Morning), *Servet-i Fünun* (The Wealth of Sciences), *Musavver Malumat* (Illustrated Knowledge) and *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (The Ladies’ Gazette) on a regular basis.⁹

Wealthy women, visible through reputation rather than physical presence on the market, bought real estate, owned mills, taverns and *çiftlik*s or made loans. In late eighteenth-century Thessaloniki, for example, one woman called Rabiye made 162 loans to a considerable range of individuals, both Muslim and Christian, including Ottoman officials, and to 22 villages, forming “a gigantic web” of people financially dependent on her. As Kotzageorgis and Papastamatiou note, this woman “must have enjoyed a prominent position in

4 Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâtî'z-zâhire*, Orhan Şaik Gökyay (ed.) (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1984), p. 47. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali contrasts these women to Turkish women, who did not indulge in this sort of practice.

5 Dankoff, Robert and Sooyong Kim (eds. and trans.), *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (London: Eland, 2011), pp. 104–5.

6 Alus, Sermet Muhtar, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul. 1900'lü Yılların Başlarında Şehir Hayatı*, Faruk İlıkan (ed.) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 57, and p. 65.

7 Uşaklıgil, Halid Ziya, *Kırk Yıl*, Nur Özmel Akın (ed.) (Istanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2008), p. 772.

8 A woman whom Demetra Vaka met in Istanbul told her how when she was a young girl “my greatest joy was to go across to Péra and buy French books and read them”, Vaka, Demetra (Mrs Kenneth-Brown), *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1923), p. 157.

9 Zorlutuna, H. Nusret, *Bir Devrin Romanı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1978), p. 17.

the urban social echelon".¹⁰ Women were active buyers, and sellers, on the real estate markets of Cairo in the eighteenth century,¹¹ of Aleppo in the eighteenth century where, according to Abraham Marcus, they should "be reckoned as a major actor in the urban real estate market",¹² in Kayseri in the early seventeenth century, where they bought dwellings, vineyards, coffee houses and shops¹³ and where they were, according to Jennings's findings, "property holders of major importance",¹⁴ accumulating "an extraordinary proportion of the lands and property in the city",¹⁵ and in Damascus in the late Ottoman period where women were active in the housing market, in commercial properties including butchers' shops, coffee houses and weaving shops, and agricultural property transactions,¹⁶ upper class women buying and selling properties "on a large scale, probably as business investments".¹⁷ In Istanbul women were buyers of property in the sixteenth century, Fatma bint el-Hac Ferhad from a *mahalle* in Üsküdar, for example, selling her ground floor habitation, which included a courtyard and was bounded on two sides by the property of other women, to Emine bint Abdullah for 2,100 *akçes*,¹⁸ in the seventeenth century, a *zimmi* (non-Muslim) called Ranya selling a house in the *mahalle* (district) of

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- 10 Kotzageorgis, Phokion P. and Demetris Papastamatiou, "Wealth accumulation in an urban context. The profile of the Muslim rich of Thessaloniki in the eighteenth century on the basis of probate inventories", *Turkish Historical Review*, 5/2 (2014), pp. 165–99, quote p. 173.
- 11 Fay, Mary Ann, "From concubines to capitalists: women, property, and power in eighteenth-century Cairo", *Journal of Women's History*, 10/3 (1998), pp. 122–6.
- 12 Marcus, Abraham, "Men, women, and property: dealers in real estate in eighteenth-century Aleppo", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26/2 (1983), p. 146. According to Marcus's findings, women in 1750–1751 were involved in 67 per cent of house transfers, and constituted 40 percent of dealers, p. 144.
- 13 Jennings, Ronald C., "Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records: the Sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 18/1 (1975), pp. 63, 67, 68, 69, 104, 106, 107.
- 14 Jennings, "Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records", p. 97.
- 15 Jennings, "Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records", p. 99.
- 16 Reilly, James A., "Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus", *Arabica*, 42/1 (1995), pp. 81, 82, 84. Reilly notes that "a large proportion of women's commercial property transactions (about two-fifths of those sampled) signal an active search for commercial opportunities", p. 84.
- 17 Reilly, "Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus", p. 83.
- 18 Günalan, Rifat, et al. (ed.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil (H. 987–988/M. 1579–1580)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 618, p. 303, 18 Rebiülevvel 988 (3 May 1580). See also no. 686, pp. 327–8, 10 Rebiülahir 988 (25 May 1580) and no. 720, p. 340, 14 Rebiülahir 988 (29 April 1580) for other examples of women buying property from women.

Bereketzade in Galata in Istanbul in early 1631,¹⁹ and in the nineteenth century, where they purchased commercial property, Hadice Aleviye Hanım purchasing a quilt shop in the district of Galata in 1864, for example.²⁰ Zarinebaf-Shahr has calculated that women were managers and co-owners of 73 *hamams* in Istanbul in 1765.²¹

Women with a certain level of disposable income shopped for cloth, frequenting the cloth market in Tanta in Egypt in the seventeenth century²² and shopping in nineteenth-century Istanbul for muslin and silk in Üsküdar²³ or fingering cloth in the Kapalı Çarşı, the covered bazaar, a favourite haunt of “well-off women”,²⁴ enticed by the cries of the shopkeepers: “we have best quality silk *çarşafs*, we have *satendölyon* (satin de Lyon), *kaşmerdikoz* (cashemire d’Ecosse) cloth, over here, over here ladies”.²⁵ Ladies “of higher degree” bought silk or cotton web gloves from the traders in Pera,²⁶ while others not so well off bought the raw materials they needed for weaving and knitting at home in Ketenciler Kapısı in the Mısır Çarşısı in Istanbul which sold cotton, flax and wool.²⁷

At the bottom of the shopping heap were the very poor women who shopped for basic foodstuffs and fuel, such as the “poor old women” who frequented the *bit pazarı* (the flea market) in Istanbul in the nineteenth century.²⁸ Women formed part of the crowds outside bakers’ shops in the capital in the eighteenth century in a period of shortage, for example,²⁹ or shopped for vegetables in the Cairo markets in the nineteenth century, not always without

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- 19 85 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1040–1041/1630–1631 (1632))*, 2 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2001–2002), vol. 1, no. 258, p. 110 (transcription, vol. 11, pp. 157–8), 10 Cemaziülahır 1040 (14 January 1631).
- 20 Zarinebaf-Shahr, Fariba, “The role of women in the urban economy of Istanbul, 1700–1850”, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (2001), p. 149.
- 21 Zarinebaf-Shahr, “The role of women in the urban economy of Istanbul”, p. 149.
- 22 Dankoff and Kim, *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, p. 425.
- 23 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, two vols., Mehmet Ali Beyhan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 11, pp. 787–8.
- 24 Murad Efendi, *Türkiye Manzaraları*, Alev Sunata Kırım (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), p. 46.
- 25 Alus, 30 *Sene Evvel İstanbul*, p. 95.
- 26 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, 11, p. 81.
- 27 Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946), pp. 153–4.
- 28 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, 111, p. 57.
- 29 Taylesanizade, *Taylesanizâde Hafız Abdullah Efendi Tarihi: İstanbul’un Uzun Dört Yılı (1785–1789)*, Feridun M. Emecen (ed.) (Istanbul: Tatav Yayınları, 2003), p. 408.

incident, one woman becoming involved in an altercation with a greengrocer over a payment which resulted in the grocer boxing her on the ear.³⁰ Other women moved around markets for more nefarious reasons. In 1707 a woman took a case to the *kadı* court in Damascus against another woman, accusing her of having attacked her in the Suq al-Arwan and stolen 12 piasters, an accusation the other woman accepted, putting it down to her profession, explaining that she was a member of the *ta'ifat al-sarraḡin* (the guild of thieves).³¹

While what women bought varied according to income and where they bought, that is whether they went themselves out into the market or sent other women to buy for them or had peddlers come to them, the fact remains that there was a highly visible presence of women consumers out and about consuming in one way or another. Women were highly visible when they went, for example, on picnics and to pleasure grounds, hopping on and off the swings set up in various parts of Istanbul by Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Paşa at the end of the Tulip Era (the Lale Devri, 1718–1730)³² or to visit the famous Kağıthane in Istanbul where Lady Layard, wife of Sir Henry Layard, British ambassador from 1877–1880, noted “groups of women in bright coloured silk *feraces* and *yaşmaks* sitting under the trees”.³³ Their visibility going to and from the *hamam*, that quintessential location for female discussion of “marriage arrangements, business transactions, family disputes, and the numerous other arrangements undergirding social and economic life”,³⁴ was even turned into a profitable enterprise in the sixteenth century when men converted their houses into *bozahanes* (places that sold *boza*, a type of drink made from fermented millet) and began to sell kebabs along the route to the *hamam* in the *mahalle* of Koca Nişancı Bey in Istanbul.³⁵

30 Tucker, Judith E., *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 112.

31 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Craft organization, work ethics, and the strains of change in Ottoman Syria”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 111/3 (1991), p. 508.

32 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi Mür'it-tevarih*, M. Münir Aktepe (ed.), 4 vols. (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976–1981), vol. 1, p. 3, 1143 (1730–1731).

33 Kunalalp, Sinan (ed.), *Twixt Pera and Therapia. The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010), p. 20 (Friday 4 May 1877). On another occasion Lady Layard noted that “everywhere there were rows of Turkish women sitting by the water’s side clothed in every colour of the rainbow”, p. 257 (Friday 30 April 1880).

34 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 108.

35 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On Birinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1000–1100)* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), no. 35, p. 18. Women on occasion remained visible even when inside the *hamam*. In 1559 an order was sent to the *beylerbeyi* (governor general) and *kadı* (judge) of Egypt for

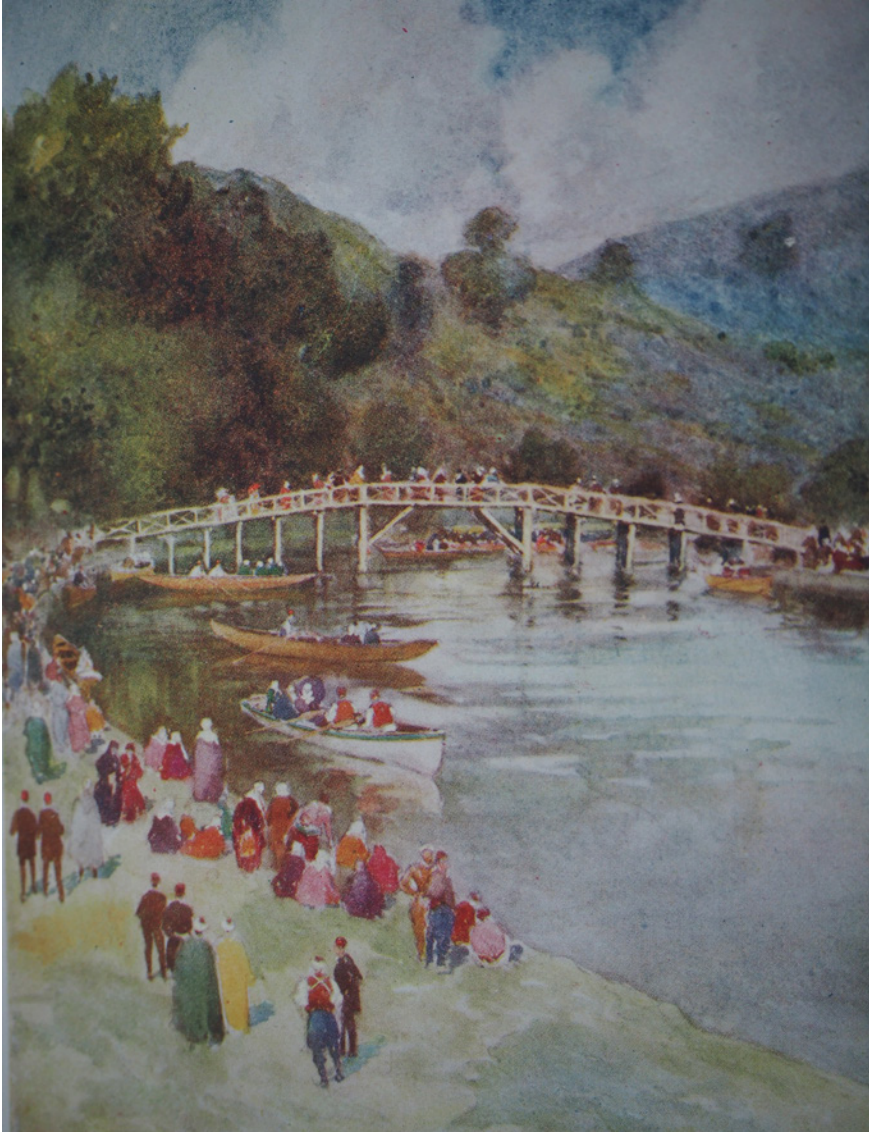


FIGURE 4.2 *Kağthane*, “The Sweet Waters of Europe. A pleasure resort near the upper end of the Golden Horn much in favour in the spring, when every Friday afternoon crowds of Turkish ladies with their children flock there for recreation by the waterside”, in *Van Millingen, Alexander*, *Constantinople Painted by Warwick Goble Described by Alexander van Millingen* (London: A. & C. Black, 1906), between pp. 254 and 255. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE SKILLITER CENTRE FOR OTTOMAN STUDIES LIBRARY, NEWNHAM COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

Women were also to be seen drinking coffee and smoking, frequenting *kaymakçı* shops (clotted cream shops) in Istanbul in the sixteenth century,³⁶ apparently with immoral intentions, and, later, in the nineteenth century, patisseries and, in the last days of the empire, the cinemas of the capital, the Alemdar Sineması in Ayasofya and the Divanyolu Sinemapalas.³⁷ Ahmad ibn Budayr, writing in Damascus in the eighteenth century, complained of women smoking and drinking coffee in public,³⁸ a complaint also expressed by the eighteenth-century Orthodox priest Mikha'il Burayk al-Dimashqi, whose chronicle covers the period from 1720 to 1782.³⁹ Ahmad ibn Budayr noted that “the consumption of coffee and tobacco had become a calamity affecting men, women, and even girls”.⁴⁰ Tobacco, however, was a substance of which Ottoman women were apparently particularly enamoured. An article in *Kadın* (Woman) in November 1908 claimed that “If I conjecture that in the world of women the most widespread use of tobacco is in the East, that is among us, no one can refute it”.⁴¹ Basmajejan (an Ottoman Armenian who left the Ottoman empire for the United States in 1886 and became a Protestant priest) too, commented on the predilection of Ottoman women for smoking, there always being hundreds of Muslim women wandering about along the shores of the Bosphorus indulging in this habit.⁴²

the sealing of any windows or doors of the houses of the bath keepers, or of anybody else, which overlooked the dressing rooms of *hamams*, this order being necessitated by the fact that rowdy soldiers (*levend taifesi*) were using such opportunities to watch women who went to the *hamams* in the afternoons, 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)*, 2 vols (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1993), no. 589, facsimile p. 212, transcription p. 268, 7 Rebiülevvel 967 (7 December 1559).

- 36 Ahmet Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1553–1591)* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1935), no. 5, p. 40, 23 Muharrem 981 (25 May 1573). Women were accused of entering such shops on the pretext of eating *kaymak* (clotted cream) and using this to sit with men who were not related.
- 37 Başcı, Pelin, “Advertising modernity in *Women’s World*: women’s lifestyle and leisure in late-Ottoman Istanbul”, *Hawwa*, 2/1 (2004), pp. 46–7.
- 38 Sadji, Dana, *The Barber of Damascus. Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 66.
- 39 Sadji, *The Barber of Damascus*, p. 80.
- 40 Tamari, Steve, “The barber of Damascus: Ahmad Budayri al-Hallaq’s chronicle of the year 1749”, in *The Modern Middle East. A Sourcebook for History*, Camron Michael Amin, Benjamin C. Fortna and Elizabeth B. Frierson (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 566.
- 41 *Kadın*, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1324 (9 November 1908), p. 11.
- 42 Basmajejan, G.Y., *Social and Religious Life in the Orient* (New York: American Tract Society, 1890), p. 169.

By the nineteenth century the presence of the female consumer was ubiquitous on the streets of the capital which “heaved like an ant’s nest” with the pushing, shoving, jostling and heaving hoards of determined women shoppers.⁴³ Markets, such as the Friday market in Üsküdar or the Thursday market in Galata, were packed with women, for, as Alus, a journalist who wrote much about Istanbul at the turn of the twentieth century, put it “how could women possibly be absent” for they were to be found everywhere, women “of all types: grand old ladies, their daughters and daughters-in-law, women who came to do cheap shopping, middle aged women popping in while passing by from Şehzadebaşı, local girls who had come out to get mastic, black aunties, maids and servants . . . and together in great numbers the prostitutes of Sultan Bayezit, Benli [“with a mole”] Sıdika, Çopur [“pock marked”] Hayriye, Kâhküllü [“with a fringe”] Zeynep, Şaşı [“cross-eyed”] Firdevs and so on, eyebrows blackened and eyes outlined with kohl, with false moles, made up and wearing rouge”.⁴⁴ Great numbers of men and women were “all mixed up together” at the Thursday market on Küçük Mustafapaşa street.⁴⁵ They frequented the department stores of Beyoğlu, like Bon Marché,⁴⁶ and they crowded round the shelves in Cümruk where “a thousand and one requests from the throats of a thousand and one women rose up to the heavens” as they tried unsuccessfully to attract the attention of the staff in their search for calico, children’s clothing and woollen jackets.⁴⁷ Or, like “a painter expecting a fresh idea from the morning breeze of the desert for the sources of his inspiration”, they set out to Beyoğlu, going from Tünel to Taksim, to see the newly arrived cloth and the new garments which were being worn, and, entering the shops, past hours in front of heaps and heaps of cloth.⁴⁸

Much consumption was driven by women who were largely responsible for household and family consumption and who were the instigators of much male spending, both on women and on men themselves, the traditional view expressed in a popular poem from Balıkesir that girls loved men dressed in *aba* (a type of woollen cloth) no doubt adding a certain stimulus to *aba* sales.⁴⁹

43 Alus, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul*, p. 39.

44 Alus, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul*, p. 281.

45 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, Nuri Sağlam (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), p. 465.

46 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 317–18.

47 Alus, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul*, pp. 273–4.

48 Uşaklıgil, Halid Ziya, *Aşk-ı Memnu*, Şemsettin Kutlu (ed.) (Istanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 1993), p. 21.

49 Su, Kamil, *xvii ve xviii inci Yüzyıllarda Balıkesir Şehir Hayatı* (Istanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1937), p. 52. A *mani* (poem) of *aba* producers ran as follows: “Efeler takar bellerine, Kulaklıca biçâğı, Kızlar severler, Aba giyen uşağı”.

One major item of expenditure was weddings, events which, according to the nineteenth-century journalist Basiretçi Ali Efendi, forced people into borrowing at exorbitant rates and crushed them under a mass of present giving and other requirements, from which they were quite unable to recover.⁵⁰ Dowries required a major outlay, for the bigger the dowry the greater the honour.⁵¹ In the realm of fashion, female consumption desires were considered by some to be dangerously excessive, for “volatile and unstable as it was presumed to be, fashion lured women into a line of consumption that extensively burdened household budgets and led (male) family leaders to heavy borrowing in order to indulge the caprices of the female members of the family”.⁵² Tinyüz Halil Ağa’s extravagance on his mistress, then wife, the “heart-stealing” İnce Hanım in the late eighteenth century, led to the loss of his high state office and his exile to Rhodes.⁵³ Male expenditure could become so absurdly extravagant, according to the anonymous eighteenth-century author of *Risale-i Garibe* (The Treatise of Strange Things), that while a husband provided a satin caftan and a girdle of silver and gold for his wife, he himself would be so poorly clothed that he did not even have a rope as a belt to wrap round his waist or a piece of felt to cover his back.⁵⁴ In part this was the reflection of a husband’s use of his wife and daughters as a vehicle for ostentatious displays of wealth. As Stephan Gerlach, the Protestant priest attached to the Habsburg embassy in the 1570s, noted in August 1577 “If a man has much money, he wants his wife and children dressed in an eye-catching manner”.⁵⁵ Nicolas de Nicolay noted that most Greek and Latin Perote women and girls of Galata dressed in all their finery when they went out, for there was no “petite bourgeoisie [minima cittadina] or wife of a merchant” who did not dress in garments of velvet, crimson silk or damask, decorated with trimmings and gold or silver buttons and was not bedecked with jewellery.⁵⁶ Ostentatious display, however, was certainly discouraged in

50 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 429.

51 Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı*, p. 3.

52 Exertzoglou, Haris, “The cultural uses of consumption: negotiating class, gender, and nation in the Ottoman urban centers during the 19th century”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35/1 (2003), p. 88.

53 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadika-ı Vekâyi’*, Adnan Baycar (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1998), p. 195.

54 Develi, Hayati (ed.), *XVIII. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair Risâle-i Garîbe* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998), p. 28.

55 Gerlach, Stephan, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1577–1578*, vol. II, Türkis Noyan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), p. 624.

56 de Nicolay, Nicolas, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia* (Anversa: Giuglielmo Silvio, 1576), p. 135.



FIGURE 4.3 A woman of Pera, “Figlia di stata Greca della città di Pera”, in de Nicolay, Nicolas, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia* (Anversa: Giuglielmo Silvio, 1576), p. 139. REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

some circles. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Orthodox prelates restricted Christian women in Ioannina to wearing only one ring, one bracelet and one pair of earrings in public, the only exception being granted to newly married women who were given a grace period of 40 days.⁵⁷

Ahmed III (1703–1730) was very opposed to such female caprices which could lead men to bankruptcy or divorce⁵⁸ or, in the case of Enderunlu Vasif at the beginning of the nineteenth century, resignation:

I have made you a promise, oh my rose-tree blossom
My soul wishes to take you in my embrace for a night
I do not have the slightest strength left for patience
What can I do, oh my beloved, my sultana?

Yesterday I bought that best quality, mottled cashmere shawl
I sought high and low for information about the black sable
Well *bayram*⁵⁹ is approaching, I can't believe it
What can I do, oh my beloved, my sultana?

We will find what you want, don't reproach me in vain.
Tomorrow, let me look at what I can afford.
The cloth for the *entari*⁶⁰ which you want is not at the market.
What can I do, oh my beloved, my sultana?

Take as much gold as you desire
Place your hand on my breast
Violet, pink, green, blue, wine-coloured shawls are many
But not pistachio green which fits the black of such a sable
What can I do, oh my beloved, my sultana?⁶¹

57 Exertzoglou, "The cultural uses of consumption", p. 99, note 51.

58 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100–1200)* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930), no. 118, pp. 86–8.

59 *Bayram* was a religious holiday.

60 An *entari* was a loose fitting robe or dress.

61 Kocatürk, Vasfi Mahir (ed.), *Şiir Defteri. Yunus Emre'den Bugüne Kadar Türk Edebiyatının Her Çeşitten En Güzel Şiirleri* (Ankara: Edebiyat Yayınevi, 1965), p. 107.

The Protesting Female Consumer

In 1791–1792 and 1825–1829 two anti-West Indian slave sugar boycotts took place in Britain. The boycott campaign was part of the anti-slavery movement and was one in which women played a prominent role. In the 1820s, for example, the Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society promoted a systematic boycott of slave sugar. The importance of women in this boycott lay in their role as consumers for, as the leading anti-slave campaigner Elizabeth Heyrick noted in 1828, “in the domestic department they [women] are the chief controllers; they, for the most part, provide the articles of family consumption”.⁶² American women played a “vital role”⁶³ in the boycott of British imports into North America in the second half of the eighteenth century, and women took part in the tobacco protest in Iran in 1891–1892, even the Shah’s wives refusing to smoke it.⁶⁴ That women, given their consumption clout and power to direct so much of society’s spending, should also have had the power to use this purchasing muscle to protest as well as to buy, is not surprising. Nor is it therefore surprising that Ottoman women, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, should have equally exhibited a tendency to protest, either when the market failed them or for politically driven motives. In 1908, when there was a boycott in the Ottoman empire of Austrian goods due to Austria-Hungary’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, women took part and were represented in Ottoman cartoons in the press as the patriotic consumer.⁶⁵ Nezire Rasim wrote an article, “İstihlak-ı Milli Ticarethanesini Ziyaret” (A Visit to the National Consumption Company), published in *Kadınlar Dünyası* in which she called for consumption of domestic, not foreign, products.⁶⁶

Throughout the life of the empire, Ottoman women protested over a variety of market-related issues. Female silk factory workers in Bursa in the early twentieth century petitioned the sultan, unsuccessfully, about their poor wages and

62 Quoted from Midgley, Clare, “Slave sugar boycotts: female activism and the domestic base of British anti-slavery culture”, *Slavery and Abolition*, 17/3 (1996), p. 143.

63 Midgley, “Slave sugar boycotts”, p. 155. See also Norton, Mary-Beth, *Liberty’s Daughters: the Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980), pp. 157–61 for female boycott of tea.

64 Sedghi, Hamideh, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 41.

65 Brummett, Palmira, “Dogs, women, cholera, and other menaces in the streets: cartoon satire in the Ottoman revolutionary press, 1908–11”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27/4 (1995), p. 446.

66 Başcı, “Advertising modernity in *Women’s World*”, p. 59, note 91.

working conditions.⁶⁷ Bad quality or scarcity of goods could produce female protest, women complaining in 1789, for example, about the scarcity of bread and about the mud-like quality of what was available,⁶⁸ and in 1810 when in two separate incidents in February women protested in Istanbul about the quality of bread, both blaming the sultan for the unsatisfactory state of affairs, one of the women, who had succeeded in obtaining two loaves, exclaiming “may the *padişah* go blind. Look at this bread and look at the torment and hardship we suffer getting this bread”.⁶⁹ It was yet another hike in the already expensive bread prices which sparked a protest of women in Damascus on 16 March 1878 when they appeared before the governor’s residence to voice their complaints about the hardships they were suffering and about the behaviour of the authorities.⁷⁰ Economic hardship also drove women to stage a public protest in the capital in the late nineteenth century when

delay in the payment of salaries, no infrequent occurrence in Constantinople, caused great suffering among the humbler employees of the Government. Other methods of redress having failed, the aggrieved parties betook themselves to the weapon of female force. Accordingly, a large body of women, mostly the wives of the poor men, but including professional female agitators, invaded the offices of the Ministry of Finance. They filled every corridor, swarmed upon every stairway, blocked every door they could find, and made the building resound with lamentations and clamours for payment. The Minister managed to escape by a back entrance. But the women would not budge. It was vain to call in the police or soldiers to intervene. The indecorum of a public application of force in dealing with the women would have created too great a scandal, and so the authorities bowed before “the might of weakness,” and made the best terms they could to induce the victors to accept.⁷¹

The “weapon of female force” could be violent. In Şaban 1171 (May 1758), the empire was hit by dearth and, with population leaving the land and streaming into the capital, Istanbul, too, experienced scarcity. Bread could not be

67 Çelik, Birten, “Sweatshops in the silk industry of the Bursa region and the workers’ strikes in 1910”, *Turkish Historical Review*, 4/1 (2013), 26–56.

68 Taylesanizade, *Taylesanizâde Hafız Abdullah Efendi Tarihi*, p. 408.

69 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi*, I, p. 603, 5 Muharrem 1225 (7 February 1810), p. 605.

70 Reilly, “Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus”, p. 102.

71 van Millingen, Alexander, *Constantinople Painted by Warwick Goble Described by Alexander van Millingen* (London: A. & C. Black, 1906), pp. 250–1.

found. Several hundred people gathered in front of every bakery and seized the uncooked, raw bread and “the poor, women and the *reaya*⁷² were hungry”. Unable to procure bread, people turned to rice and, with a sudden rush on this commodity, rice became scarce too. As it was close to the month of Ramazan, not a propitious time for any sultan to be seen as unable to provide for his subjects, an order was issued that, in order to prevent the suffering of the Muslims, everyone was to be given two *vakıyye*⁷³ and that no one was to be left destitute. “But on the last day of Şaban [8 May] several hundred shameless [bi-edeb] women came to the granary of a *zimmi* [non-Muslim] rice merchant in Gümrükönü and one of the women took out a heavy curved knife [yatağan bıçağı] and threatened the *zimmi* and the *zimmi* fled and they plundered the rice that was there”. Receiving the news of this attack, the Janissary *ağa*, Nalband Mehmed Paşa, went to the scene with the intention of stopping the women “but the women cursed the *Ağa* and impugned his honour [nâmusunu kesr ettikde]”. In consequence the *ağa* sent the *karakulak* (messenger), Kuzucu Mehmed Ağa, to the grand *vezir*. The grand *vezir* was, however, unperturbed by the account given by Kuzucu Mehmed Ağa and, without disturbing himself in any way, merely instructed the *karakulak* to take the *kul kethüdası* (janissary commander) to the scene. Kuzucu Mehmed Ağa duly fetched the *kul kethüdası* and, on their approach, the women dispersed. While the women appear to have melted away and to have been unpunished for their violent attack on the rice merchant, the “scandal” (“rezâlet”) resulted in the dismissal of the Janissary *ağa* who was replaced the next day by the *kul kethüdası*, Vefalı Mehmed Paşa.⁷⁴

In another incident in 1808, women, incensed by the high prices, invaded the house of the Istanbul *kadı*, who was eating his lunch at the time. Infuriated by the array of dishes, which the women inspected, lifting up their lids, they berated the alarmed *kadı*: “infidel scoundrel, while you are eating this abundance of food, we are dying of hunger and paying 25 *para* for liver”. Deserting his food, the *kadı* took refuge in the *harem* (the private, female part of the house). Not content with terrorizing the *kadı*, the women took to the streets carrying poles topped with liver and guts and presented the sultan, on his way to Friday prayer at the Bayezid mosque, with a petition. Shaking their poles,

72 *Reaya* was the term used for the sultan's tax-paying subjects.

73 A *vakıyye* or *okka* was a measurement of weight. One *okka* was equal to 1.283 kilograms or 2.8 lb.

74 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi Mür'it-tevarih*, M. Münir Aktepe (ed.), 4 vols. (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976–1981), vol. 11 A (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1978), p. 16, 29 Şaban 1171 (8 May 1758).

they shouted “oh our sultan, wake up and think of us. We cannot stand the prices. We are starving”.⁷⁵

Such events show that women consumers were not only seen in the public sphere but could be exceedingly vocal and indeed violent. From the contemporary accounts it appears that female protest was not something extraordinary or even particularly remarkable. The grand *vezir* in Şemdanizade’s account of the 1758 pillaging of rice and the violent attack on the rice merchant was apparently “unperturbed”. Oğulukyan’s account of the 1808 attack on the Istanbul *kadı* also shows no evidence of surprise that the participants were women, something which Oğulukyan does not comment on, thus giving the impression that this was not in itself something noteworthy and that publicly protesting women were not, at least in this period, particularly unusual.

Not only did women protest, but they appear, at least when the protests related to the market’s failure to provide basic foodstuffs, to have gone unpunished. While the janissary *ağa* was immediately dismissed after the women’s attack on the rice store and the rice merchant, the women themselves merely dispersed on the approach of the *kul kethüdası* and the *karakulak*. Despite the violence and aggression of the 1808 incident, including the intimidation of the *kadı*, a major Ottoman official, and the invasion of his house, actions which in themselves give a very striking illustration of both the visibility and the proactive nature of female economic protest, the women here too went unpunished. In the two incidents in 1810, the women in the account given by the contemporary Cabi are represented as recipients of divine, rather than sultanic, retribution. The “decrepit” old woman who cursed the sultan for paying no attention to the quality of the bread, developed a pain in her eye the night after her complaining had been overheard by the wife of Halil Ağa, the bath keeper of the Bostan *hamam* in Tophane, and by morning she was blind in one eye and inflicted with pain in the other.⁷⁶ The other woman had been in a crowd of people trying to get bread when the sultan, Mahmud II, passed by inognito.⁷⁷ She had complained vociferously about the quality of the bread and the difficulty of procuring it, cursing the sultan. This had drawn a response from one of the men in the sultan’s retinue who had chastised her, pointing

75 Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan’ın Ruznamesi. 1806–1810 İşyanları. III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, Hrand D. Andreasyan (ed. and trans.) (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1972), p. 22.

76 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, I, p. 603, 5 Muharrem 1225 (10 February 1810).

77 Sultans used to move around the city on occasion in disguise, accompanied by a special retinue. For a description of the practice, see Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 39–40.

out (perhaps somewhat unconvincingly) that the sultan, who personally had no fields or farms to sow or harvest, could not be held responsible, the matter being rather in the hands of God, an argument which simply served to enrage the woman further. In contrast to other sultans who took immediate action at things they observed on the streets of the capital and which displeased them (Murad IV, for example, a ferociously anti-smoking sultan, was said to have had people killed on the spot for smoking when he came across them when out in cognito),⁷⁸ Mahmud took no action. He did, however, despatch officials with 100 *guruş*, a not inconsiderable sum of money, for the woman to the bakery the following day. When the officials arrived at her house, they found that she had gone blind in both eyes, an event which for Cabi served to display the “saintliness and power of sanctity of the sultan.”⁷⁹ This retribution, however, was for the cursing of the sovereign and not related to the reason for the protest, the bread. It was designed both to boast the representation of Mahmud II’s particular sanctity and his religious aura, but also presumably to give the assurance that cursing the sultan would not go unpunished, even if the sultan himself was unable to wreak retribution.

Given that Ottoman women were certainly punished for a wide array of offences, from infringement of the dress codes, indulging in political criticism, as women did while on a pleasure trip in 1813 leading to their imprisonment, for example,⁸⁰ theft, adultery and murder, the fact that they were not punished for violent and public protest needs explanation. Such an explanation is presumably to be found in the nature of the protests themselves. What appear to have provoked female protest were issues related to economic hardship: scarcity and/or low quality of foodstuffs or, in the case of the silk workers in Bursa, poor working conditions and low wages which made it hard for them to survive economically. Inability to provide the populace with basic, and affordable, foodstuffs represented a considerable failure on the part of the state and one that could lead to dangerous and destabilizing consequences. Such a failure had implications for the legitimacy of the sultan who was required to provide justice, stability (and thus a stable market) and protection. In this context, while an official could fall, as was the case with the Janissary *ağa* who was removed from office immediately after the 1758 protest, the protest itself

78 Naima, *Târih-i Nâimâ*, 4 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2007), II, p. 756.

79 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi*, I, p. 605.

80 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi*, II, p. 956, 5 Rebiülevvel 1228 (8 March 1813). In 1809 women were seized for criticising the government in a *hamam*, I, p. 392, 23 Zilhicce 1223 (9 February 1809).

could thus be seen as a just one and the actions of the protesters thus justified. Mahmud's reaction to the woman who cursed him over bread was, far from punishing her, despite his considerable annoyance, in fact to send her a rather large sum of money. In this context the role of the just sultan was not merely rhetorical but real, and the punishment here was rendered inadvisable, or inapplicable, because of the very nature of the protest itself. Here women were not only highly visible in the public market but also untouchable.

A Dangerous Consumer

Women were, as we have seen, a highly visible presence in the Ottoman market place, a spending force which the state was to find hard, if not impossible, to control. At the same time, this female presence required the state to ensure that the market place was safe for women, for, as argued in the introduction to this volume, a state unable to ensure the safety of its female population was a failing one. Dangers that beset women when going about their legitimate business in the public space therefore also posed a threat to the legitimacy of the ruler. When in 1565 in Bulgaria women were attacked and prevented from entering a *hamam*, access to the public baths being of such significance that the failure of a husband to provide his wife with money for the *hamam* was apparently grounds for divorce,⁸¹ the state responded by ordering an investigation. According to the complaint presented by local *sipahis* (cavalry soldiers, recipients of land grants), *ayans* (notables) and *zaims* (holders of a large military land grant) to Ahmed, the *sancakbeyi* (governor of a *sancak*, an administrative unit) of Köstendil, certain women did obtain access to the *hamam*. Twice a week, they claimed, the *kadı* Abdurrahman closed the doors of the Ilca Hamamı and posted men armed with sticks outside it. While the women of the *kadı's* household went in to disport themselves, all the other women who turned up, unaware of this private (and, it would appear, highly irregular arrangement), found themselves not only locked out but also under attack from the *kadı's* men who beat them and pulled off their head coverings, certainly making the women concerned highly visible in the public space. In response the *ayan* sent their own men to the *hamam*, but without effect, for again the *hamam* was closed and men posted outside armed with "weapons of war". The women who came to the *hamam* were stopped and had their belongings seized and thrown away. In his defence the *kadı* argued that he had had

81 Thévenot, Jean de, *Voyages de Mr de Thevenot tant en Europe qu'un Asie et en Afrique*, 5 vols. (Paris: chez C. Angot, 1689), vol. 1, p. 178.

the doors of the *hamam* shut for a few hours in order to protect the women from *fitne* and *fesat* (sedition and disorder), an explanation not presumably entirely convincing for the sultan ordered an investigation.⁸²

It was this need for the state to ensure female safety when in the market place, or, as in the case of the women in Bulgaria, in the legitimate pursuit of visiting the public baths, that resulted in Selim III's (1789–1807) swift reaction to the rumour that sailors were planning to kidnap respectable women in the market in Üsküdar, Selim threatening the governor of Istanbul with dire consequences if he failed to sort the situation out.⁸³ Markets were clearly not always safe for women when out shopping, for a young girl shopping for silk and muslin in an Istanbul market in 1811 was nearly abducted by a janissary at gunpoint.⁸⁴

The state's concern for the safety of the market place is evident from the early days of the empire. According to the Ottoman chronicler Aşıkpaşazade, writing towards the end of the fifteenth century, Osman, the eponymous founder of the Ottoman state

had a market built in the Hamam quarter of Eskişehir [in western Anatolia]. Even the infidels of the surrounding region would come and buy and sell there. From time to time the people of Germiyan [another small Turkish state] would also frequent the market. One day, infidel traders came from Bilecik [in the north west of modern Turkey]. The infidels in Bilecik produced good jugs and, loading them up, used to come to the market to sell them. A man from Germiyan bought a jug but did not pay for it. The infidels therefore came and complained to Osman Gazi. Osman Gazi had the man . . . brought before him. He punished him and gave his rights to the infidel. He severely forbade the injuring of the infidels of Bilecik. Because commerce was thus conducted justly and the situation progressed well, even the women of the infidels of Bilecik came to the market at Eskişehir, and did their shopping and came and went and carried out their business in safety.⁸⁵

82 *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri 972/1564–1565*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), vol. II, no. 833, pp. 16–17, 8 Şaban 972 (11 March 1565).

83 Karal, Enver Ziya, *Selim III'ün Hat-ı Hümayunları – Nizam-ı Cedit – 1789–1807* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), p. 97.

84 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, II, pp. 787–8.

85 Aşıkpaşazade, *Die Altosmanische Chronik des Aşıkpaşazade*, Fredrich Giese (ed.) (Leipzig, 1929, reprinted Osnabrück, 1972), *bab* 9, pp. 14–15.

Apart from demonstrating the presence of women in the public sphere from the very beginnings of the Ottoman state, this passage is also particularly interesting in that it shows that foreign women, in this instance presumably Christian Byzantine women, came to the Ottoman market from outside Ottoman territory. It also makes clear the importance given to ensuring that the market was safe and that it would attract women to shop there.

While women were thus to be protected, the level and nature of their consumption caused concern both to society at large and to the state. When Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Paşa (d. 1730) set up roundabouts, swings and other entertainments for the populace in various parts of Istanbul, women, wishing to attend such entertainments, demanded spending money (*seyr akçası*) from their husbands. If their husbands refused, the wives sued for divorce and, according to a disgusted Şemdanizade, the courts often backed them up. If the husband in question wished to remain married, he found himself forced to pay up, thus being reduced, in Şemdanizade's assessment, to the status of a mere pimp and leaving the power of divorce in the hands of women.⁸⁶ Şemdanizade notes that some of the women who went to these entertainments did so without the permission of their husbands,⁸⁷ and it does appear that women could indeed go out without a husband's permission with impunity, at least in this period, for according to the ruling of the *şeyhülislam* Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi (d. 1743), if a man told his wife "if you go to the place you want, you cannot be my wife" and his wife then went where she wanted, this was not grounds for divorce.⁸⁸ In the nineteenth century the Greek Orthodox community agitated about the "catastrophic effects" of women's spending on household budgets,⁸⁹ and Basiretçi Ali Efendi explained that "To say to our women "there is no money for foolish squanderings. There is no money for separate individual sets of clothes for every social gathering, to buy one new *ferace* after another for every excursion, and to procure every month's fashion" has no effect".⁹⁰ Cartoons from the late empire used the figure of women in European fashion to signify "frivolity, consumption, sexuality, and the impending demise of empire",⁹¹ as well as extravagance and economic

86 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, I, p. 3, 1143 (1730–1731).

87 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, I, p. 3.

88 Kaya, Süleyman, Betül Algın, Zeynep Trabzonlu and Asuman Erkan (eds.), *Behcetü'l-Fetâvâ Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi* (Istanbul: Klasik, 2011), no. 460, p. 99.

89 Exertzoglou, "The cultural uses of consumption", p. 88.

90 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 142.

91 Brummett, "Gender and empire", p. 293.

exploitation.⁹² In such cartoons women were portrayed as a “pawn of European social and economic power”.⁹³

For the state, female consumption represented a potentially explosive and disruptive factor on the market. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali (1541–1600) even argued that the bad state of the finances in Egypt, a province which should have been producing a high level of returns for the central treasury in Istanbul, was adversely affected by “pitiless” women whose influence on their high official husbands blew these men off course “like a tornado”.⁹⁴ It was the spending of the wives of high officials which brought great damage to the Egyptian treasury.⁹⁵ Such an approach to the negative impact of women on state finances can also be seen in the popular view in Ancien Régime France that it was Marie Antoinette’s reckless spending that had resulted in the bankruptcy of the French state.⁹⁶

Female consumption placed the state in something of a dilemma. What lay behind the Ottoman economic approach for much of the empire’s existence was the desire to maintain a stable market in which excess of consumption or significant fluctuation of prices were avoided. It was a stable market that made society content,⁹⁷ a view shared by Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali who argued that failure to control the market resulted in a dangerous situation for the state.⁹⁸ Many historians, including Mehmet Genç, have argued that the Ottoman state followed a highly interventionist approach,⁹⁹ exhibited, for example, in the application of a system of fixed prices (*narh*).¹⁰⁰ This view, however, is open to challenge. The level of state intervention was often limited, the state following instead a more *laissez-faire* approach, the result either of an inability to intervene or of a lack of desire to do so, as it can be argued was the case

92 Brummett, “Dogs, women, cholera”, p. 444.

93 Brummett, “Dogs, women, cholera”, p. 444.

94 Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâtî'z-zâhire*, pp. 129–30 and note 515.

95 Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâtî'z-zâhire*, p. 129, note 514.

96 Jones, Jennifer, “Coquettes and grisettes: women buying and selling in Ancien Régime Paris”, in *The Sex of Things. Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (eds.) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 25.

97 Kütükoğlu, Mübahat S. (ed.), *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), p. 7.

98 Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, p. 6.

99 For a discussion of these views, see Fleet, Kate, “The Ottoman economy, c. 1300–c. 1585”, *History Compass*, 12/5 (2014), 455–64.

100 For an introductory discussion of *narh*, see Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 167–9.

in Crete after the Ottoman conquest in 1669.¹⁰¹ In the context of the market, Şevket Pamuk has argued that the use of the *narh* system was adopted more in times of economic difficulty than on a regular basis¹⁰² and Eminegül Karababa has suggested that in fact “the limited intervention of the state in the economy most likely provided an opportunity for consumer culture to flourish”.¹⁰³

While it is therefore necessary to qualify the level of state economic intervention, it is undoubtedly true that when it came to female consumption, sultans sought to impose controls. For rulers such as Ahmed III, female spending on new fashions was destabilizing because of its effect on the budgets of males and on traditional craftsmen. While men were being “drawn into sin” or dragged to divorce by the unsuitable extravagances of their wives who were throwing money away on the latest fashions, the decline in the popularity of old-style clothing was having an adverse effect on tradesmen on the market who were now faced both with the loss of demand for their goods and the need to sell the new fashions.¹⁰⁴ Selim III attempted to protect local producers by imposing a ban on women wearing clothes made from English cloth.¹⁰⁵ Despite Selim’s efforts, his own high officials preferred foreign to local cloth, decking themselves out in Indian or Iranian cloth while the sultan always dressed instead in Istanbul and Ankara cloth.¹⁰⁶

Sultans such as Selim III and Abdülhamid II (1876–1909)¹⁰⁷ thus discouraged excessive spending and flashy innovation and encouraged moderation and conservatism. Murad IV (1623–1640) was totally opposed to the new fashions in which the women of the capital draped themselves and sent criers through the streets to announce that women were not to dress in the new-fangled fashions but in the soft felt caps of the past, a pronouncement which resulted, apparently, in men taking the new attire away from their wives and punishing them for incorrect dressing.¹⁰⁸

101 Fleet, Kate, and Svetla Ianeva, *Ottoman Economic Practices in Periods of Transformation: the Cases of Crete and Bulgaria* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2014), pp. 103–5.

102 Pamuk, Şevket, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 14–15 and note 46.

103 Karababa, Eminegül, “Investigating early modern Ottoman consumer culture in the light of Bursa probate inventories”, *The Economic History Review*, 65/1 (2012), p. 199.

104 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda*, no. 118, pp. 86–8.

105 Karal, *Selim III’ün Hat-ı Hümayunları*, p. 136.

106 Karal, *Selim III’ün Hat-ı Hümayunları*, pp. 101–2.

107 Engin, Vahdettin (ed.), *Sultan Abdülhamid ve İstanbul’u* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2001), doc. 15, p. 163 (12 January 1904), and p. 55.

108 Topçular Katibi Abdülkadir Efendi, *Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkâdir (Kadrî) Efendi Tarihi (Metin ve Tahlil)*, 2 vols., Ziya Yılmaz (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. II, p. 990.

In an attempt to control female fashion consumption, sultans issued orders banning certain garments and imposing others. Noting that women were abandoning their tradition, and suitable, garments for tight-fitting *feraces* and plain muslin veils, Mustafa II (1695–1703) instructed the *kadı* of Edirne in 1702 to ensure that women wore capacious *feraces* and black veils.¹⁰⁹ In 1726 Ahmed III decreed that women ignoring the ban on large coloured *feraces* and big head covers would have their collars cut and they themselves would be sent into exile;¹¹⁰ Selim III also banned large head gear and long collars made of bright colours, women dressed in them being punished;¹¹¹ and Mahmud II (1808–1839) issued similar bans and decreed punishment for those caught in contravention.¹¹²

These continuous attempts to control the female fashion market clearly proved largely ineffective, giving an interesting twist to the argument about the levels of government economic intervention and bringing into question just how effective any such intervention, even when attempted, actually was. During the early eighteenth century, women simply ignored clothing regulations. They “shamed the Muslims”, piling ten to 20 square head coverings onto their heads like a turban with many plaited folds, showing their faces through *yaşmaks* made of thin muslin and by setting out into the streets in *feraces* whose collars fell down to their waists and in “close-fitting lust-exciting” clothes.¹¹³ This state of affairs continued and by the mid-eighteenth century women simply wore what they wanted and did not obey the orders “for more than three days”, instead walking round the markets in “obscene clothing and in a dissolute manner”. Even when the orders were reinforced and punishment increased, the effect did not last more than six months. Once or twice a year regulations concerning the women of Istanbul were tightened up, with no effect, leaving Istanbul “in ruins”.¹¹⁴

The attempt to control clothes’ consumption, which applied equally to men, was considered, at least by Şemdanizade, to be of fundamental importance, for, he argued,

109 Özcan, Abdülkadir (ed.), *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099–1161/1688–1704)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), p. 179.

110 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda*, no. 118, pp. 86–8.

111 Karal, *Selim III’ün Hat-ı Hümayunları*, p. 102.

112 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, I, pp. 564, 587–8; II, p. 772.

113 Şemdanizade, *Şem’dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, I, p. 26, 1143 (1731–1732).

114 Şemdanizade, *Şem’dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, II A, p. 36, 1173 (1759–1760). This was a situation which Şemdanizade found quite extraordinary and inexplicable.

the truth is that it is of great benefit to men to inform them about clothing and to put them in [suitable] clothes and [this] is incumbent upon the *padişah* and his *vezirs* [to do] and this is a thing they call the order of the world. It is true that those who are intelligent know the limits and do not transgress them. But there is the evil of peer pressure [akran belâsı]. When those equal in fecklessness dress in excessive clothing, the common people are impressionable and do not know how to prevent themselves from transgressing the limits and they hold them in contempt. If the poor, who are not prevented and restrained and prohibited, were threatened legally with banishment, beating and death and if there were the utmost care [taken over imposing the dress codes] and if women dressed and clothed themselves according to the rank of their husbands, [then] *şal* [a valuable woollen material from Iran and India] and cloth and cloth decorated with gold and silver thread and silk cloth and patterned brocade and fur and broadcloth coming from other countries would not be in demand on the market and the money of the Ottoman state would not go to other countries. For this reason [i.e. because they do not follow the dress codes] gold and silver and cash are scarce in the Ottoman state. Many people fall into debt because of this and the curse of desiring fame, the curse of courting popularity and the curse of women.¹¹⁵

It was thus female consumption and the desire for new fashions, not state decrees, that proved the more effective force on the market. However much sultans, driven by a combination of economic agitation about market conditions and moral concern for the honour of their female subjects or perceived moral improprieties of female dress, might fight to maintain the status quo in the fashion industry and keep women constrained in their traditional and capacious coverings, fashion changed and so did the tastes, and spending, of the female members of Ottoman society. New fashions appeared among women in the Lale Devri, as the poet Nedim (d. 1730) noted: “All belts are now worn over the stomach, as if sticking straight out/ Among beautiful women a new garment has arrived”.¹¹⁶ In the late eighteenth century collars got longer and were produced in bright colours, *feraces* in the nineteenth century became made of thinner cloth instead of the traditional thicker cloth, and were then abandoned altogether for the new *çarşaf*, despite being banned several times,

115 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, II A, pp. 69–70, 1178 (1764–1765).

116 Gölpinarlı, Abdülbâki (ed.), *Nedim Divanı* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1951), p. 149.

and “hideous crinolines” replaced *şalvars* and *entaris*.¹¹⁷ Women spent their money in the markets of Beyoğlu on newly arrived foreign goods they regarded as unusual and elegant and adopted totally unsuitable clothing that made them resemble European women.¹¹⁸

One of the factors in changing tastes and fashions was related precisely to the lack of female isolation that is so often posited for Ottoman women. Fashion and tastes move fast, propelled by the constantly shifting winds of innovation, imitation and, as Şemdanizade put it “the evil of peer pressure” [“akran belâsı”].¹¹⁹ The luxury fashions of the upper echelons were imitated by those less affluent who, to use the term applied by Cissie Fairchilds in relation to eighteenth-century Paris, pursued “populuxe” goods.¹²⁰ The tastes and consumption desires of Ottoman women, who had such a major commercial impact because they made many of the household spending decisions, triggered much male spending and, of course, spent on themselves, were influenced by what they encountered around them. Such influence came both from within and from outside the empire and began, one can argue, in the market places of the very early Ottoman state. As we have seen, the market at Eskişehir under the first ruler Osman (?–c. 1324) in the early fourteenth century was frequented by women, presumably Christian Byzantines, from outside the Ottoman state. The porous nature of border zones gave plenty of opportunity for the movement of influence, and indeed women themselves. One can look here, for example, at the case of a girl who fled from the house of her father, Ahmed Ağa, in Klis (Clissa, Kilis) on the Split (Spalato) border and into Venetian territory in 1621. On hearing that she wished to convert to Christianity, her father, mother and other family members promptly set off for Split to discourage her, unsuccessfully, from doing so.¹²¹ While Ottoman women could

117 Zeynoub Hanoum, *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions*, Grace Ellison (ed.) (London: Seeley Service and Co., 1913), pp. 97–8.

118 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 21.

119 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, II A, p. 69.

120 Fairchilds, Cissie, “The production and marketing of populuxe goods in eighteenth-century Paris”, in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.) (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 228–48. Fairchilds argues that “this penchant for populuxe goods which allowed them to ape the aristocracy seems to have been unique to France”, adding that “when the English lower classes acquired extra disposable income they spent it on useful household goods, not populuxe items”, p. 230. Ottoman women, however, appear to have been attracted by goods that imitated those of women from higher income brackets.

121 Dursteler, Eric, “‘Convenient to the piety of Our Signoria and to the honor of the Lord God’: gender and institutional honor on the early modern Dalmatian frontier”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 15/4 (2011), 367–84.

move across frontiers, other women appeared in the empire and had an instant impact on fashion. The visit of the wife of Napoleon III, Empress Eugénie, to Istanbul in 1869 led to a snow storm of French fashion as women, swept along by “a craze for *everything* French”,¹²² set out to imitate her style and clothing.¹²³ In this Ottoman women were no different from French women in the previous century who had “squeeze[d] themselves into lime-green taffeta dresses with pink spots, inspired by the ambassadors from Tippoo-Saib”.¹²⁴

With the increasing flood of foreign goods onto the Ottoman market from the late eighteenth century, imported European textiles were among the goods sought after. Upper class women in nineteenth-century Damascus, for example, found it desirable to be seen dressed in garments of European cloth carrying European labels and the adoption of cheap and good quality European textiles boosted the sale of European textile manufacturers.¹²⁵ The gift presented on behalf of Baroness Burdett Coutts¹²⁶ by Lady Layard for the wife of Abdülhamid when she visited the imperial *harem* in December 1877 was “a fine Shetland shawl in an English oak box . . . as a specimen of English work”.¹²⁷ Many of the women of high Istanbul fashion in this period dressed in the latest Parisian fashions,¹²⁸ Charles White commenting that the crowds in Pera in the summer evenings was composed of Franks or Perotes “all attired

122 Zeynoub Hanoum, *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions*, p. 98.

123 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 299–302.

124 Jones, “Coquettes and grisettes: women buying and selling in Ancien Régime Paris”, p. 29. The state visit took place in 1788.

125 Rafeq, “Craft organization”, p. 510.

126 Baroness Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906) was the daughter of the politician Sir Francis Burdett and his wife Sophia, daughter of the banker Thomas Coutts. A keen philanthropist and book collector, she actively collected manuscripts from the Middle East. She was instrumental in the creation of the Turkish Compassionate Fund set up to support Muslims displaced from the Balkans during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, and was decorated by the sultan in 1878, see Edna Healey, “Coutts, Angela Georgina Burdett-, suo jure Baroness Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan. 2012. In August 1877 she sent Sir Henry Layard, the British ambassador in Istanbul, £ 1,000 for the Turkish refugees, Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 50. Henry Layard, in referring to this donation in his memoirs, described her “munificence and boundless charity”, noting that “she had opened a public subscription to a fund, which she named ‘The Turkish Compassionate Fund’”, Kunalalp, Sinan (ed.), *The Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan. Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard's Constantinople Embassy 1877–1880* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), p. 142.

127 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 75.

128 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, pp. 20, 264–5.

in exaggerated European costume, making dress hideous".¹²⁹ The popularity of imported goods led local producers to manufacture imitations, as the partnership of al-Sayyid Darwish al-Rumani and al-Khawaja Jurji Mashta did in Damascus in the 1860s. They produced a cloth "with spiral patterns for women in imitation of a European brand, but Damascene women shied away from it because it was not graced with a European label",¹³⁰ although Reilly argues that "on the whole . . . the merchant-entrepreneurs' attempts to market imitations of European goods succeeded".¹³¹ The same cannot be said for the shoemaking industry in Istanbul in the 1870s which stopped producing traditional footwear, turning instead to the manufacture of the more successful European styles.¹³²

With the rise of the press in the later nineteenth century, the female population became bombarded with a barrage of advertisements displaying imported fashion, household goods and a vast array of other products which further 'globalised' female spending. Newspapers such as *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* carried adverts for the latest European fashions, taking illustrations from English or French magazines,¹³³ and displaying illustrations of European fashion for young and middle aged women,¹³⁴ children,¹³⁵ and for little girls¹³⁶ or for specific seasons, such as the latest fashion for winter.¹³⁷ Journals also published adverts for specific shops, such as Granos Magasins de Nouveautes Cleanthes Hadjopoulo¹³⁸ or Karlman and Blumberg in Galata, and in the Cadde-i Kebir (now İstiklal Caddesi) and in Istanbul whose advert featured a very well-dressed woman in a jacket with puffy sleeves and a parasol on one side of the advert and a little boy in a sailor suit with a little sailor's cap on the other.¹³⁹

129 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, II, p. 15.

130 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, "Sources of wealth and its social and political implications in nineteenth-century Damascus", in "The Ottomans and wealth: a comparative perspective", Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (eds.), *Oriens*, 37 (2009), pp. 262–3.

131 Reilly, James A., "From workshop to sweatshops: Damascus textiles and the world economy in the last Ottoman century", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 16/2 (1993), p. 206.

132 Quataert, Donald, "Ottoman handicrafts and industry in the age of European industrial hegemony, 1800–1914", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 11/2 (1988), p. 175.

133 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 21 Rebiülahir 1313/29 Eylül 1311 (11 October 1895).

134 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 25 Rebiülahir 1313/2 Teşrin-i evvel 1311 (14 October 1895).

135 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 28 Rebiülahir 1313/5 Teşrin-i evvel 1311 (17 October 1895).

136 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 2 Cemaziülevvel 1313/9 Teşrin-i evvel 1311 (21 October 1895).

137 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 28 Rebiülahir 1313/5 Teşrin-i evvel 1311 (17 October 1895), 5 Cemaziülevvel 1313/12 Teşrin-i evvel 1311 (24 October 1895).

138 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 29 Cemaziülahir 1313/4 Kanun-i evvel 1311 (16 December 1895).

139 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 11 Cemaziülahir 1313/16 Teşrin-i sani 1311 (28 November 1895). Little sailor suits were not restricted to boys for Selma Ekrem was dressed in a "blue

Tiring Mağazası in Galata in Karaköy street also advertised, the shop's ad being flanked on both sides by a picture of women, one young in a puffy-sleeved jacket, skirt and boots, the other older with a veiled hat and tight-waisted, puffy-sleeved jacket, and announcing that Tiring brought all the latest goods from Paris and London and other large European cities.¹⁴⁰ Adverts also appeared in non-Ottoman language newspapers such as the *Journal de Smyrne* which in March 1834 carried an advertisement for van Lennep, a Dutch merchant on the Rue Franc in İzmir, who was selling the finest imported fabrics from the Netherlands.¹⁴¹ In May 1881 *The Constantinople Messenger* published an advert for Joseph U. Streater and Co., on Nerdiban Street near Galata Tower, who brought the latest novelties from Paris and London.¹⁴²

When it came to fashion, women were not restricted to the Ottoman press but followed the latest French and English journals, such as *Weldons and Fashions for All*.¹⁴³ French was, after all, a useful language to have and Bihter, the heroine of Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's novel *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Forbidden Love) had enough French for her excursions to the shops in Beyoğlu.¹⁴⁴ Despite social disapproval, Greek women perused foreign, and in particular French, fashion magazines, a pastime condemned in an article in the women's review *Evrydike* in 1871 which described the imitation of European fashion as "a sin and shame for those bearing the name of *Greek Woman*".¹⁴⁵

Influences which drove changes in taste and fashion and thus in female consumption patterns were not restricted to those coming from outside Ottoman lands but were also evident within the empire itself, something hardly surprising given the size and diversity of Ottoman territory. Ahmed III was enraged by the Muslim women of the capital imitating the fashions of his non-Muslim

woolen sailor suit and woolen sailor cap" when she was a young girl, an outfit she was very keen on: "I loved my sailor suit for it had such deep friendly pockets, and I was proud of my cap. Mother always made us wear these suits, which she bought at an English store", Selma Ekrem, *Unveiled. The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1933), p. 46.

140 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 11 Cemaziülahir 1313/16 Teşrin-i sani 1311 (28 November 1895).

141 İnal, Onur, "Women's fashions in transition: Ottoman borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman exchange of costumes", *Journal of World History*, 22/2 (2011), p. 267.

142 İnal, "Women's fashions", p. 267.

143 Tahsin Nâhid and Şahabeddin Süleyman, *Ben . . . Başka!*, Sibel Ercan (ed.) (Istanbul: Bordo Siyah Klasik Yayınlar, 2004), p. 39.

144 Uşaklıgil, *Aşk-ı Memnu*, p. 32.

145 Exertzoglou, "The cultural uses of consumption", p. 92.

female subjects.¹⁴⁶ The *çarşaf* (the burka) came from Syria with the wife of Suphi Paşa, the governor there, and replaced the *ferace* as the garment of preference in the Ottoman capital.¹⁴⁷ The arrival of the women of the households of Abbas, the Khedive of Egypt, and his entourage to pass time in their *yals* (summer houses) in Istanbul, produced a spurt of fashion excitement and a desire to imitate the 'exotic' outfits of these Egyptian women, such as Zeynep Hanım, daughter of the *de facto* ruler of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Paşa (d. 1849).¹⁴⁸ Nazlı, the wife of Halil Şerif Paşa, the ambassador to Paris, and the daughter of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa who was the son of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt, dressed in the height of French fashion and used French furnishings in her home,¹⁴⁹ and the wife of Mehmed Ali's son Halim also dressed in European fashion.¹⁵⁰ Azize, Nazlı's sister, dressed her three-year-old son who, rather precociously, spoke both French and English, "like an English child".¹⁵¹ On a much more every day level, there was, of course, the consumption driven by observing the neighbours. The wife of a friend of Basiretçi Ali Efendi was very demanding in her requirements for her daughter's wedding, but there was not the money to pay for such things, a point of little interest to the lady who responded by saying "Mrs So-and-So did it, I certainly want it, and you can be sure that [if I don't get it] all hell will break loose".¹⁵²

The outcome of all this was, as Başcı argues for the beginning of the twentieth century, the emergence of a "new woman" who "was aware of her choices and was an active participant in the shaping of the modern market as a consumer".¹⁵³ In fact, this woman was perhaps not all that new, but had simply become more obvious with the changes of the nineteenth century. However much the sultans tried they were unable to control female consumption because females wanted to consume, had the power to drive consumption, the access to a world of changing fashions and, most importantly, because the market wanted their custom.

146 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda*, no. 118, pp. 86–8.

147 Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı*, p. 133.

148 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Mârûzât*, Yusuf Halaçoğlu (ed.) (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980), p. 7.

149 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 23.

150 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 44.

151 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 158.

152 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 142.

153 Başcı, "Advertising modernity in *Women's World*", p. 61.

A Desired Consumer

What was a source of alarm for sultans and for some sectors of society was one of great interest for those whose livelihoods came from the market, for whom the female customer was an inescapable necessity not merely because of her own spending but also because of the power she wielded over male spending and over household budgets. Given the size and importance of the female consumer market therefore, it is not surprising that with the rise of the press in the later nineteenth century much advertising space was devoted to appealing to women. Women's magazines (and others not aimed specifically at a female audience) advertised a range of goods for female customers from Babbitt's cleanser, the American cleanliness powder ("Amerikan nezafet tozu") which was the most powerful, cheapest and most harmless method of cleaning,¹⁵⁴ to a depilatory powder which worked in just three minutes (the advert being accompanied by an enticing before and after female headshot),¹⁵⁵ the hair products sold by Mahmud Nedim at the İslam Saç Ticarethanesi,¹⁵⁶ doctors advertising blood and urine testing using the latest European methods for gonorrhoea syphilis and skin complaints, for both men and women,¹⁵⁷ and, for those interested in learning about their future, the palm-reading skills of the Egyptian Shaykh al-Suyuti Muhammad Farid Bey, who translated the secrets of the ancient arts from French and Arabic.¹⁵⁸

Some adverts were specifically aimed at women, such as that for a cake and sweetshop only for women in Sultan Hamamı in Istanbul¹⁵⁹ or that for a patisserie (*süthane salonu*) which had a room reserved especially for women.¹⁶⁰ The "famous" baklava maker Şamlı Hacı Mustafa advertised "a salon for taking one's ease embellished with a sea view" reserved especially for women on the top floor of his establishment, noting that his shop also had a telephone.¹⁶¹ An advert also appeared for a "book for ladies" ("hanım kitabı") in which everything a woman wanted to know could be found. It was sold in a bookshop in Bab-ı Ali Street in Istanbul, selling for 12 ½ *guruş*.¹⁶² Women clearly were

154 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 136, 8 Cemaziülevvel 1331 [sic.]/22 Mart 1330 (4 April 1914).

155 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 136, 8 Cemaziülevvel 1331 [sic.]/22 Mart 1330 (4 April 1914).

156 *Kadınlar Alemi*, no. 4, 12 Haziran 1330 (25 June 1914).

157 *Genç Kadın*, no. 3, 30 Kanun-ı sani 1335 (30 January 1919).

158 *Genç Kadın*, no. 8, 10 Nisan 1335 (13 April 1919).

159 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 127, 4 Rebiülevvel 1332/18 Kanun-ı sani 1329 (31 January 1914).

160 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 128, 11 Rebiülevvel 1332/25 Kanun-ı sani 1329 (7 February 1914).

161 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 127, 4 Rebiülevvel 1332/18 Kanun-ı sani 1329 (31 January 1914).

162 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 124, 12 Sefer 1332/28 Kanun-ı evvel 1329 (10 January 1914).

customers of bookshops, one bookshop which sold all types of books accompanying its advert with an illustration of four women in a row holding books advertising different subjects.¹⁶³ Women, like the youngest daughter of Ahmed Vefik Paşa, a high-ranking Ottoman official, read a great deal.¹⁶⁴ However, the reading woman was not welcomed by all. The Greek Orthodox community advised against young girls (the future mothers of the Greek nation) reading cheap romances and in some cases “conspicuous consumption was directly linked to the infatuation of young brides with European romances”.¹⁶⁵ Charles White apparently agreed with such an assessment for, observing that although Turkish women read much less than women from Pera or Fener, that is Orthodox or Catholic women, he remarked that at least what they read was of value whereas “among the latter there is scarcely one that reads a good work”, an observation which led him to ask “of what advantage is it then to read or write, if the principal use made of the acquirement be to run over trashy collections of degenerate novels?”¹⁶⁶ A similar hostility to reading was expressed by the mother-in-law about her daughter-in-law in Hüseyin Rahmi [Gürpınar’s] novel, *Mutallaka*, when she snapped “What? At it again? Are you reading a book? . . . In our golden times women used to have their looms; nowadays they have their library, ink and pen. We used to weave clothes, you read novels”.¹⁶⁷ This attitude continued for when Demetra Vaka returned to Istanbul in 1921 she met a young woman at the house of an acquaintance. In conversation the young girl explained “my father thinks I am quite a ruined article . . . because . . . I am a great reader of European literature”.¹⁶⁸

While later nineteenth-century adverts targeted women specifically, so too did women traders and other female workers who catered specifically for a female clientele. Female peddlers (*bohçacı*) who went from house to house selling cloth, linen and female clothing, were such a common sight, at least on the streets of the capital, that in order to circumvent bans on alcohol men in the early nineteenth century would disguise themselves as non-Muslim female peddlers in order to carry jugs of alcohol into their own houses,¹⁶⁹ a further

163 *Genç Kadın*, no. 5, 26 Cemaziülevvel 1337/27 Şubat 1335 (27 February 1919).

164 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 22.

165 Exertzoglou, “The cultural uses of consumption”, p. 93.

166 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, II, p. 181.

167 Quoted in Sönmez, Emel, “Turkish women in Turkish literature of the nineteenth century”, *Die Welt des Islams*, n.s. 12/1–3 (1969), p. 28.

168 Vaka, *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul*, p. 48.

169 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, I, p. 22.

indication of the visibility, and normality, of women on the streets, becoming so visible as to become almost unseen.

Apart from bringing goods to female customers in their own homes, a women-to-women market also existed in the provision of services. According to Jennings's findings for Kayseri in the early seventeenth century, women often served as representatives (*vekils*) usually only for other women.¹⁷⁰ This also appears to have been the case in late-sixteenth century Üsküdar where, for example, Hadice bint Abdürrezzak was registered in court as the *vekil* of her daughter Fatma bint Ali¹⁷¹ and, in the following month, Emine bint İlyas from the region of Gelibolu was registered as the *vekil* for Fatma bint Odel.¹⁷² Female slave traders, who appear in the *narh* regulations for 1640,¹⁷³ both bought females and sold to women. Their job was not always a safe one for a female slave dealer in Istanbul was knifed and killed by a female slave in 1762, the slave being hanged in the slave market.¹⁷⁴ Although their ultimate target was not necessarily a female buyer, female slave dealers also bought little girls whom they reared and educated and then sold to the households of *paşas* and high-ranking officials.¹⁷⁵ While female doctors and nurses treated female patients

170 Jennings, "Women in early 17th century Ottoman judicial records", p. 111.

171 Günalan, *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil*, no. 151, p. 125, 13 Zilkade 987 (1 January 1580).

172 Günalan, *Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil*, no. 204, pp. 143–4, Zilhicce 987 (January–February 1580).

173 Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, pp. 256–7.

174 Şemdanizade, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi*, 11 A, p. 49, Muharrem 1176 (July–August 1762).

175 Davis, Fanny, *The Ottoman Lady. A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 103; Örik, Nahid Sırrı, *Eski Zaman Kadınları Arasında. Hatıralar* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1958), p. 9; Tugay, Emine Foat, *Three Centuries, Family Chronicle of Turkey and Egypt* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 309–10. According to Emine Foat Tugay, Circassian and Georgian slave traders brought slaves to Istanbul where "they were put in charge of female slave-traders, who acted as agents between purveyor and customer. These unscrupulous women had access to all the konaks, where by flattering the mistress or an influential kalfa, they disposed of the slaves as profitably as possible", p. 306; Melek Hanim, *Thirty Years in the Harem, or the Autobiography of Melek-Hanum, Wife of H.H. Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), pp. 158–60. According to Garnett, much of this traffic in the late nineteenth century was "carried on to a great extent by ladies of high rank, some of whom are themselves emancipated slaves, and the profits they realise are said to be very considerable, especially when their operations are on a large scale", Garnett, Lucy M.J., *The Women of Turkey and their Folk-Lore* (London: David Nutt, 1893), pp. 403–4. She relates a "little story" about Behiye Hanım, the wife of the famous Tanzimat grand *vezir*, Fuad Paşa. "The desire to possess an income independently of her husband had in the first instance

in Ottoman hospitals,¹⁷⁶ women bath keepers and workers catered for women in the female *hamams*, Nicolas de Nicolay noting in the mid-sixteenth century that in the public baths “there are certain women to serve and administer to those who come without their servants or slaves”.¹⁷⁷ Women owned or rented and ran female *hamams*, an occupation apparently considered suitable for women.¹⁷⁸ In October 1514 Hacı Nefise bint Hoca Piri and Gülzar bint Abdullah rented the Mehmed Paşa Hamamı in Üsküdar for 12 months for 3,200 *akçe*;¹⁷⁹ Ayşe Hanım rented Havuzlu Hamam, which belonged to the Atik Valide Vakfı, in 1645 and Fatma bint Abdullah rented Çemberlitaş Hamamı between 1786 and 1790.¹⁸⁰ A *hamam anası*, who oversaw female bathhouse attendants in the women’s section, was listed among the employees of the Çemberlitaş Hamamı.¹⁸¹

Women sold to women in markets such as the Suq al-Niswan (the women’s market) in Damascus¹⁸² and dominated the small fruit and vegetable markets in Egypt in the nineteenth century.¹⁸³ They also produced for them for a female clientele. Higher status Greek women in Istanbul in the sixteenth century produced beautiful needlework in their homes which they sold in the *bezestan* (cloth market) and the public markets, presumably, given the commodity, aimed at and purchased by female consumers. The less affluent Greek women earned their living publicly selling in the town eggs, poultry, milk, cheese and herbs.¹⁸⁴ In the mid-nineteenth century too, muslin and cotton handkerchiefs, embroidered in gold and coloured silks, were made by Christian and Jewish

induced this lady to engage in this profession, and her investments had turned out so well that in a few years her house was transformed into a vast training-school of saleable maidens”, p. 407.

- 176 Shefer-Mossensohn, Miri, “A sick sultana in the Ottoman imperial palace: male doctors, female healers and female patients in the early modern period”, *Hawwa*, 9/3 (2011), pp. 295, 301.
- 177 de Nicolay, *Le navigazione et viaggi nelle Turchia*, p. 125.
- 178 Ergin, Nina, “Bathing business in Istanbul: a case study of the Çemberlitaş Hamamı in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”, in *Bathing Culture of Anatolian Civilizations: Architecture, History, and Imagination*, Nina Ergin (ed.) (Leuven, Paris and Walpole, M.A.: Peeters, 2011), p. 150.
- 179 Aydın, Bilgin and Ekrem Tak (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 1 Numaralı Sicil (H. 919–927/M. 1513–1521)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2008), no. 198, p. 175, 1 Ramazan 920 (20 October 1514).
- 180 Ergin, “Bathing business in Istanbul”, p. 150. Ergin notes that Ayşe Hanım did not attend the *hamam* herself, as it only served male customers, and that day-to-day running of *hamams* rented by women was done through a *vekil*.
- 181 Ergin, “Bathing business in Istanbul”, p. 148.
- 182 Reilly, “Women in the economic life of late-Ottoman Damascus”, p. 98.
- 183 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 110.
- 184 Nicolay, *Le navigazione et viaggi nelle Turchia*, p. 255.



FIGURE 4.4 A woman from Karaman, "Donna di Caramania", in de Nicolay, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia*, p. 257.

REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

women from Fener, Vlanga Bostan and Balat and sold in the Uzun Çarşı in Istanbul in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸⁵

By the nineteenth century the women-to-women market was thriving, at least in the capital where, just as in Victorian Glasgow where “much of the retail commerce of the city was based on the public servicing of the domestic world, and involved women selling to women”,¹⁸⁶ so too did much of the Istanbul market reflect this world of female provision of services to a female clientele. Emine Semiye, writing in the women’s journal *Kadın* (Woman) demanded, among other things, “restaurants maintained by women and thus open to women”.¹⁸⁷ Women ran their own shops, such as the pastry shop which catered for women,¹⁸⁸ Raşide Hanım’s bridal shop in Beyezit,¹⁸⁹ or the shops of Calivrusi, Fegara and the Shaki sisters and the Demilville sisters.¹⁹⁰ The famous female tailor Efijeni had a shop opposite Galatasaray catering for a largely female clientele,¹⁹¹ and the Paris Terzihanesi (tailor’s shop) of Madam Margaret Nafi Bey catered for women in Kadıköy.¹⁹² Madam Ferdinand, a corsetiere who had a diploma from Paris, advertised her “huri korseleri”,¹⁹³ and Madam Della Suda advertised “ideal korseleri”¹⁹⁴ in the press.

Women offered other services less related specifically to the domestic scene. Women’s magazines, run entirely by women and whose journalists were women, such as *Kadınlar Dünyası* and *Şükufezar*,¹⁹⁵ were aimed at a female

185 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, III, pp. 164–5.

186 Gordon, Eleanor and Gwyneth Nair, “The economic role of middle-class women in Victorian Glasgow”, *Women’s History Review*, 9/4 (2000), p. 799.

187 Karakaya-Stump, Ayfer, “Debating progress in a ‘serious newspaper for Muslim women’: the periodical “Kadın” of the post-revolutionary Salonica, 1908–1909”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 30/2 (2003), p. 179, referring to Emine Semiye’s article, “Makale-yı Mahsuse: Muhterem Biraderimiz Cavid Beyefendi’ye”, in *Kadın*, 9 (8 Kanun-ı evvel 1324), pp. 4–5.

188 Başcı, “Advertising modernity in *Women’s World*”, p. 47, referring to Sadiye Vefik, “Kadınlıkta Teşebbüs-i Şahsi: Hanımlar Pastanesi Sahibesi Sediye Keman Hanımefendi”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 1309 (25 Rebiülevvel 1331), p. 12.

189 Frierson, Elizabeth, “Cheap and easy: the creation of consumer culture in the later Ottoman empire”, in *Consumption Studies of the History of the Ottoman Empire 1550–1922. An Introduction*, Donald Quataert (ed.) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 254, and note 24, referring to *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 289–91 (13 December 1900), p. 6.

190 Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*, p. 191.

191 Alus, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul*, pp. 98–9. Alus also refers to Kalivrusi, p. 98.

192 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 128, 11 Rebiülevvel 1332/25 Kanun-ı sani 1329 (7 February 1914).

193 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 136, 8 Cemaziülevvel 1332/22 Mart 1330 (4 April 1914).

194 *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 124, 13 Sefer 1331/28 Kanun-ı evvel 1329 (10 January 1914).

195 Çakır, Serpil, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2011), pp. 83–4.

market. Matmazel Servanis had a photography studio catering for women¹⁹⁶ while Mademoiselle Henriette Hornik, a dentist with a diploma from the medical school in Vienna, had her surgery in Beyoğlu where she treated Muslim and non-Muslim women between the hours of 5.00 and 10.30 *ala turca* time every day. Her services, performed “with perfect care”, included filling teeth with gold, silver and platinum, making false teeth, cleaning teeth that had been broken or become loose or gone yellow because of not being looked after, after extracting teeth “with the greatest ease” and in such a way that there was no pain. *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* recommended her services to women, and in particular Muslim women, who would thus be completely independent of male dentists, urging its female readers to support her as an example of female solidarity to present to men.¹⁹⁷

For craftsmen and traders the important thing was to cater for female clients, to attract them to their establishments and to ensure sales. It was for this reason that gold bracelet craftsmen, for example, petitioned the sultan in 1761 to ensure that women should not be prevented from coming to their shops, for they were their main customers.¹⁹⁸ The importance of the female customer was paramount, a fact recognised by the shop-keepers in nineteenth-century Beyoğlu who followed the accepted view that contradicting female shoppers was not done and that they should always be listened to “with the respect of a student”. Wishing to make a sale, they therefore spent hours, “without tiring”, piling up cloth before their female customers.¹⁹⁹

Women thus, whether in a women-to-women world of marketing or for the male traders, craftsmen, shopkeepers and itinerant sellers who went from house to house with a range of goods from candyfloss, candies, *dolma*, and roasted chickpeas to water, liver, vegetables and even little poems,²⁰⁰ were an essential element in the day-to-day running of the market. The importance of attracting their custom overrode any other considerations and state orders which attempted to contain or control female consumption, such as those related to fashion, were liable to be ignored in the pursuits of profit on the part

196 Başcı, “Advertising modernity in *Women’s World*”, p. 48, referring to *Kadınlar Dünyası* 143 (4 Recep 1331).

197 *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, no. 52, 13 Ramazan 1313/15 Şubat 1311 (27 February 1896), p. 2 (of the *kısm-ı musavver* – illustrated section).

198 Kala, Ahmet et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Külliyyâtı: İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri İstanbul Esnaf Tarihi 1* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), Evahir-i Ramazan 1174 (26 February–7 March 1761), pp. 291–2.

199 Uşaklıgil, *Aşk-ı Memnu*, p. 21.

200 Sadri Sema, *Eski İstanbul Hatıraları*, Ali Şükrü Çoruk (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2002), pp. 33, 272–4; Alus, 30 *Sene Evvel İstanbul*, pp. 289–91.

of the traders and pleasure on that of the female customer. To this end craftsmen and traders were even willing to risk their lives. Tailors and ribbon makers who made up *feraces* in contravention of Ahmed III's edict of 1726 were liable to punishment²⁰¹ and those tailors who made *feraces* in banned Ankara cloth at the end of the eighteenth century were to be hanged in front of their shops while the customer who had ordered such a garment was also to be punished.²⁰²

Women were thus a desired customer and try as it might the state often proved unable effectively to control their consumption or prevent their appearance in the market place. In 1599 the *şeyhülislam* Sunullah Efendi ruled that women should not wander round openly among men in the markets,²⁰³ a pronouncement which indicates that this was in fact precisely what they were doing. Three and a half centuries later, in 1810, it was the wandering of the women of Üsküdar around the markets until late that prompted the imposition in the capital of a curfew on women going out at night.²⁰⁴ Women apparently largely ignored the oft-repeated dress regulations, behaviour which astonished and horrified Şemdanizade, and fashion and spending were driven along by female consumer demand, not controlled by government decrees. If the market failed them over basic food stuffs, women protested vociferously. In short, women were visible shoppers, engines of consumption and, despite any social or state concerns about the behaviour of females in the public space, ever present, vocal, on occasion violent, and unstoppable.

201 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda*, no. 118, pp. 86–8.

202 Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On Üçüncü Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1200–1255)* (Istanbul: Matbaacılık ve Neşriyat T.A.Ş., 1932), no. 4, p. 4.

203 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, 2 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), vol. II, p. 826.

204 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, I, p. 690.

The Extremes of Visibility: Slave Women in Ottoman Public Space

Kate Fleet

Of all Ottoman females, it was the female slave who was the most visible in the Ottoman public space. While women in general were positioned at various points along the trajectory of visibility, their location dictated by social position, wealth, role or regional variation, slave women moved through the whole gamut of female visibility from physical invisibility and seclusion in the *harem* at one end of the spectrum to total exposure on the market place, a level of public display unthinkable for any other Ottoman woman, at the other. Further, the visibility of a female slave was always fluid for she could swiftly move from one level of visibility to another, from protected possession to exposed commodity or from household servant to prostitute. Honour, a factor of significance in setting the limits of acceptable visibility, was something which female slaves either did not possess at all or for which they were dependant on their owners. Although in many ways merging into their households and indistinguishable from other, free, women performing the same roles within them, their non-free status meant that female slaves were always ‘exposable’ and had no choice over the level to which they could be displayed to public gaze.

Visibility through Role

Female slaves, as Suphi explained to a Russian princess in Ahmed Midhat’s novel *Acaib-i Alem* (Wonders of the World), were to be found throughout the Ottoman household, from “what would be called in Europe dame d’honneur and femme de chambers to cooks”.¹ They were, in the words of Madeline Zilfi, “critical accoutrements of great households and, given the elites’ domination of early modern culture, of society itself”.² They were “a status symbol,

1 Parlatur, İsmail, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992), p. 43.

2 Zilfi, Madeline C., “Muslim women in the early modern era”, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3 The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, Suraiya N. Faroqhi (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 234.

a manner of conspicuous consumption”³ for the well-to-do in Bursa in the sixteenth century and “essential to ‘respectability’ amongst one’s neighbours” in nineteenth-century Egypt.⁴ Female slaves were evident in the processions for the wedding of the eldest daughter of Ahmed I in June 1615⁵ and well-heeled women, such as Vicdan, wife of Halim Paşa and daughter-in-law of Mehmed Ali, the *de facto* ruler of Egypt,⁶ never left home without them, Baronne Durand de Fontmagne commenting that when a rich woman went out into the street, she was always accompanied by her slaves.⁷

Throughout the life of the empire, female slaves were visible accompanying their mistresses as they moved about in the public space. Wives and daughters of government officials thus set off for excursions with female slaves in tow,⁸ and women walked through the streets accompanied by them.⁹ High class women, according to Nicolas de Nicolay, in Istanbul in the mid-sixteenth century, went to the baths accompanied by one or two female slaves, one of whom carried on her head a bronze vessel in the shape of a little bucket for drawing water inside which were placed a fine, long cotton vest and another shirt, drawers, and cloth together with *rusma* (a depilatory). This vessel was covered by a rich covering of crimson velvet or satin brocaded with gold and silver with silk and gold tassels. The other slave, if there was one, carried a fine carpet with a beautiful pillow. After their time in the *hamam*, the slaves put the shirts and other linen cloths back into the vase and returned home walking behind their mistress.¹⁰ Better off women travelling around the empire did so in the company of female slaves. When Emine bint Mustafa set off from Istanbul for

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- 3 Sahillioğlu, Halil, “Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries”, in Sahillioğlu, Halil, *Studies on Ottoman Economic and Social History* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1999), p. 157 (first published in *Turcica*, 17 (1985), 43–112).
 - 4 Baer, Gabriel, “Slavery in nineteenth century Egypt”, *The Journal of African History*, 8/3 (1967), p. 422 (refers to Francis to Clarendon, Constantinople, 28 September 1869, The National Archives, London, F.O. 84/1305).
 - 5 Dei Crescenzi, Crescenzo, “Letter di Costantinopoli del 1615. A un amico”, in Giustiniani, Michele, *Lettere memorabilia dell’Abbate Michele Giustiniani, Patrizio Genovese de’ Sig.ri di Scio. Parte II* (Rome: Per Nicol’Angelo Tinassi, 1699), no. xvii, pp. 65–72.
 - 6 Kunalalp, Sinan (ed.), *Twixt Pera and Therapia. The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010), pp. 47, 125.
 - 7 Fontmagne, Baronne Durand de, *Un séjour à l’ambassade de France à Constantinople sous le second empire* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1902), p. 288.
 - 8 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi*, 2 vols., Mehmet Ali Beyhan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 476–7.
 - 9 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi* 1, pp. 491–2, 28 Cemaziülevvel 1224 (11 July 1809), p. 587, 26 Ramazan 1224 (4 November 1809).
 - 10 de Nicolay, Nicolas, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia* (Anversa: Giuglielmo Silvio, 1576), pp. 125–6.



FIGURE 5.1 *Woman and slave going to the public baths, "Turca andando al Bagno", in de Nicolay, Nicolas, Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia (Anversa: Giuglielmo Silvio, 1576), p. 128.*

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Edirne in 1742 to deal with a matter of inheritance, she did so accompanied by her female slaves,¹¹ as did Afife Hatun, who also travelled to Edirne from Istanbul in the same year to supervise various unspecified matters.¹²

In this context, slave women were not merely highly visible in the public space, but their visibility was important and significant in itself for it signalled that those women whom they accompanied were legitimately out in public. It could be argued that this legitimization could also be provided by the presence of a servant girl or an old woman, the famous *şeyhülislam* Ebussuud Efendi, for example, ruling that it was acceptable for women to go out to public places, provided they carried themselves with dignity and in a virtuous manner, and were accompanied by servants and attendants (“hadem ü haşem”).¹³ Such servants could have been female slaves, though this was not explicitly stated. Being accompanied by an old woman could also give protection to female honour, but such a choice was presumably related to financial status, only those women from the higher echelons being in a position to afford female slaves as attendants. That this was so is indicated by the case of Gülbeşe Hatun, a woman from Burdur, who was accused in 1564 of stealing and was to be sent to Istanbul accompanied either by a male relative (“mahrem”), if she had one, or by an old woman.¹⁴ Presumably in her case, she was not from a sufficiently affluent background to own a female slave. While the presence of a servant or an old woman could thus provide the necessary cover for honourable mobility, the legitimization offered by the presence of a slave woman was different for not only did it allow mobility, but it also marked status, wealth and thus power. Being accompanied by female slaves was therefore not simply about honourable mobility, but was a public display of status. The important thing here was not merely to be accompanied by other women, but to be attended by female slaves.

The mark of status and power flagged by the presence of female slaves may also have given the women thus accompanied not only ease of movement but also ease of independent behaviour and freedom from intervention. This, at

11 Kala, Ahmet et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Külliyyâtı 11. İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri. İstanbul'da Sosyal Hayat 1* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), pp. 28–9, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1155 (11–20 October 1742).

12 Kala, *İstanbul'da Sosyal Hayat 1*, pp. 34–5, Evail-i Ramazan 1155 (30 October–8 November 1742).

13 Düzdağ, M. Ertuğrul (ed.), *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), no. 154, p. 55.

14 *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (972/1564–1565)*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), vol. 1, no. 5, p. 5, 5 Muharrem 972 (13 August 1564).

least, is indicated by the behaviour of two women, Mahpeyker and Konyalı Deli Rabia in Antep (modern Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey) in the early seventeenth century. In August 1631 Mahpeyker, widow of Murad Paşa and now wife of Rıdvan, and Konyalı Deli Rabia, accompanied by Rıdvan's son Süleyman, the eunuch İbrahim and several female slaves, attacked two men, one the son of the late Murad Paşa and the other, Ali, son of Mevlana Davud, who brought the issue to court, as they repaired the wall of a vineyard. Addressing Ali, Mahpeyker asked sarcastically "have you become the owner of the property then?" and struck him. Rabia and the female slaves, at İbrahim's instigation, beat Ali on the arm with shovels and on the head with stones, as a result of which his arm was broken and his head injured.¹⁵ In this attack, which appears to have been related to a property dispute, the female slaves did not merely accompany but took an active part in the aggression. The presence of a eunuch no doubt further guaranteed the protection of the women who appeared to have initiated an unprovoked attack on two apparently unarmed men. Protection was not, however always guaranteed by the presence of female slaves. When a woman wearing a forbidden *ferace* and accompanied by several slave girls walked past the Segbanbaşı Deli Mehmed Ağa in Şehzadebaşı in Istanbul in November 1809, ignoring his rebuke for her breach of the dress code, she found herself instantly despatched to the women's prison.¹⁶

Apart from providing permitted mobility and signalling status, the presence of female slaves may also have had a further significance, one perhaps less satisfactory for the women accompanied, for female slaves may also have played the role of informant. Female slaves were certainly used in this role in general. They could be sent to organise secret assignments¹⁷ or employed in the hunt for suitable brides for young men of the household, women despatching their female slaves "to form acquaintance with those of houses where eligible matches may be found".¹⁸ According to Mary Ann Fay, female slaves also formed networks of information gathering, for women bought female slaves in order to construct patronage networks. Even after manumission the former owner could expect continuing loyalty from her former slaves who would

15 85 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1040–1041 (1042)/1630–1631 (1632))*, 2 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2001–2002), no. 428, p. 2560, Ottoman text no. 4218 [254], p. 178, 11 Muharrem 1041 (9 August 1631).

16 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târîhi*, I, p. 587, 26 Ramazan 1224 (4 November 1809).

17 See, for example, "Yağlıkcının Hindi Cihan Karısı", in Sükan, Işık, *Âsitâne Efsaneleri* (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2007), pp. 71–6.

18 White, Charles, *Three Years in Constantinople, or, Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), vol. III, p. 198.

provide her with information from their new households. Such information could be used both in developing her own network and in providing her husband with inside information beneficial in extending his own power and influence.¹⁹

The possession of knowledge or the ability to obtain it was clearly advantageous to a female slave, and the provision of information could lead to lucrative rewards. In June 1624 the female slave of the late Hüseyin Paşa, who had been killed in the uprising against Sultan Osman, informed the grand *vezir* that Hüseyin Paşa had hidden a great quantity of money in the wall of the *köşk* (villa, summer house, mansion) he had had built in Ortaköy in Istanbul. As a result of this information, the sultan sent the *bostancıbaşı*, a major Ottoman official, to the *köşk*, the walls were excavated and the money extracted. The slave was rewarded by a gift of money from the sultan and her manumission.²⁰ It was the obtaining of information that also led to freedom for a female slave in Namık Kemal's novel *İntibah* (Awakening) when the mother of the book's hero, Ali, wished to ask one of her son's closest friends, Atif Bey, for help, but did not know where his *konak* (mansion) was. One of her female slaves learnt its location and in gratitude Ali Bey's mother freed her.²¹

Female slaves were apparently perceived as easier to extract information from than other women, this presumably being related to their slave status which gave them no protection against any pressure applied. When the women on an outing to pick cherries at an orchard in Üsküdar in 1809 were seized and raped, information about what had happened was extracted from the children and female slaves who had been present.²² In this context, female slaves could thus have been regarded as reliable spies on the actions of their mistresses when out and about in public, thus guaranteeing a level of respectability and propriety pleasing to male heads of households. The accompanying female slave's role was thus multi-faceted: to allow honourable mobility, to mark status and power, to provide freedom of action, and to report back.

While in the position of attendant on a mistress in the public space visibility and slave status went hand-in-hand, this was not always the case, for much of the visibility of a slave woman was accidental, related not to her status as slave but to the role she performed for the household to which she belonged. Slave

19 Fay, Mary Ann, "From concubines to capitalists: women, property, and power in eighteenth-century Cairo", *Journal of Women's History*, 10/3 (1998), p. 133.

20 Arslantaş, Nuh and Yaron Ben Naeh (eds. and trans.), *Anonim Bir İbranîce Kroniğe Göre 1622–1624 Yıllarında Osmanlı Devleti ve İstanbul* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2013), p. 71.

21 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, p. 129.

22 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târîhi*, I, pp. 476–7.

women shopping, performing various jobs as part of a *mukataba* contract towards manumission,²³ or tending sheep as agricultural workers near Bursa in the sixteenth century,²⁴ were visible in exactly the same way as free women performing the same function. That slave and free women were often engaged in the same work is clear, for example, from the various injunctions over candle making in Istanbul in the seventeenth century. A petition presented by candle makers complaining that their prerogative to provide candles in the capital was being contravened by, among others, women (*hatunlar*) and female slaves (*cariyeler*) who were buying wax, making candles and selling them, an action that not only harmed the legitimate candle makers but represented a fire hazard to the city, prompted an order issued to the *kadı* of Istanbul in 1618, which noted that previous regulations in this matter had been ignored and ordered that the regulation be observed.²⁵ A similar petition was presented in 1647 again complaining that women (*hatunlar*) and female slaves (*cariyeler*) were contravening the candle makers' rights.²⁶ The visibility of slave women in such cases was thus not a visibility of show, to be noted or remarked on, but a part of everyday life. They were not, in other words, in the public space to be seen but to fulfil a role in which visibility, or invisibility, played no part, and one in which their slave status too had no bearing.

It was also role, not slave status, that dictated the level of invisibility for other female slaves who remained largely unseen and out of the public gaze within the confines of the *harem* of the households within which they lived. While physically largely unseen, such women could have considerable political influence and reputation, as was the case for various women within the sultan's *harem*, one obvious example being Hürrem Sultan, the famous concubine then wife of Sultan Süleyman (1520–1566). The importance and power of such women is clearly indicated by the frequent reference in the reports of Venetian

23 Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", p. 122.

24 Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", p. 108, note 3. Sahillioğlu notes that "the use of slave labour in agriculture was confined to isolated instances", pp. 107–8.

25 *82 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1026–1027/1617–1618)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2000), no. 70, pp. 45–6, Ottoman text, no. 70 [299], p. 33 [142], 11 Muharrem 1027 (8 January 1618).

26 Tulum, Mertol (ed.), *Mühimme Defteri 90* (Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1993), no. 472, p. 390, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1056 (17–27 January 1647). The *hüküm* sent to the *molla* of Galata noted that orders had been issued in the time of Ahmed I and Murad IV, and ordered that these orders be obeyed. Control of candle production was clearly a problem for the state, see also The Turkish Archives of Heraklion (hereafter TAAH), sicil 4, f. 6, 1083 (1672–1673).

baili (consuls) at Istanbul to women within the *harem* whom they regarded as pro- or potentially pro-Venetian, such as the wife of Ali, the *büyük imrahor* (the sultan's Master of the Horse), and sister of Gazanfer, the very powerful *odabaşı* and *kapı ağası*, a woman who spent much time weeping over her fate and was close to the *haseki* (the sultan's favourite consort). Cautious to avoid attracting suspicion, she nevertheless provided information to Venice when she could and was, in the estimation of Girolamo Cappello in his report presented to the Serenissima in 1600, "a woman of great value and judgement".²⁷ Venetian *baili* were anxious to secure the support of women within the *harem*, the *bailo* Lorenzo Bernardo, for example, in Istanbul in the late 1580s, putting much effort into securing the good will of the *kira*²⁸ who had easy access to the *harem*, was a conduit of information and was well disposed to Venice. In Bernardo's judgement it would be very much in Venice's interests to ensure that she was encouraged "in some way" to remain pro-Venetian.²⁹ As was the case throughout Ottoman society power came from proximity to the seat of power and was totally unrelated to servile status.³⁰

In other, non-sultanic *harems*, too, concubines were incorporated into the family structure and often formed a central part within it. Relations with their male owners were a source of some confusion for British visitors in the nineteenth century who found such domestic arrangements somewhat unpalatable. For Ottoman wives, however, such arrangements were apparently preferable to western dalliance with French floozies, as the wife of an Ottoman minister explained to Mrs Müller, who visited Istanbul in the 1890s and whose

27 Cappello, Girolamo, *Relatione*, in Pedani-Fabris, Maria Pia (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato. Vol. XIV Costantinopoli relazioni inedite (1512–1789)* (Padua: Aldo Ausilio Editore, 1996), p. 418. See also Pedani-Fabris, Maria Pia, "Veneziani a Costantinopoli alla fine del XVI secolo", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 15, *Veneziani in Levante, Musulmani a Venezia* (1997), pp. 74–5.

28 *Kiras* were Jewish women who acted as commercial agents for women in the imperial *harem* and who could reach positions of considerable importance. See Lamdan, Ruth, "Jewish women as providers in the generations following the expulsion from Spain", *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, No. 13, *Jewish Women in the Economy* (Spring 2007), pp. 57–8; Skilliter, Susan, "The letters of the Venetian 'Sultana' Nur Banu and her Kira to Venice", in *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexii Bombaci Dicata*, A. Gallotta and U. Marazzi (eds.) (Naples: n.p., 1982), pp. 515–36; Aydın, Mahir, "Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudi Kira Kadınlar", *Bellelen*, 65/213 (2001), 623–35.

29 Bernardo, Lorenzo, *Relazione*, in Pedani-Fabris, *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato*, p. 346.

30 For the role of women in politics, see the chapter in this volume by Ebru Boyar, "The public presence and political visibility of Ottoman women".

son was in the British embassy there. “Well”, the minister’s wife exclaimed, “we are happier than you, for our husbands may fancy one of our slaves whom we know, but your husbands go about with French actresses whom you don’t know”.³¹

The Female Slave as Possession

As Debra Blumenthal has argued for fifteenth-century Valencia, “ultimately, what distinguished the slave experience... was not the type of work performed, but the conditions under which they laboured”.³² Although slave women merged into the social fabric with little to distinguish them from other Ottoman women, performing the same roles, seen or unseen in the public space in the same way as free females, they remained possessions to be listed in inheritance registers alongside household utensils or livestock,³³ or given physical descriptions in court. While women appeared regularly in court throughout the empire, prostitutes appearing in court in Aleppo in the seventeenth century,³⁴ and women in Lesbos in the early sixteenth century to deal with sales of land or, in the case of Fatma Hatun, a dispute with her ex-husband Yakub over the division of property and the running of a *çiftlik* (agricultural estate),³⁵ for example, female slaves alone were physically described, Mihriban, for example, manumitted in 1580 by Mustafa ibn Hasan el-Reis being

31 Müller, Mrs Max, G.A.M., *Letters from Constantinople* (London: Longmans, Green & CO., 1897), p. 177.

32 Blumenthal, Debra, *Enemies and Familiars. Slavery and Masters in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 81.

33 Seng, Yvonne J., “Fugitives and factotums: slaves in early sixteenth-century Istanbul”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 39/2 (1996), p. 139.

34 Semerdjian, Elyse, “Sinful professions: illegal occupations of Ottoman women in Ottoman Aleppo, Syria”, *Hawwa*, 1/1 (2003), p. 70.

35 Laiou, Sophia N., *Τα οθωμανικά έγγραφα της Μονής Βαρλαάμ Μετεώρων: 16ος–19ος αι.* (Athens: Kentron Ereunēs tou Mesaionikou kai Neou Hellēnismou tēs Akadēmias Athēnōn, 2011), doc. 1, p. 79, Evahir-i Ramazan 913 (24 January–2 February 1508); doc. 6, p. 82, Evasit-1 Şevval 943 (23 March–1 April 1537); doc. 9, p. 84, Evahir-i Şaban 948 (10–18 December 1541), doc. 15, pp. 88–9, 4 Sefer 951 (27 April 1544), doc. 21, p. 93, 2 Cemaziülâhur 955 (9 July 1548), doc. 34, p. 102, 23 Recep 961 (24 January 1554), doc. 39, pp. 105–6, 14 Muharrem 946 (13 November 1556) (same woman as in doc. 9). Sophia Laiou has noted that in most of the cases she looked at involving Orthodox women in the *kadı* courts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women appeared in person in court, Laiou, Sophia, “Christian women in an Ottoman world: interpersonal and family cases brought before the *Shari’a* courts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (cases involving the Greek

described as of Russian origin, of medium height, with wide-spaced eyebrows, dark hazel eyes, fair skinned and with the big toe of her right foot suppurating,³⁶ or the slave manumitted by the Jewish slave dealer Sara in 1678 who was described as of medium height, detached eyebrows, blue eyes, with a dot on her right ear, and of Russian origin.³⁷

While acceptable visibility was inextricably related to honour for free women, this was not the case for a female slave whose honour was not her own but was provided to her by her owner. If she behaved in a way thought morally reprehensible by society, then this moral reprehensibility lay not with her but with her owner. She could thus be displayed in any way her owner wished, for she herself had no say in the matter and no honour to protect. In much the same way, her sexuality “was not hers to loose, withhold or contest”, but was at the free disposal of her owner.³⁸

Under these circumstances the only choice which a slave woman could make was to abscond, as the heroines of various nineteenth-century Ottoman novels did, Dilber, the heroine of Sami Paşazade Sezai’s novel *Sergüzeşt* (Adventure), for example, taking flight³⁹ as did Peyman in Fatma Aliye’s *Muhaderat* (Memoirs). Flight could end in success and enforcing the return of slaves who had absconded proved difficult. In the sixteenth century female slaves in the Ottoman Balkans fled into territory under the control of Venice or Dubrovnik. In 1560 two female slaves of a *zaim* (holder of a large military land grant) in Mostar fled to a village under the jurisdiction of Dubrovnik. Despite being pursued and despite an official request for the return of the slaves, the government of Dubrovnik refused.⁴⁰ In the same period the *sancak beyi* (head of an administrative division) of Mora (the Morea) reported that female slaves were fleeing by boat to Venetian territory where, according to reports, they were converted and

community”, in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History*, Amila Buturović and Irvin Cemil Schick (eds.) (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 258.

36 Günalan, Rifat, et. al (ed.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil (H. 987–988/M. 1579–1580)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 693, p. 330, Evail-i Rebiülâhır 988 (16–25 May 1580).

37 Ben-Naeh, Yaron, “Blond, tall, with honey-colored eyes: Jewish ownership of slaves in the Ottoman empire”, *Jewish History*, 20/3–4 (2006), p. 320.

38 Zilfi, Madeline C., *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 205.

39 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, pp. 135–6.

40 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1993), no. 827, p. 374, 6 Cemaziülâhır 967 (4 March 1560), order to the *beys* of Dubrovnik.

provided with money. Despite requests from their owners for their return, such slaves were not handed over.⁴¹

Apart from the rather drastic, and dangerous, choice of flight, a female slave had no other way of controlling her fate and no choice over the work she was required to perform or the level of her exposure to public gaze, this being the business of her owner alone. The purpose for which she was bought could in itself require high levels of public visibility, as was the case for slaves sold on the markets as singers and dancers.⁴² Ethiopian slave girls, “tawny as ambregris, who set hearts aflutter” according to Evliya Çelebi, danced in the coffee houses in Mecca, a city where women were known for their grace and beauty, moving “with gaits like skipping partridges”.⁴³ Once purchased, a female slave could be employed in ways that were illegal or immoral, such as prostitution, begging,⁴⁴ stealing, the slave dealer Bitli Ömer, for example, using his female slaves in 1732 to steal from private houses and from the *hamam*⁴⁵ and thuggery, as in the case of Abdullah, the sultan’s ex-chief coffee maker, and his brother who were exiled to Cyprus in the mid eighteenth century for having had “their female slave beat up a woman who was obstinate enough to resist the idea of letting the brothers’ sewage run through her garden”.⁴⁶

Black female slaves were used for prostitution in Egypt in the nineteenth century⁴⁷ and owners could in essence act as pimps, in much the same way as slave owners did in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro when female slaves were sent “on assignments by their mistresses”. Such slaves “often doubled as

41 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)*, no. 1664, pp. 721–2, 14 Rebiülevvel 968 (3 December 1560).

42 Sahillioğlu, “Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa”, pp. 140, 153 and chart of sales of slave girls trained in singing and dancing on p. 155. Sahillioğlu notes that “If the singers were not sold to various foreign or Ottoman dignataries, then they worked for their masters and sang at weddings and similar occasions and thus brought in money”, p. 153.

43 Dankoff, Robert and Sooyong Kim (eds. and trans.), *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (London: Eland, 2011), p. 361.

44 Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrî’de İstanbul Hayatı (1495–1591)* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1988), no. 4, p. 139.

45 Erdem, Y. Hakan, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its Demise, 1800–1909* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996), pp. 34–5.

46 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 35. The brothers were recalled from exile in spring 1758.

47 Lane, Edward William, *An Account of the Manners and the Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871), vol. II, p. 91.

house servants during the day or when business was slow".⁴⁸ A high palace official and former head of the armourers, Halil Ağa, known as Forsa Halil, set his female slaves to work as prostitutes in sixteenth-century Istanbul⁴⁹ and slave dealers in the same period often ran what amounted to prostitution rings using slave girls handed over to them by their owners to be re-sold. The dealers then delivered the slaves to soldiers and men of that ilk who, after a few days, returned them. The dealers then handed the slaves back to their owners claiming that they had been unable to find a buyer.⁵⁰ Slave dealers also rented out female slaves in places such as inns where, for a small price, the customer took possession of the slave for the duration of his stay and then on departure returned her to the dealer.⁵¹ In the first half of the seventeenth century slave traders, often female, delivered slave women whom they had taken from their owners on the pretext of re-sale, to the Polish and Moldavian embassies or to other rich non-Muslims for a small fee. After a few days the slaves were returned to the dealers who in turn handed them back to the owners claiming that they had been unable to re-sell them.⁵²

Such activities were not acceptable to the state which took measures to punish those involved in prostituting female slaves. Halil Ağa was imprisoned in 1595,⁵³ and the practice of dealers trading out slaves for short-term prostitution was banned in 1583,⁵⁴ even if unsuccessfully for in the *narh* register for 1640 the number of slave dealers officially allowed to trade was reduced from over 100 to 60 and dealers were to be held collectively responsible for contraventions committed by any one of them in an attempt to prevent such prostituting of female slaves.⁵⁵ The stance adopted by the Ottoman government mirrored similar responses in fifteenth-century Valencia where the state banned owners from prostituting their slaves, without apparently great success. Blumenthal gives an example of one woman, Ursola Vinader, the widow

48 Lauderdale Graham, Sandra, "Making the private public: a Brazilian perspective", *Journal of Women's History*, 15/1 (2003), p. 30.

49 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, 2 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), vol. II, p. 546.

50 Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrî*, no. 8, p. 46.

51 Ahmet Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı, 1553-1591* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1935), no. 42, pp. 63-4, Şaban 991 (August-September 1583).

52 Kütükoğlu, Mübahat S. (ed.), *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), pp. 257-8.

53 Selaniki, *Tarih*, II, p. 546.

54 Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrî*, no. 8, p. 46; Ahmet Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı, 1553-1591*, no. 42, pp. 63-4, Şaban 991 (August-September 1583).

55 Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, pp. 257-8.

of an innkeeper, who in effect acted as a madam for a group of slave prostitutes and for whom this was apparently her sole main income.⁵⁶ The “illicit use of slaves” was also grounds for the removal of female slaves from their owners in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, at least in theory.⁵⁷

The Ottoman state was concerned about morality and about the treatment of female slaves more generally issuing orders to prevent the use of female slaves “in order to insult the religion of Islam” by unmarried Jewish and other non-Muslim men, and the sale by some slave dealers “due to unchecked and unconcealed covetousness” of pregnant female slave girls to Jews and other non-Muslims.⁵⁸ Protection was extended to Muslim female slaves who were re-sold, an illegal act given that such slaves had converted to Islam and could thus not be sold. Such slaves had recourse to the courts. In the early sixteenth century Gülbahar bint Abdullah took her mistress, Ayşe Hatun bint Sanduk, to court in Üsküdar claiming that Ayşe Hatun had freed her (a claim for which she had documentary proof) but that when the time of severance came the manumission had been denied and instead she was sold for 2,500 *akçe* to Karaca ibn Abdullah. Given that she had converted and was a Muslim, she could not be re-sold.⁵⁹ Muslim female slaves sold illegally could also appeal to the sultan. In August 1759, the female slave of the Eflak *kapıkethüdası* (representative of a provincial governor) became a Muslim, but her master nevertheless sold her, despite her protestations and his attempting to beat her into submission. The slave fled and petitioned the sultan who responded by having the *kapıkethüdası* killed.⁶⁰ The state also severely punished men who led female slaves “astray” (*ayartmak*), often a euphemism for sexual abuse, an offence which could lead to the galleys as was the case in 1560, for example, with a non-Muslim called

56 Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, p. 89. For details of this woman’s activities, see pp. 89–92.

57 Lauderdale Graham, Sandra, “Slavery’s impasse: slave prostitutes, small-time mistresses and the Brazilian law of 1871”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33/4 (1991), 669–94, and Soares, Luiz Carlos, *Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (University of London Institute of Latin American Studies Occasional Papers 17) (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1988), pp. 22–4.

58 85 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1040–1041 (1042)/1630–1631 (1632))*, no. 421, pp. 255–6, Ottoman text, no. 421 [263], p. 175, Gurre-i Muharrem 1041 (30 July 1631).

59 Seng, “Fugitives and factotums”, p. 143.

60 Şemdanizade, *Şem’dânî-zâde Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi Mür’it-tevarih*, 4 vols., M. Münir Aktepe (ed.) (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976–1981), vol. II A (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1978), p. 34, Zilhicce 1172 (August 1759).

İstemad, who had many times created disorder (*fesad*) among the population of a village in the region of Tekfurdağı and had made a female slave pregnant.⁶¹

While female slaves were thus afforded a certain protection by the state, government concern was not in essence with the slave per se but with moral and social order. Halil Ağa was arrested not so much for the use to which he put his female slaves as for the social unrest his behaviour caused and the complaints against him from the *mahalle* population.⁶² Leading female slaves astray or kidnapping them, as was the case, for example, with the female slave of Yusuf Çavuş, plucked from his house together with other goods in 1618,⁶³ or the slaves of Hadice from Pilevne who presented her complaint in Istanbul in 1646 that her house had been raided by *hayduts* (bandits), that she herself had fled and her female slaves had been seized, imprisoned and threatened by the *hayduts* who ordered them to find their mistress,⁶⁴ were offences against property. Protecting female slaves from the clutches of non-Muslim men was the required action of a good Muslim ruler, again related to social moral order. Provided an owner's use of his/her female slave did not transgress the bounds of what society found acceptable and did not cause unrest, then the state had no reason to or interest in interfering in an owner's use of his/her own property.

The level of an owner's ability to use a female slave for purposes to which it would have been quite unacceptable to put any free woman, the lack of the slave's control over the use to which she was put, and the non-existence of honour in this context, are clearly demonstrated by the case of Gülistan bint Abdullah. In 1671 Mustafa ibn Zefer, a sailor from Istanbul then residing in Kandiye (modern Heraklion) on Crete, borrowed 150 *esedi guruş* from a Venetian sea captain called Bernardo, son of Martinico. As a pledge for the loan, Mustafa handed over to Bernardo his female slave, Gülistan bint Abdullah, of Russian origin, described as having wide-spaced eyebrows, with blue-grey eyes, and of medium height. This transaction was registered in the

61 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (966–968/1558–1560), no. 706, p. 318, 22 Rebiülahir 967 (21 January 1560). For other examples of offenders being sent to the galleys for leading female slaves astray, see 6 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, no. 669, p. 369, and no. 670, p. 369, 28 Cemaziülahir 972 (31 January 1565), 12 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (978–979/1570–72), 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1996), no. 870, pp. 90–1, 19 Rebiülahir 979 (10 September 1571), 12 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, no. 1056, p. 186, 3 Zilkade 979 (18 March 1572).

62 Selaniki, *Tarih*, II, p. 546.

63 82 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (1026–1027/1617–1618), no. 276, pp. 185–6, Ottoman text, no. 276 [98], p. 133 [44], 11 Cemaziülevvel 1027 (6 May 1618).

64 Tulum, *Mühimme Defteri* 90, no. 474, pp. 391–2, Evasıt-1 Zilkade 1056 (18–28 December 1646).

kadı court.⁶⁵ The name of the slave shows that she was a Muslim while the man she was handed over to clearly was not. It would presumably have been totally unacceptable for Mustafa to hand over his daughter to a non-Muslim sea captain in this way and had he done the same with a servant, her family members would have objected to such treatment, the female servant's honour being an issue for her family. In this case, even though the slave was Muslim, she could be handed over to a non-Muslim male because her owner found this acceptable. The action clearly did not contravene any social morality or cause unrest, and the legality of the action is evident from the fact that the transaction was registered in the *kadı* court. Here honour was not an issue, for the slave woman simply did not have any, any honour related to her being dependent on the perception of her owner.

The Female Slave as Commodity

Before a female slave became a possession and a member of a household, she was a commodity, a state to which she could at any moment return. In consequence slave women, by their very nature, were of necessity highly visible, for to sell a commodity required visibility both physical and by reputation. The fact that a female slave could move from the seclusion of the household or the protected visibility offered to her as an owner's possession, to market object to be viewed as part of a transaction of sale, and back, multiple times in some cases, White, for example, referring to a slave who was "a superior cook and sempstress" but who "on account of incorrigible temper" had been sold 13 times,⁶⁶ meant that her visibility was always mutable.

As a commodity female slaves were visible as they were transported to slave markets, led as prisoners-of-war from the Balkans or traded from the Caucasus or from North Africa and further south. Slave dealers transported slaves across the Mediterranean from Istanbul to Egypt,⁶⁷ such as Şemsigül who was taken

65 TAH, sicil 3, ff. 25–6, no. 63, 12 Rebiülahir 1082 (18 August 1671).

66 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, II, p. 282. White also noted that "It is no uncommon practice with young and wealthy libertines to purchase young women from the Circassian dealers in Tophana, or from those who buy women from the latter to educate and resell, and then, at the expiration of a few weeks, to send them to Yessir Bazari [Esir pazarı] in order to procure money for purchasing other novelties", II, p. 284.

67 Toledano, Ehud, "Shemsigül: a Circassian slave in mid-nineteenth-century Cairo", in *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, Edmund Burke III (ed.) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 66.

to Egypt with around 13 white female and two white male slaves and who later took her slave dealer, Deli Mehmed, to court in 1854.⁶⁸ Slave dealers also transported black slaves, male and female, into Egypt from the south,⁶⁹ such dealers attempting on occasion to avoid payment of tax on their merchandise. In late 1560 and early 1561, merchants importing black male and female slaves, apparently came to some sort of private arrangement with officials of the Egyptian treasury and, instead of paying the required tax at the places where tax was levied, fought with the Ottoman state officials who attempted to collect it.⁷⁰ Such actions were clearly highly visible, and even if the slave women were not actually standing in sight, they would certainly have been visible by association. Black female slaves from Tunis and Tripoli were shipped from North Africa to Istanbul.⁷¹ Circassian slaves were also transported to Istanbul along the Black Sea. According to Toledano, in 1872–1873 “most steamers . . . were regularly transporting Circassian slaves from Trabzon, Samsun, and other Black Sea entrepôts to Istanbul.”⁷² The great grandmother of the Turkish writer Nahid Sırrı Örik was captured and brought with other slave girls from the Caucasus to Istanbul in the early 1800s where she was sold as a slave.⁷³ Various heroines of nineteenth-century Ottoman novels and short stories were also seized as little girls in the Caucasus and then transported to Istanbul for sale, such as Nuridil in Emin Nihad Bey’s *Faik Bey ile Nuridil Hanım’ın Sergüzeşti* (The adventure of Faik Bey and Nuridil Hanım),⁷⁴ Vuslat, the heroine of Rezaizade Mahmud Ekrem’s novel of the same name,⁷⁵ and Dilber in Sami Paşazade Sezai’s *Sergüzeşt*.⁷⁶ Abdülhak Hamid [Tarhan]’s poem “Validem” (My Mother), written in 1913, begins with his mother’s capture in the Caucasus as a little girl and her being brought to Istanbul to be sold, an event which had

68 Toledano, “Shemsigül: a Circassian slave in mid-nineteenth-century Cairo”, pp. 59–74.

69 Baer, “Slavery in nineteenth century Egypt”, pp. 424–6.

70 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (966–968/1558–1560), no. 1658, p. 719, 17 Cemaziülevvel 968 (3 February 1561); 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (966–968/1558–1560), no. 1659, p. 719, 14 Rebiülevvel 968 (3 December 1560).

71 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, II, p. 284.

72 Toledano, Ehud R., *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), p. 33.

73 Örik, Nahid Sırrı, *Eski Zaman Kadınları Arasında. Hatıralar* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1958), p. 8.

74 Parlatır, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, p. 65.

75 Parlatır, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, p. 72.

76 Parlatır, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, p. 135.

apparently happened about 80 years previously. The journey on “a small boat with a rotten sail” took her to Trabzon, Sinop, Samsun and finally Istanbul.⁷⁷

Slave women were also highly visible while being moved around locally, from one market to another or along the streets of Istanbul, for example. Şemsiğül was taken by a slave dealer called Timur to be sold at the Tanta fair,⁷⁸ the most important in Egypt in this period.⁷⁹ Two janissaries followed a female slave trader and her two white slaves down the Divan Yolu in Istanbul in 1812, shouting comments and then, irritated by the slave dealer’s insistence that they should either buy the women or leave them alone, stabbing them.⁸⁰

The visibility of slaves on the market varied from complete exposure in public slave markets to the more private display within a slave dealer’s house, or presentation by a slave dealer within the *konak* of a potential buyer. Women from the Balkans were displayed and sold on the markets in sixteenth,⁸¹ seventeenth⁸² and nineteenth centuries,⁸³ and indeed, “from all parts of the world”, according to Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, who was in Istanbul in 1597.⁸⁴ According to Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza Bey, Circassian and Georgian slaves, both male and female were sold in Istanbul in the Avrat Pazarı and male and female black slaves in the Tiryaki Çarşısı which was located in the Esir pazarı (slave market) until the slave markets were removed after abolition.⁸⁵ White, however, noted that in the mid-nineteenth century white Circassian female slaves did not go to the slave market in Istanbul, but were taken to Tophane where the Circassian merchants “take up their abode, and may be seen lounging about the coffee-houses”. The Ottoman dealers went to Tophane and purchased “on speculation”. The slaves were then transferred

77 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, pp. 169–70.

78 Toledano, “Şemsiğül: a Circassian slave in mid-nineteenth-century Cairo”, p. 63.

79 Toledano, “Şemsiğül: a Circassian slave in mid-nineteenth-century Cairo”, pp. 63–4.

80 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târîhi*, II, p. 913. The janissaries were subsequently hanged for this attack.

81 de Nicolay, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia*, p. 129.

82 Lithgow, William, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures, and Painfull Peregrinations of Long Nineteene Yeares Travayles, from Scotland, to . . .* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1623), pp. 136–7.

83 Madden, R. Robert, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1824, 1825, 1826 and 1827*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), vol. I, p. 7.

84 Fresne-Canaye, Phillippe du, *Le voyage du Levant de Philippe du Fresne-Canaye (1573)* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1897), pp. 252–3.

85 Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza Bey, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı*, Ali Şükrü Çoruk (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), pp. 269–70.

to the speculator's house where they were trained and raised.⁸⁶ Traders in white slaves in the nineteenth century also conducted business in the houses of the wealthy.⁸⁷ Female slaves could also be on display while moving around on the streets with their dealers. Garnett notes that "a lady with slaves to dispose of dresses and otherwise "gets them up" well, and drives them out in order to advertise them".⁸⁸ Parading slaves around the streets was a way of picking up customers. In Ahmed Midhat's novel *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi), Rakım Efendi while going one day from Tophane to Beyoğlu saw and liked a Circassian slave girl who was with a slave dealer whom he met in the road. Rakım Efendi decided to buy her and although he did not have enough money on him, he gave what he had to the slave trader, made an arrangement to pay the remainder at a later date, and took the slave away with him.⁸⁹

While "it was private homes and private dealings that sustained the Middle Eastern slave trade and shaped the norms and by ways of servile employment",⁹⁰ visibility was a common feature in all such exchanges. A slave dealer's house became in this instance an at least semi public space, as a selling point for commodities, and the appearance in a *konak* was in order to display if not to the eyes of the public mass, at least to people before whom a woman would not normally be paraded or for whom she would not be required to display. Fynes Moryson, described how buyers "if they will, may take them [captives for sale on the market] into a house, and there see them naked, and handle them (as wee handle beasts to know their fatnesse and strength)".⁹¹

As merchandise put up for sale on the market, a female slave's visibility was an intrinsic, and permissible, part of the process. She was an object to be viewed, handled and ogled. Female slaves could be made up to attract customers, a practice banned by Selim I.⁹² Such a ban was clearly not that effective for

86 White, *Three Years in Constantinople*, II, p. 287.

87 Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*, p. 70.

88 Garnett, Lucy M.J., *The Women of Turkey and their Folk-Lore* (London: David Nutt, 1893), p. 411.

89 Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, in *Bütün Eserleri. Romanlar 1*, Kazım Yetiş, Necat Birinci and M. Fatih Andı (eds.) (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), pp. 139–40.

90 Zilfi, Madeline C., "Servants, slaves, and the domestic order in the Ottoman Middle East", *Hawwa*, 2/1 (2004), p. 7.

91 Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* (London: John Beale, 1617), p. 264.

92 Yücel, Yaşar and Selami Pulaha (eds.), *1. Selim Kanunnameleri (1512–1520)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 65.

several centuries later the anonymous author of *Risale-i Garibe* (The Treatise of Strange Things) was cursing the slave traders who presented their slaves as better than they were by painting their faces.⁹³ Made up or not, the slave women were objects which could be ogled by those who could not afford to buy but came to look, and who, according to Latifi, who died c. 1582–1583, “had no other option than to go to bed every night alone and grasping their knees until morning”.⁹⁴ The behaviour of such men who, posing as customers, appeared every day at the slave markets and examined the goods was roundly condemned by the author of *Risale-i Garibe*.⁹⁵

This level of exposure certainly struck western observers, who often compared the sale of slaves to that of horses. According to Nicolas de Nicolay, Christian slaves of all ages and both sexes were sold in the slave market in Istanbul “in the same manner as they sell horses”, those wishing to buy a slave examining “the eyes, the teeth and all parts of the body. They even make them strip and walk to see better the natural defects that they may have”. De Nicolay commented that he himself had seen a young Hungarian girl aged around 13 or 14, stripped and examined three times in less than an hour in the corner of the market.⁹⁶ John Sanderson, in Istanbul at the end of the sixteenth century, described the slave market in Istanbul in much the same terms: “Heare likewise they sell many Christian slaves of all sects and adge, in manner as they sell thier horses, lookinge them in the eyes, mouth, and all other parts”.⁹⁷ William Lithgow, in Istanbul at the beginning of the seventeenth century, used the same analogy when describing the sale of slaves who were sold “as Horses and other Beasts are with us”.⁹⁸ For Giovanni Careri, in Istanbul at the end of the seventeenth century, “the manner of selling them is odd; for after praying for the grand seignior, the seller holds the slave that is to be sold, by the end of a cloath, and on the other side, the crier goes proclaiming the price. He that has a mind to buy, uncovers the slave’s face, and feels him or her, in several parts of the body, as we do in buying horses or asses”.⁹⁹

93 Develi, Hayati (ed.), *XVIII. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair Risâle-i Garîbe* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998), p. 40.

94 Latifi, *Evsâf-ı İstanbul*, Nermin Suner (Pekin) (ed.) (Istanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977), p. 40.

95 Develi, *Risâle-i Garîbe*, p. 40.

96 de Nicolay, *Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia*, p. 129.

97 Sanderson, John, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602*, Sir William Foster (ed.) (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931), pp. 78–9.

98 Lithgow, *Discourse*, p. 136.

99 Careri, John Francis Gemelli, “A voyage round the world by Dr John Francis Gemelli Careri in six parts. Part I containing the most remarkable things he saw in Turkey”, in *A Collection*

Philippe du Fresne-Canaye spoke of the slave market where a person who wanted to buy slave girls “lifts the veil which they have over their faces and to see if they are made up or painted or not, they spit in their faces, then looking in their mouths testing and counting their teeth to see if they are crooked or rotten or broken. After this they come to the arms and the hands and then to the legs and sliding downwards until the rump, examining the most secret parts”.¹⁰⁰ Lithgow accompanied to the slave market a French master gunner called Nerack, who wished, for motives somewhat less pious than he presented, to rescue a slave from Ottoman slavery. According to Lithgow’s account the females they were interested in “were strip’d stark naked before our eyes”.¹⁰¹ Robert Madden, a doctor in the Ottoman empire in the 1820s, spoke of the slave market in Istanbul where women were brought and sold “like cattle, inspected by every scoundrel who wears a turban, and submitted to scrutiny of every virago, who affects to be a judge of slaves”.¹⁰² He wrote of the Greek women there being “subjected to the gaze of every licentious soldier, who chose to examine her features, or her form, on the pretence of being a buyer” and gave an account of a young Greek girl whom he saw “brought forth to exhibit her gait and figure to an old Turk, whose glances manifested the motive for her purchase; he twisted her elbows, he pulled her ankles, he felt her ears, examined her mouth, and then her neck; and all this while the slave merchant was extolling her shape and features, protesting that she was only turned of thirteen, that she neither snored nor started in her sleep, and that, in every respect, she was warranted”.¹⁰³ In the late nineteenth century, one British observer was much concerned about the exposure of female slaves in the market place, commenting that “white and beautiful virgins are, at Adrianople, Tophana, and notably at Pera, under the very eyes of the British Ambassador, exposed, nude, to the unhallowed gaze of filthy Turkish libertines”.¹⁰⁴

Although one can of course question the voracity of western accounts, carrying as they did their own baggage of perception and influenced both by their own conceptions shaped by their own societies and by a far from in-depth understanding of the workings of Ottoman society, here in particular

of Voyages and Travels Some Now First Printed from Original Manuscripts Others Now First Published in English in Six Volumes, John Churchill (ed.) (London, 1732), vol. IV, p. 72.

100 Fresne-Canaye, *Le voyage du Levant*, pp. 252–3.

101 Lithgow, *Discourse*, p. 137.

102 Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, 1, p. 5.

103 Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, 1, p. 7.

104 *Breakers Ahead! Or the Doomed Ship, the Determined Captain and the Docile Crew. A Review of Lord Beaconsfield’s Policy* (London: G.J. Palmer, 1878), pp. 8–9.

in relation to the role of Ottoman slavery, the fact remains that when it came to the female slave as commodity there was a level of acceptable female visibility, and indeed tactility, inconceivable for any other Ottoman woman or in any other circumstance. The slave woman as commodity was at the extreme end of the range of female visibility in Ottoman society. Even women regarded as outcast from society were not exposed in this way.¹⁰⁵ When Selim III hanged six prostitutes about the various gates of Istanbul as an example to the others, he was careful to have their bodies put in sacks first.¹⁰⁶

As has been noted elsewhere in this volume, the Ottoman empire exhibited significant regional variations and, hardly surprisingly for an empire which last over 600 years, considerable changes period to period. This said, however, it is still possible to arrive at various general conclusions in relation to the visibility of the female slave in Ottoman public space. A female slave was always potentially 'exposable', her status could change from possession to commodity and back, thus making her visibility always mutable, and when not a market commodity, she was a possession, classed under sharia law as "property with a voice" (*mal-ı natık*), like livestock, as opposed to "mute property" (*mal-ı samit*), that is real estate or moveable property.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, a female slave was an integral part of Ottoman society, firmly imbedded within the social fabric. She could be a highly respected figure, central to the *harem* of the household in which she lived and of which she was a member. Women bought little slave girls and groomed them to become the wives of their sons and the mothers and grandmothers of men from the upper echelons of society such as Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan and Nahid Sırrı Örik were of slave origin. Other female slaves in the same household could be simple servants, cooks or perform some other work for the household. What made such women visible, or not, was related to the role they performed, just as it was for free women. Nevertheless, as the owning of slave women was in itself a marker of status, the display of slaves as attendants with their mistresses was significant, both as allowing

105 See Ebru Boyar's chapter, "An imagined moral community: Ottoman female public presence, honour and marginality", in this volume.

106 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadika-ı Vekâyi'*, Adnan Baycar (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1998), pp. 203–4.

107 For the legal status of slaves in Islamic law, see Brunsvig, R., "Abd", *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (eds.). Brill online, 2014. See also Marmon, Shaun, "Domestic slavery in the Mamluk empire: a preliminary sketch", in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, Shaun Marmon (ed.) (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), pp. 1–24.

honourable mobility to the women they accompanied, and as signifiers of wealth and power, the slaves themselves being richly attired.

While slave women thus ranged in role from the highest to the lowest point on the social scale, and were often in most practical ways indistinguishable from the free women around them, they lacked an essential element in the establishment of permissible visibility: their own honour. Without honour as a commodity, female slaves were also devoid of their own honour as possessions, any honour attributed to them coming from that bestowed on them by their owners. A female could thus hold a position of honour in the household, be honourable by association with the household, be protected by the honour of her owner, or she could be used dis-honourably, made to work as a prostitute or handed over as a pledge for a loan, in the case of *Gülstan bint Abdullah*. Even if protected by the honour of the household, such honour could be swiftly removed, and the slave returned to the market, a fate reflected in nineteenth-century novels and short stories, where Nuridil in Emin Nihad Bey's *Faik Bey ile Nuridil Hanım'ın Sergüzeşti*,¹⁰⁸ for example, found herself back on the market, as did *Vuslat*, the heroine of Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem's novel of the same name, who was sold off promptly by the mother of the hero, Muhsin Bey, when she saw that he had fallen in love with the slave,¹⁰⁹ and *Dilber* in Sami Paşazade Sezai's *Sergüzeşt*, returned to the slave dealer for re-sale, also as a result love between the slave and the young man of the *konak* to which the family was opposed.¹¹⁰ It was this lack of honour, and the dependency on an owner for an honour which could be bestowed or withdrawn, that made a female slave always potentially exposable in a way a free woman was not. Provided such exposure or the use to which the slave was put did not contravene any specific law, cause any breach in order or provoke hostile social reaction, the state did not interfere and the exposure of the female remained a matter for the owner or, in the case of sale, of the slave dealer.

108 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, pp. 67–8.

109 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, p. 72.

110 Parlatur, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik*, pp. 136–7.

Frivolity and Flirtation

Edith Gülçin Ambros

The shovel was broken on the roof.
The girl fell in love with the boy.
When the boy said, “Flee! Flee!”
The girl hugged the boy.¹

ANONYMOUS

Here, in this little Turkish folk poem of just four lines (*mani*), we have an illicit flirtation and its result in a nutshell. The setting is the Ottoman empire in the 1880s. There are more poems about such flirtation. Yet illicit contact between the sexes was prohibited in the Ottoman empire and the state did all it could to prevent opportunities for it in public space. This study investigates the discrepancy between this prohibition and reality as expressed in literature. Our goal is to contribute to a better understanding of the degree of seclusion Ottoman women experienced in public space. We shall do this by concentrating on the venues of opportunities for flirtatious behaviour.

We included both Ottoman folk literature and high-culture (*divan*) literature in our study. We did not restrict it either to a period in the empire’s history or to a geographical section of it. However, due to the sources used for this study, our present findings refer mainly to Istanbul and Anatolia. Neither did we restrict the study with respect to religion, ethnicity or social class. We have not, however, included other languages than Turkish, such as Greek, Armenian, Serbian, Bosnian, Arabic, which were also spoken and written in the Ottoman empire. This is an initial study of the subject and comprehensiveness of the whole Ottoman empire or representativeness of a section of it must be left to further studies.

Basically, Ottoman urban and rural space had two venues of opportunities for frivolity in common. One of these was the city neighbourhood (*mahalle*)²

1 Kunos, Ignaz, “Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 4 (1890), p. 37. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2 On the characteristics and function of the Ottoman *mahalle*, with the *Ankara Şerîye Sicilleri* as the main illustrative source, see Ergenç, Özer, “Osmanlı Şehrindeki ‘Mahalle’nin İşlev ve Nitelikleri Üzerine”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 4 (1984), 69–78.

and the village. The inhabitants of an Ottoman *mahalle* formed a close-knit community of people usually, though not always, of the same religion or ethnicity.³ There were also *mahalles* of people who had the same profession. The *mahalle* was an administrative unit and its inhabitants not only knew and helped each other but were by law guarantors of each other (*müteselsilen kefil*).⁴ A space filled with people on such close terms could not but be a space where a certain degree of familiarity reigned. The situation was similar in a village; here, too, a community feeling arose from unity of religion, though here, too, there were instances when the adherents of more than one religion lived together.⁵ So the atmosphere in a village was similarly one of close acquaintanceship. Obviously therefore, it is problematic to say that the *mahalle* or the village is public space like, for example, the bazaar is. It has been suggested that the space of an Islamic *mahalle* should be described as a “semi-private space”.⁶ We find this a good suggestion and, therefore, shall call the space of both the *mahalle* and the village with its immediate vicinity “semi-private space”. At the same time, we note that the segregation of various groups in *mahalles* was somewhat less strict in Ottoman times than in pre-Ottoman Islamic cities.⁷

The houses in villages were not always close to each other, but in the city the narrowness of many streets⁸ reduced the distance between the houses; even more so when there were enclosed balcony-like projections (*cumbas*) with

On a similar study on Bursa, with the *Bursa Şerîye Sicilleri* as the main source, see Düzbakar, Ömer, “Osmanlı Döneminde Mahalle ve İşlevleri”, *Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 4/5 (2003), 97–108. For detailed information on the *mahalle* structure of Niğde and Kırşehir in the sixteenth century see Metin, Rafet, “xvi. Yüzyılda Niğde ve Kırşehir Sancaklarında Mahalle Yapılanması”, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, 20 (2009), 45–58.

3 For example, it appears from an imperial edict dated 13 July 1607 (18 Rebiülevvel 1016) sent to the *kadı* of Ankara that there was no Jewish *mahalle* in this city and the Jews lived in various *mahalles* in it; see Ergenç, “Osmanlı Şehrindeki ‘Mahalle’nin İşlev ve Nitelikleri Üzerine”, p. 71. On mixed neighbourhoods with Jews in Istanbul see Rozen, Minna, “Public space and private space among the Jews of Istanbul in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”, *Turcica*, 30 (1998), 337–41.

4 Ergenç, “Osmanlı Şehrindeki ‘Mahalle’nin İşlev ve Nitelikleri Üzerine”, p. 73.

5 On Jews living in mixed villages along the Bosphorus see Rozen, “Public space and private space”, pp. 339–40.

6 See footnote 9 in the “Introduction” of this volume. For a fundamental discussion of the subject see the introductory section “Public, private, and semiprivate: Islamic and Ottoman concepts”, in Ayalon, Yaron, “Ottoman urban privacy in light of disaster recovery”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43/3 (2011), pp. 514–18.

7 Ergenç, “Osmanlı Şehrindeki ‘Mahalle’nin İşlev ve Nitelikleri Üzerine”, p. 70.

8 On the problem of narrow streets even in a late period see Çakmak, Biray, “Geç Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Afet Yönetimi: 1894 Büyük Uşak Yangını”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi*

latticed windows looking unto the street.⁹ This made it easy to follow what the neighbours opposite or people in the street did. The houses were typically constructed so as to guarantee the intimacy by reason of consanguinity (*mahremiyet*) of the family. Latticed windows looking onto the street allowed people who were technically in private space, that is, at home, to see what went on outside but they themselves remained invisible to people on the street. But, provided the window was open behind the lattice, they were audible to anyone outside. And they themselves could, of course, hear what went on outside very well. The combination of such communal acquaintanceship, the frequent close proximity of the houses, and the errands to run in the vicinity of the house, as well as the farming work in the villages,¹⁰ gave women opportunities for illicit contact with the other sex.

The other venue of opportunities for flirting in both urban and rural space was open natural space. There were a great many gardens even in the centre of Istanbul, not to speak of the villages on its outskirts, for example along the Bosphorus. There were also large public gardens and pleasure grounds (*mesires*).¹¹ So there was no lack of natural space in Istanbul. Rural towns and villages were, of course, surrounded by such space. Men and women can come across each other repeatedly in open natural space, by chance or tacit agreement, because it is harder to police it. As for public gardens and pleasure grounds, they combine the advantage of natural open space with that of a place of *leisure*. On outings lasting several hours if not a whole day, women were not only visible but had a leisurely time not comparable to that when they did farming work. Nor was their time to be accounted for as it was when they went on an errand. And their manners could be more relaxed than when in crowds during official festivities or in the bazaar. We would argue that the factor of leisure was very important. On such outings women were not only visible and had the occasion to look around but also a reasonable amount of time to do so at their ease. In other words, such advantages could lead

Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi, 15 (2011), pp. 65–6. On the same unresolved problem in Istanbul see Türesay, Özgür, “L’Istanbul du début du xx^e siècle au prisme eurocentrique: L’urbanisme et la Civilisation selon Ebüzziya Tevfik (1849–1913)”, *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 6/1 (2011), pp. 8–12.

9 On similar projections in Jewish houses see Rozen, “Public space and private space”, pp. 342–3.

10 On the contribution of rural women to agricultural production see Dingeç, Emine, “Osmanlı Toplumunda Kadınların Üretime Katkıları”, *History Studies*, 2/1 (2010), pp. 12–14.

11 For a detailed account of the private and public gardens and pleasure grounds in and around Istanbul see Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 209–48.

to some frivolous and flirtatious behaviour. The pleasure grounds were also appreciated as places of leisure by men who camped there.¹² From the point of view of the dichotomy of public space and private space, their encampment thus became a sort of temporary semi-private space (whilst the inside of their tents was private space), in rough analogy to the encampment of nomads or semi-nomads.

The kind of flirtatious behaviour targeted in this study is the demure, modest kind, since opportunities for this type of behaviour would be more generally within the reach of more women than opportunities for immodest behaviour. For this reason, marginal groups such as dancers, singers, prostitutes, who were much less secluded than the main body of Ottoman women, are excluded.¹³ Because the targeted behaviour is not indecent, the court records would not reflect them unless the illicit contact ended in abduction, elopement reported as abduction, rape or the attempt thereof, or some other grave misdemeanor with which the families and possibly the neighbours could not deal among themselves in the private sphere.

There is also a methodological problem. The literary evidence comes almost totally from the mouth or pen of men. Besides, it is literary, not factual writing. So the flirtation related can have a male bias or be pure male fantasy. As a safeguard against including writings that have no grounding in reality, we have chosen the following conditions of inclusion. We have included only literary passages that comply with one or more of these.

1. The behaviour is depicted in very short anonymous folk poems of the genre *mani*. As far as tradition shows, *manis* were composed more often by women than by men. Also, they were generally composed on the spur of the moment. So, being improvised, there was little time for creating fantasies or falsehoods; of course, this lessens but does not rule out this eventuality.

12 On camping in Kağıthane in the seventeenth century see Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 231; on the camping of tradesmen in public pleasure grounds in Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century see Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri*, Kâzım Arısan and Duygu Arısan Günay (eds.) (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 298–9.

13 For such marginal women see Ebru Boyar's chapter, "An imagined moral community: Ottoman female public presence, honour and marginality", in this volume.

2. The behaviour is a recurrent motif in both minstrel and anonymous folk songs. Folk poetry being grounded in reality, such popularity enhances the likelihood that the motifs reflect life.
3. The behaviour is found in a minstrel's poems of such popularity that passages from these poems form part of anonymous folk songs. Such popularity enhances the likelihood that the minstrel's poems generally reflect life. For example, Karacaođlan is such an exceptional minstrel.
4. The behaviour is confirmed by edicts, travel writings or works of socially relevant humour.
5. The behaviour is likely because it has a routine setting.
6. The behaviour is likely because it is connected to religious or communal rules or values.

It will not have escaped the reader's attention that points 1–3 above refer to folk poetry, whereas high-culture literature is not mentioned at all. In most literatures one finds traces of women's flirtatious behaviour in lyric love poetry, not so in literary Ottoman love poetry (*gazels*). Women will be looked for in vain in this poetry or, perhaps more correctly, they are not recognizably present in *gazels* because these poems have a conventional homo-erotic and/or mystical tone. Women may be concealed as the subject of some of the *gazels* but there are no outward signs of this. So the coquettish glances and fickle behaviour that are constant themes of this poetry cannot be seen as evidence of female flirtatiousness, let alone as evidence of the flirtatious conduct of a specific woman. Needless to say, no female names occur.

Since literary poetry is basically the poetry of urban people, it would have addressed (primarily if not exclusively) urban women, had it openly addressed any woman at all. The evidence on possibilities of flirtation for urban women was therefore not gleaned from a multitude of samples from high-culture literature but collected by searching for exceptional instances. The samples found are too few to draw conclusions about the frequency of such behaviour by urban women in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. There is a general increase of evidence for the nineteenth century which implies an increase in such conduct.

Ottoman folk poetry is quite different. Village women and allusions to them and their behaviour, and quite often even their names, appear in lyric folk poetry. This love poetry is hetero-erotic in tone, with no hint whatsoever of homo-eroticism. The drawback here is that a good part of this poetry cannot be dated with precision. This is especially true, of course, of anonymous folk poetry. So no chronological graph of increase or decrease of evidence of flirtatious behaviour can be drawn.

The *Mahalle* and the Village

The urban *mahalle* and the village are the constant localities in which the urban and the rural women (with the exception of the nomads and semi-nomads) spent their lives. These localities share similarities, as already mentioned above, and the radius of action and the activities of the women living in them are comparable up to a degree. So the evidence from folk literature is applicable within limits to urban women. This is all the more feasible because folk literature was also the literature of the popular urban classes.

The urban women of the lower classes had errands to run outside their home, though the activities of most of them were more or less confined to the *mahalle* in which they lived. Water had to be fetched from the neighbourhood fountain, to name but one of their occupations in semi-private space, should they have no servants. The women of the upper classes had fewer obligations to see to in semi-private or public space, and were accompanied by servants if not eunuchs when doing so, therefore they had less opportunity for contacts with male strangers. Here is how, as told by Eremya Çelebi Kômürçiyân (d. 1695) in the seventeenth century, a young Albanian baker called Dimo fell in love with a Jewish girl called Mrkada in a *mahalle* in Istanbul.¹⁴ This story is possibly based on a real event.¹⁵ This is how it starts:

In Istanbul a Jewish girl.
 Their house was in the neighborhood of Phanar (*Fener*).
 Outside the city gate, in the area called Waterfront (*Yalı*)¹⁶
 That was their homestead since time immemorial.

At the Phanar Gate [there was] also a young man,
 By nation an Albanian, [by faith] Greek-Orthodox.
 His name was Dimo, with a long mustache.
 He used to sit there and sell bread.

He would deliver bread to the Jew's house
 And became acquainted with a girl.

14 Eremya Çelebi Kômürçiyân's Armeno-Turkish Poem "The Jewish Bride", Avedis K. Sanjian and Andreas Tietze (eds.) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981).

15 Eremya Çelebi Kômürçiyân's Armeno-Turkish Poem, pp. 39–40.

16 Eremya Çelebi Kômürçiyân's Armeno-Turkish Poem, p. 75, footnote 3 with the information that the *Yalı* area outside the Phanar Gate (*Fener Kapı*) had a mixed Greek and Jewish population.

He flirted with her by way of joking,
He chatted with pleasantries.

Every day Dimo would greet his friend.
He fell in love and would not part with her.
All the time his tears flowed abundantly.
The blood in their two hearts began to boil.

For, when the girl woke up from her sleep
She saw that the young man was waiting.
He started a song, like a huckster.
He ingeniously turned to coquetry.

The girl's mother said to Dimo:
Since your heart boils for Mrkada
Let me give her to you, come, become a Jew
And I [your] mother-in-law, [my] sweet son-in-law!¹⁷

To follow only the thread of their love affair, let us add that he refuses to become a Jew, convinces her to become a Christian instead, she “consents to be abducted”, they flee, she converts and they marry. As this intimates, the story also gives expression to Eremya Çelebi's underlying religious outlook.¹⁸

After the restrictive remarks on high-culture Ottoman literature regarding evidence on female flirtatious behaviour, our starting by giving as evidence an Armeno-Turkish poem about two non-Muslims (a literary minority on social minorities) instead of an Ottoman-Turkish poem on Muslims (literary and social majority) will have caused no surprise. Interesting as it is, this story is about a development that is exceptional for non-Muslims, too, and we have cited it mainly to point out that illicit contacts *might* arise through spatial closeness in *mahalles* generally.

Close neighbourly relations could lead to problems. Such intimacy led to the overlapping of the private and semi-private spheres of households, with the ensuing opportunities for illicit sexual contact. In the compilation made by Pertev Naili Boratav from the oldest and most reliable manuscripts and printed

17 Eremya Çelebi *Kömürjian's Armeno-Turkish Poem*, pp. 75–7, translation by Andreas Tietze.

18 There is also an anonymous Greek version and Eremya Çelebi wrote two versions, one in Turkish and the other in Armenian; for a comparison of these see Eremya Çelebi *Kömürjian's Armeno-Turkish Poem*, pp. 37–46.

collections of Nasreddin Hoca anecdotes, the oldest of which dates back to the sixteenth century, there is one on the danger of letting inexperienced young females go to help their neighbours. The anecdote reflects that this could have a disastrous effect on the girls' modesty and morality; in it Nasreddin Hoca's daughter loses her virginity.

The Hoca had a daughter. The deceased [that is, the Hoca] used to send her to the neighbours to perform some services. His wife said: "Sir! Don't send this girl everywhere, for she is an uncut musk-melon". The girl's chemise happened to open and he saw the girl's you know what. The Hoca said: "O woman! You called her an uncut musk-melon. Look! It is cut into two slices". And the woman said to the girl, "My daughter! Cover up your bundle!". Whereupon the Hoca said, "Wife! That is not a bundle, it has become an object to be used well".¹⁹

But help in the home could turn out to be a bad thing for the man involved, too. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Katip Osman tells how he fell in love with his second wife in the story of his life (*Sergüzeştname-i Katip Osman*, Book of Katip Osman's Experiences)²⁰ and how he married her, only to regret it bitterly. She was a divorced woman and former acquaintance of his, and she went in and out of his home as a neighbour and performed all kinds of services for him. This was an unconventional situation, notwithstanding that it was a neighbourly relationship, and one would not have expected the co-inhabitants of the *mahalle* to approve of it, but apparently they did not feel impelled to report immodest behaviour to the authorities. The *Sergüzeştname*, which was completed in 1736–37 (1149) is written in the high-culture narrative genre of the *mesnevi* (in couplets according to the Arabo-Persian prosody, *aruz*) and consists of 1014 couplets.²¹ His own words telling how she charmed him into marrying her are as follows:

I saw that a beautiful woman had come, the heart's desire,
Whose locks were like harmonious snakes.

19 Boratav, Pertev Naili, *Nasreddin Hoca* (Ankara: Edebiyatçılar Derneği Yayınları, 1996), pp. 169–70, anecdote no. 289. Although there is no specification as to which collection(s) this anecdote was taken from, it contains linguistic elements that point to an earlier rather than later Ottoman date.

20 On this work and its author see Gökçalp, Halûk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Manzum Sergüzeşt-nâmeler* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009), pp. 412–73.

21 Gökçalp, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Manzum Sergüzeşt-nâmeler*, p. 412.

When I saw her, I recognized her as an acquaintance,
An old acquaintance and a splendid one.

She had separated from her husband.
She had washed her hands of her marriage gift.
She came as a visitor and became a neighbour.
Those who saw her thought her a guest.

Day and night she was busy serving me,
Enduring all my troubles.

[...]

She could read and write, was a patron of the sciences and arts.
In the field of polish, you'd take her for a sovereign lioness.

[...]

At times she would show her beauty through her gait,
At times she would offer her union in conversation.

[...]

I saw this wouldn't do, in the end I married her.²²

[...]

Provided the author does not deviate too much from the truth in his autobiographical work, this unorthodox relationship may point to a leeway allowed in neighbourly contacts if they were conducted with decorum. For, after all, the inhabitants of a quarter (*mahalle*) were under the legal obligation to report anything irregular or unlawful that happened in it; the community was responsible for the conduct within it. For example, a decree to the *kadı* of Eyüp dated 25 May 1573 (23 Muharrem 981) is the result of such a report made by Muslims to the *kadı*. One of the complaints in it was that

in most of the shops, bread bakeries and gardens near the newly rebuilt noble medrese and beside the noble school in the Grand Mosque quarter (*mahalle*) there are non-Muslims who commit debauchery, play the flageolet, dance trampling on the ground and thereby are a hindrance to the business of the quarter, to the pious in their religious chanting, and to hearing the noble call to prayer.²³

22 Gökalp, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Manzum Sergüzeşt-nâmeler*, pp. 424–5.

23 [Altınay], Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı*, Abdullah Uysal (ed.) (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1987), pp. 60–1.

Playing the flageolet and dancing would indeed wreak havoc with the peace and quiet of the quarter. Much less was enough to excite the women in the *mahalles*, as we see from what Evliya Çelebi wrote in the seventeenth century in his prose *Seyahatname* (Book of Travels) about a kind of lute similar to the *tanbura*, which he calls “womanizers’ lute” (*zenpare sazı*):²⁴ “[. . . it] is a stringed instrument with a very ardent tone. When it is played in the neighbourhoods, our mothers and sisters and aunts are sure to assemble at the windows and look out”.²⁵

A serio-comic event related by Antoine Galland in his journal on his stay in Istanbul in 1672–1673 shows that the authorities were not negligent in policing sexual behaviour either.

Sunday, 6 August

I learned but a few days ago that the Resident of Holland having taken a country house in Üsküdar (*Scudaret*) close to the mansion of the Bostancı Başı,²⁶ and having moved there with his wife, his children and all his family, the Bostancı Başı having noticed all this contrivance, supposed, without considering that the Resident was married, that these were women whom he was taking with him to divert himself, and this scandalized him all the more because the Resident²⁷ was conducting them there in full daylight. Thinking thus, he sent a number of sergeants to seize them and punish them as he would think fit. The spokesman’s first request to the interpreter was to ask him who these whores were. At the same moment, the Lady Resident asks the interpreter what the man wants. As he did not dare tell her something that would offend her to the greatest degree, her daughter, who understood Turkish enough for this, told her the matter as it was. The Lady Resident, alight with the fire that suffused her face when she saw herself outraged by such an affront, threw herself at the beard of the person who was insulting her and thought she’d tear it out. At the same time, the servants threw themselves on the others and made them run away; some of them went after the

24 We could not ascertain whether this is the general name of this instrument or if only Evliya Çelebi calls it so.

25 Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 1, *Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, Robert Dankoff, Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (eds.) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), p. 345 (fol. 207b).

26 The commander of the imperial *bostancı* (“gardener”) corps.

27 Text: he.

daughter but could not catch her. The Resident was very surprised at this proceeding of the Bostancı Başı, and to make him feel the insult done him, went to him and menaced him with nothing less than demanding his head at the Porte in reparation.²⁸

Just as in the urban *mahalle*, women in the rural environment had errands to run outside their home. Here too, the daily fetching of water from the common fountain (*çeşme*) was one opportunity of looking and being looked at that might have led to more. In addition, they worked in the gardens and fields.²⁹ Although we give evidence from folk literature here in connection with rural women, we must not forget that this was also the literature of the popular class of urban men and women.

Karacaoğlan, the great Turkish minstrel (*âşık*) of the Taurus region, who lived in the seventeenth or, according to another opinion, in the sixteenth century, is explicit. Even if we do not believe what (or all) he says about his erotic experiences, his songs (*türkü*s) show us that there must have been opportunities for some irregular contacts between the sexes. The passages from his songs and all other samples of folk poetry given below are composed according to syllabic prosody (*hece vezni*):

Already as a child you were saying, “You are mine”,
 You were saying, “I’ll please this foolish heart of yours”,
 You were saying, “I’ll look for you and tell you so in lonely places”.
 Come, my darling, let us sleep together now and then.³⁰

I talked a lot with the beloved,
 I drank her wine out of her hand,
 I unbuttoned the buttons on her breast,
 I attained my desire today.
 [. . .]
 Without having made an assignation,
 I found the beloved alone today.³¹

28 *Journal d'Antoine Galland pendant son séjour à Constantinople (1672–1673)*, 2 vols., Charles Schefer (ed.) (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881), vol. I, pp. 136–7.

29 Dingeç, “Osmanlı Toplumunda Kadınların Üretime Katkıları”, pp. 12–14.

30 Wannig, Klaus-Detlev, *Der Dichter Karaca Oğlan: Studien zur türkischen Liebeslyrik* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1980), p. 468.

31 Wannig, *Der Dichter Karaca Oğlan*, p. 496.

You, for whose hazel eyes I'd die,
 Don't spread it abroad and let the whole world know about me.
 Don't uncover your white throat and stand before me,
 Don't kill me before my time to die has come.

Sweetheart, wind your arms around my neck,
 Then my eyes will see no fear of death.
 Let me be a guest for a night in your arms.
 Don't make me get up, saying "It is dawning".³²

I went to our meeting-place when the evening had just begun.
 I was on the lookout but my coal-eyed [darling] did not come.
 I don't know, did she get sleepy, lie down and fall asleep?
 I don't know, is she sulking at me? She did not come.

My beloved adorned herself more and more.
 She promised, my foolish heart believed her.
 And the moon rose and circled round.
 The dawn breezes arose. She did not come.
 Did she forget the promise, the mercy? What did she do?
 [...] ³³

As women were out and about in rural circles, men had occasion to observe them more or less daily in semi-private and public space. It is no surprise, therefore, that poets frequently speak of a woman's walking or ambling in open space. Two lines from *Karacaoğlan* demonstrate this:

Bride in red going to the fountain,
 Why do you walk with such a sway?³⁴

A line by Öksüz Dede, a minstrel who was a janissary and lived in the second half of the sixteenth century, or it might be by the minstrel Öksüz Âşık,

32 Wannig, *Der Dichter Karaca Oğlan*, p. 502.

33 Wannig, *Der Dichter Karaca Oğlan*, p. 462.

34 Arısoy, M. Sunullah, *Türk Halk Şiiri Antolojisi* (Ankara: İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1985), p. 160.

reckoned by some to have lived in the seventeenth century (the poems of the two are mixed up):

Every morning, every morning she comes out and walks with a sway.³⁵

A similar line by Kuloğlu, one of the most important folk poets of the seventeenth century is as follows:

Beautiful woman walking with a sway opposite me.³⁶

Walking with a sway, that is, walking with slightly swaying hips (*salınmak*), a most alluring gait, also occurs frequently in anonymous folk songs. The expression has in the course of time become a cliché;³⁷ it obviously reflects traditional behaviour. Many women walk in this way in Turkey today and this is indeed considered an alluring way to walk; if exaggerated too much it is still thought to be alluring but rather vulgar. In connection with anonymous folk poetry Ali Osman Öztürk mentions that this swaying way to walk (here *sallana sallana yürümek*, which is the same as *salına salına yürümek* or *salınmak*) means that the girl displays herself to show that she is of an age to marry but is not yet married, and he adds that this can also have a seductive effect.³⁸ The anonymous example he gives of *sallana sallana* is:

You go, walking with a sway, to the fountain.
Your purpose is not [to fetch] water, you walk for pleasure.³⁹

Elsewhere he also gives an example with *salınmak*:

Walk with a sway, hey my beloved, walk with a sway!⁴⁰

Anonymous folk poetry is difficult to date, but the following anonymous folk songs (of the *mani* genre) were collected and published by Ignác Kúnos in the

35 Arısoy, *Türk Halk Şiiri Antolojisi*, p. 103.

36 Arısoy, *Türk Halk Şiiri Antolojisi*, p. 186.

37 This gait is also a cliché in high-culture Ottoman poetry; an example is given further on in the section "Public gardens and pleasure grounds".

38 Öztürk, Ali Osman, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), p. 100.

39 Öztürk, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk*, p. 100.

40 Öztürk, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk*, p. 49.

1880s.⁴¹ The very popular *mani* is generally a strophe of four lines and most often composed on the spot, probably predominantly by women.

Look at the moon, look at the stars,
 Look at the girl standing on the roof!
 The moon is mine, the stars are mine,
 The girl who stands on the roof is mine!⁴²

I threw a stone into the brook,
 The girl came to the window.
 "Girl, if you love God,
 Let me come inside!"⁴³

Two cherries on one branch,
 One is red, the other white.
 I got my desire's fill from a brunette,
 But couldn't embrace one who[se complexion] is white.⁴⁴

Only the last two lines of the following are given as the rest is not relevant.

The good one among these girls
 Is the one who gives without being asked.⁴⁵

The wife of our neighbour
 Has made me fall in love.⁴⁶

41 First in two volumes in Budapest (*Oszmán-török népköltési gyűjtemény*, 1887–1889) and then in Vienna with a German translation: Ignaz Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 2 (1888), 319–24; Ignaz Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Fortsetzung)", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 3 (1889), 69–76; Ignaz Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 4 (1890), 35–42.

42 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Fortsetzung)", 3, p. 75.

43 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)", 4, p. 37.

44 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder", 2, p. 322.

45 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)", 4, p. 37.

46 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)", 4, p. 38.

Whilst I was looking for the mother,
Her daughter came into my arms.⁴⁷

Such a repetitive assertion of romantic and erotic involvement makes it hard to dismiss all of it as a figment of the imagination. The various details also attest to their being grounded at least partly in reality. As already mentioned, a meeting place of the sexes is the fountain or spring⁴⁸ and there is much 'evidence' of this in oral literature. One example is the anonymous short folk tale with song (*kısa türkölü hikaye* [*bozlak*]) "Yazıcıoğlu ile Senem" (Yazıcıoğlu and Senem).⁴⁹ This dates back to the time of the *Fırka-ı İslahiye* (The Reformatory Army Division), 1865–1866, which saw to the compulsory settling of nomadic Turkmen tribes in the region of Çukurova and the mountains Gavur Dağı, Kozan Dağları and Kürt Dağları in Anatolia. It is the love story of a girl, Senem, and a man, Yazıcıoğlu, from two different Turkmen tribes. Yazıcıoğlu sees Senem for the first time at a fountain. They fall in love and decide to marry. But the compulsory settling separates them because their respective tribes have been settled in different locations. Nevertheless they remain true to each other all their lives and marry no one else. The audience would think that such a love affair *could* have happened because it reflects the conditions of life they knew.

On inter-ethnic relations we can cite the following folk song that in view of its content must date back to Ottoman times.

I left Istanbul and went away on the sea.
By chance I met an Armenian girl.
Don't eat, don't drink, just gaze at the lovely girl's face.
"Convert to Islam, royal maiden,⁵⁰ convert to Islam!"

"I am the morning star that rises at dawn,
I am the suckling lamb fed in the shade,
I am the only daughter of my mother and father,
Go away, boy, go away, I won't give up my religion."

47 Kunos, "Türkische Volkslieder", 2, p. 321.

48 For an anonymous undatable folk song with this motif see Öztürk, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk*, pp. 172–3.

49 For detailed information on this folk story see Görkem, İsmail, "Güney Türkmenlerine Ait 'Yazıcıoğlu ile Senem' Türkölü Hikayesinin Anlam ve Nesne Dünyası", *Türkbilgi/Türkoloji Araştırmaları*, 9 (2005), 40–66.

50 In the text: *kiral kızı*, literally "daughter of a king".

“The blacksmiths forge iron, it becomes bronze.
 The scribes write, they become hodjas.
 For a girl it is hard to be an Armenian.
 Convert to Islam, my coal-eyed girl, convert to Islam!”

“Let the blacksmiths forge iron so that it becomes bronze.
 Let the scribes write and become hodjas.
 Let there be hardship [for me] if I don’t take you.
 Go away, boy, go away, I won’t give up my religion.”
 [...]

 “If you ask my name, it is Benli Ali.
 The road we go on is the road of the Kaaba, of Islam.
 Our religion is truer than all other religions.
 Convert to Islam, royal maiden, convert to Islam!”

“If you ask my name, it is Benli Emine.
 How you have succumbed to the power of beauty.
 If your name is Ali, I will convert to your religion.
 Roll up your sleeves and wind your arms around me!”⁵¹

That flirtation could lead to elopement or abduction is documented by anonymous folk songs, some of which are sure to go back to Ottoman times.⁵²

Another inter-ethnic love-story is related by Keçecizade İzzet Molla (1786–1829). He composed his autobiographic *mesnevi*, *Mihnet-keşan* (Bearers of Hardship)⁵³ of 4167 couplets⁵⁴ during his exile of one year (28 February 1823–15 February 1824) in Keşan in Thrace.⁵⁵ A Greek Orthodox woman, married and the mother of two children, falls in love with Muhammed, one of Keçecizade İzzet Molla’s servants. Muhammed is also in love with her but initially refuses her because he is already betrothed, whereupon she tries to commit suicide. Muhammed tries to subdue his feelings and after much suffering, mainly on

51 Öztürk, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk*, pp. 160–3.

52 For a likely candidate see the variants of the “Leyla” song in Öztürk, *Das türkische Volkslied als sprachliches Kunstwerk*, pp. 205–14.

53 Özyıldırım, Ali Emre, *Keçeci-zâde İzzet Molla and Mihnet-keşân*, Parts 1 and 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 2007).

54 The work contains a number of poems of different genres other than the monorhyme *mesnevi* and also a short prose piece; Özyıldırım, *Keçeci-zâde İzzet Molla and Mihnet-keşân*, Part 1, p. 36.

55 Özyıldırım, *Keçeci-zâde İzzet Molla and Mihnet-keşân*, Part 1, pp. 18–19.

the Greek woman's side, the passionate affair ends in final separation.⁵⁶ Such a situation could only have arisen if the two could have seen and met each other in a provincial town like Keşan. Being in semi-private space was of help, too, as when towards the end of the story the woman manages to move secretly into a house in the vicinity of the mansion inhabited by her lover and his master, and thus to awaken his passion again.

Two lines by the folk poet Kağızmanlı Hıfzı (1893–1918) illustrate the advantages of vicinity, when the aural may join the visual as a means of 'contact':

Beauty showed its pattern in the window,⁵⁷
The one with the lovely voice is talking in private, it seems.⁵⁸

Not so private after all.

Public Gardens and Pleasure Grounds

In Istanbul, people of all classes were in natural space when they went to the public gardens and pleasure grounds (*mesires* or *mesiregahs*) in the fair seasons.⁵⁹ Strolling about, the sexes could come across each other again and again in a sort of loose mingling and, what's more, this could chance to be in a slightly secluded spot. Going to pleasure grounds, and above all to Kağıthane, took on the form of almost a cult, especially during the period called the Tulip Era (Lale Devri), roughly the first quarter of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Or, perhaps more correctly, one should say that the renown of Kağıthane as such a space is linked most strongly to this period. But this practice was already a custom in the sixteenth century, as the words of the sixteenth century author Latifi (d. 1546) in his book *Evsaf-ı İstanbul* (Description of Istanbul), written in prose interspersed with verse, show.

56 See Özyıldırım, *Keçeci-zâde İzzet Molla and Mihnet-keşân*, Part 1, pp. 46–7 for a resümé and Part 2, pp. 194–242, couplets 2520–3233 for the edition.

57 Obviously the girl showed her face at the window.

58 Ambros, Edith Gülçin, "Of cranes and ducks: Kağızmanlı Hıfzı in the wake of Karacaoğlan", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 7–8 (1988), p. 110.

59 For detailed information on this topic see the chapter "Outings and excursions", in Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 205–48.

60 On especially the eighteenth century, see the chapter "Public spaces and public order", in Hamadeh, Shirine, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle – London: University of Washington Press, 2007), pp. 110–38.

In this way, because it [Kağıthane] is an attractive locale for diversion and a relaxing place to stroll, the females and males of Istanbul-town, that is, its wives and husbands, married women and their spouses, go in small boats and amuse themselves there. There do love-inclined females (to whom fate will bring just deserts) and men of low morals become a herd of gazelle bucks and does, and, after the fashion of the musk deer of Tartary on the steppes of Cathay, they scatter and roam about those wilds.⁶¹

A little earlier, Tacizade Cafer Çelebi (d. 1515) wrote the *mesnevi Hevesname* (Book of Desire) composed of 3810 couplets. This work belongs to the *sergüzeştname* (book of adventure/experience) genre, of which we have already given a couple of examples. The subject is a love affair. This is allegedly his own love affair with the wife of a member of the upper-class intelligentsia, and the venue is Kağıthane.⁶² It would seem that such an occurrence was within the realm of possibility in such a venue. İsmail E. Erünsal mentions that according to the somewhat later Ottoman historian and man of letters Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali (died probably in 1600) this love affair had in fact taken place.⁶³ Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı pertinently write:

Of course, this is a story told primarily for aesthetic and artistic reasons. Even the assertion that it is a true account is subject to doubt, for such assertions are commonplaces of literary style. Nonetheless, it is a depiction intended to convince its audiences – Ottoman consumers of high-culture literary art – that it could have been an accurate representation of a love affair between a young man and a young woman of the elite classes. That is to say that an Ottoman audience would have accepted that an encounter like this could have taken place and that the behavior of the Ottoman lover and his female beloved was reasonable under the circumstances. What this and much other evidence indicates – although

61 Andrews, Walter G. and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 67, translation of Andrews and Kalpaklı. For the original see *Lâtîfî, Evsâf-ı İstanbul*, Nermin Suner (ed.) (Pekin) (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1977), p. 61.

62 On the plot (including the translation of some verses), see Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, pp. 181–6.

63 Erünsal, İsmail E., *The Life and Works of Tâcî-zâde Cafer Çelebi, with a Critical Edition of his Dîvân* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1983), p. lvi with footnote 132.

the point is nowhere stated overtly – is that the garden or natural setting is a special kind of space, one where the rules of normal (public) space do not apply.⁶⁴

We posit that the rules in question were partly not applicable. As already mentioned above, we think that such a natural public setting is a special kind of space because, apart from such space being hard to police, it is a public space of *leisure*, which can even turn into temporary semi-private space if one camps there. Leisure implies that the people did not hurry along but had time to look around, certainly more so than when rushing along on the street. The visibility of the women there was of a different sort because they were *publicly at ease* for a longer span of time than legitimately possible during the normal course of their daily activities. This gave opportunities for frivolous behaviour or falling in love as in the above story. Apparently the people in this story did not cause a disturbance in Kağıthane that would have warranted the intervention of the authorities. Had there been drinking and visible immoral goings on, the people closest to the revelry would have intervened and/or reported this to the authorities, or the authorities would have become aware of this themselves, and the culprits would have been punished.

As an example on a smaller scale of the relative freedom of behaviour in such a venue: in a manuscript of eighteenth-century story plots for the use of *meddahs* (public storytellers), there is the plot of *Hikaye-i Sergüzeşt-i Hafız Çelebi* (The Story of Hafız Çelebi's Adventure), in which a whole family goes in three boats on a picnic to a pleasure ground. There the children play, the slightly older ones get on swings and sing, the old people tell a story, whilst the youths look admiringly at the women.⁶⁵ Therefore unrelated women were close enough to be looked at and this is believable because this type of story, however exaggerated its plot, was full of realistic details.

In another allegedly autobiographic high-culture love-story written in the sixteenth century, the *mesnevi Ebkar-ı Efkâr* (The Virgins of Thought), composed of 1504 couplets and one strophic poem, the author Maşızade Fikri Çelebi (d. 1574/5 or 1583/4) narrates his search for a new beloved.⁶⁶ He starts

64 Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, p. 186.

65 See Nutku, Özdemir, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikâyeleri* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, n.d.), pp. 101–3 on the manuscript, pp. 137–9 on the plot as related by the author, and pp. 205–8 on the plot in its original wording.

66 For the plot see Özyıldırım, Ali Emre, “*Ebkâr-ı Efkâr*: Fikrî Çelebi'nin Aşk Konulu Hasbihali”, *Turkish Studies: International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 2/4 (2007), 685–703.

by promenading in the gardens along the shores of the Tunca, comes upon gatherings of various groups of men and youths, but each time has reasons for thinking that he will not be able to find himself a (male) beloved among them. Then he comes to a meadow where women have gathered and are enjoying themselves.

They are walking with a sway⁶⁷ in every direction like pheasants.⁶⁸

But there is no indication of flirtatiousness towards him. The passage seems to serve as a vehicle for stating his opinion of women, the gist of it being that they are beautiful but fickle. And his argumentation against choosing a woman as a beloved ends with a couplet on the impediment of the veil.

How can you know if the face behind the veil
Is not that of your sister or of your mother!

And his search for a male beloved continues. The point is that he can watch the women enjoying themselves, there is no sign that his doing so is remarkable in any way.

About two centuries later, the poet Enderunlu Fazıl (d. 1810) wrote, among other works, the humorous erotic *mesnevi Zenanname* (Book of Women) of 1101 couplets.⁶⁹ There is a passage in it on how to make women fall in love with oneself. Fazıl's advice is to go to a pleasure ground, especially to the neighbourhood of Kağıthane, in spring. In any case, one should go to any gathering where there is an assembly of women, but should seem unapproachable because then the women would show interest. In a couplet of this passage he calls two women who sit on a swing "common, contemptible" (*mübtezele*), and it is not quite clear if all the women present are common/contemptible in his eyes or only those on the swing (see below), but he is basically making fun of them all.

67 *Salnur*, that is, the same verb as in folk poetry.

68 I am very grateful to Ali Emre Özyıldırım for letting me use the pre-print draft of his forthcoming edition of this work.

69 See Sabahattin Küçük's article "Enderunlu Fâzıl", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XI (1995), p. 189. Enderunlu Fâzıl, *Hûbanname ve Zenanname*, Ercümen Muhib (ed.) (n.p.: Yeni Şark Kitabevi, 1945), pp. 49–74, is only a partial edition. See also *Le livre des femmes (Zenan-nameh)*, J.-A. Decourdemanche (trans.) (Paris: E. Leroux, 1879); on the translation of this French text into English see Schick, İrvin Cemil, "Representation of gender and sexuality in Ottoman and Turkish erotic literature", *The Turkish Studies Association Journal*, 28/1–2 (2004), p. 89, footnote 35: included in *Eastern Love*, 12 vols., E. Powys Mathers (ed. and trans.) (London: John Rodker, 1927–1930), vol. III, pp. 1–69.

Don't look on your right or your left.
Go by wrathfully, go on your way.

Go, sit down alone on the shore of the stream.
Then they will all make you signs.

Some do this and some do that,
Look at all those gestures of greeting.

This one smiles under her veil,
That fairy looks at the ground in a blush.

That laughter, that fawning, that glance,
When suddenly she looks at you in a furtive manner.

One of them starts to sing,
Until they [all] annoy you with innuendos.

Some run to coquet with you
And their cloaks fall from their backs.

Sometimes a swing is hung on a cypress,
Two common (*mübbezele*) women sit down on it.

One of them pushes the swing with coquetry.
Ah! Those hands tinged with henna appear.

As she swings, her caftan opens
To show you every part of her.

She shows you the knot of her Turkish trousers,
Perhaps [even] the treasure of secrets.⁷⁰

Without denying the possibility that some women acted immodestly as related in the last two couplets, such behaviour can not, of course, be attributed to all women who went to pleasure grounds. Just as we cannot rely

70 Enverunlu Fazıl, *Hûbanname ve Zenanname*, p. 59. The line "Ah! Those hands tinged with henna appear" has the variant "Lovely songs are sung there" in the lithography of 1255 (1839, Istanbul), p. 56, which contains only 1073 couplets.

uncritically on the representativeness of miniatures, a point Betül İpşirli Argıt has already made.⁷¹ In this case, two very well known miniatures illustrating Fazıl's *Zenanname*,⁷² which also served Argıt as examples in her argumentation, portray women enjoying themselves in Kağıthane. All women in one miniature and most women in the other are without a veil; in both miniatures some of the women have deep decollétés. In both, there is a man sitting near the shore quite close to them and looking at them (see passage above). In addition, in one of the miniatures there are two musicians and a man with a tray (of sweetmeats?) who are actually among the women. Obviously we cannot deduce from these miniatures, illustrating a work which is an unabashedly erotic and humorously critical description of women, that this was the mainstream dress code for *modest* women in public gardens, and that the mingling of the sexes was generally permitted there. The miniatures by themselves are not sufficient for a generalization comprehending of all types of women of all classes; we must interpret them in the context of the work they illustrate.

On the other hand, that *some* women rode swings seems a fact, since Pietro della Valle (d. 1652) described this in his travel writings⁷³ already a century ago, as mentioned by Andrews and Kalpaklı.⁷⁴

Crowds and More Outings

The third main venue of opportunities is to be found principally in cities, and especially in Istanbul. The greater anonymity of a crowd offers some opportunities of contact between men and women if they are not strictly separated. Here we return to Pietro della Valle as quoted by Andrews and Kalpaklı in George Anthony Bull's translation. This is a passage from della Valle's letter of 25 October 1614 to his friend Mario Schipano about Istanbul's bazaars.

We from elsewhere often go along [to the bazaars] to look at the Turkish ladies who flock there either to buy or, as I believe, to be seen, insofar as

71 İpşirli Argıt, Betül, "Visual material as a source for the study of Ottoman women in the early modern era", in *Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources*, Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu (eds.) (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 36–9.

72 MS İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, Ty 5502, fol. 78, and British Library, Or. 7094, fol. 7a, in Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, p. 1, plate 8, and frontispiece respectively.

73 *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino...*, in three parts (Rome: Vitale Mascardi, 1650–1658).

74 Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, p. 190.



FIGURE 6.1 *On the Galata Bridge, "Sur le pont de Galata", from Amicis, Edmundo di, Constantinople (Paris: Hachette, 1883), p. 27.*

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this is allowed by the veils covering up their faces: these, however, do not always hide the eyes nor entirely prevent them from being able to make themselves known to whom they want. They go along stiff and straight as posts, [...] When they encounter any of us strangers, with whom they know they can take more liberties, they jostle us with their elbows as if forced to do so by the crowd, and, if they are pretty, we do the same to them, and we burst out laughing. Sometimes we do not fail to exchange pleasant, teasing questions, and flirt in other little ways, and so, gently, gently, friendships are formed.⁷⁵

75 As quoted by Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds*, pp. 189–90, from *The Pilgrim: The Travels of Pietro Della Valle*, George Bull (trans., abridged and intro.) (London: Hutchinson, 1990), p. 23.

The frivolity of demeanour of *some* women – towards foreigners “with whom they know they can take more liberties”, as della Valle remarks – cannot be generalized to comprise all women. Nor does their flirting make these women into “loose women”. Prostitutes are said to have acted much more brazenly, as we see in the description of the covered bazaar (*bedestan*) in Istanbul given by the Dutch traveller Gerard Hinlopen in the second half of the same century:

[...] there are always crowds near the entrance [of the bazaar], among them women of low status/morals [canailjes van vrouwen] who offer themselves for inspection although they are fully dressed, their heads covered, apart from their eyes, and wearing small yellow boots. They pester foreigners in particular, whom they pummel, tearing at their hair, slapping them in their faces, shouting gavur; they prefer to do this to attractive young men ...⁷⁶

The posture of the women della Valle writes about, their going “along stiff and straight as posts”, differentiates them at first glance from these women.

The mention of foreigners brings another Nasreddin Hoca anecdote to mind. It is from the already mentioned collection by Pertev Naili Boratav.

They relate that whilst the Hoca himself was a *kadı*, a woman brought a man to him⁷⁷ and said: “Sir! This foreign [*ecnebi*] man here held me and

76 Quoted from Jan Schmidt’s e-mail to me of 25 March 2011, with the bibliographic citation: “in Joris Oddens (ed.), *Een vorstelijk voorland; Gerard Hinlopen op reis naar Istanbul (1670–1671)* Zutphen, 2009, p. 154”. I am very grateful to Jan Schmidt for giving me this summary and translation of the Dutch passage in question.

Another traveller of the seventeenth century reports equally explicit behaviour in another city. I thank Jan Schmidt sincerely for giving me this information, too. “In his description of ‘Old Cairo’ [...] De Bruijn says that there were whores standing along a main route he took into town who tried to draw the attention of passers-by by ‘acting in a provocative, lewd manner’ (‘... snoodste geylheden te bedryven’), p. 187 of the first Dutch edition. (*Reizen van Cornelis de Bruyn, door de vermaardste deelen van Klein Asia, de eylanden Scio, Rhodus, Cyprus, Metelino, Stanchio &c. mitsgaders de voornaamste steden van Ægypten, Syrien en Palestina, verrijkt met meer als 200 kopere konstplaatens, vertoonende de beroemdste landschappen, steden, &c. Alles door den authour selfs na het leven afgetekend* (Delft, 1698)”. Quoted from Jan Schmidt’s e-mail to me of 28 March 2011.

77 Text: the *kadı*.

kissed me. Decidedly you must see to my rights". The Hoca replied, "What must happen now? You kiss the man, too".⁷⁸

Julia Pardoe (d. 1862) writes in the first half of the nineteenth century about the shopping of women of the wealthier class:

[...] the carriage of the veiled Osmanli stops at the door of some merchant who has a handsome shopman; and the name of the latter, having been previously ascertained, Sadak [sic.] or Mustapha, as the case may be, is ordered by the *arabadjhe* [sic.], or coachman, to exhibit to his mistress some article of merchandise, which he brings accordingly, and, while the lady affects to examine its quality and to decide on its value, she enters into conversation with the youth, playing upon him meanwhile the whole artillery of her fine eyes. The questioning generally runs nearly thus: – "What is your name?" – "How old are you?" – "Are you married?" – "Were you ever in love?" – and similar misplaced and childish questions. Should the replies of the interrogated person amuse her, and his beauty appear as great on a nearer view as when seen from a distance, the merchandise is objected to, and the visit repeated frequently, ere the fastidious taste of the purchaser can be satisfied.

Nor are women of high rank exempt from this indelicate fancy, which can only be accounted for by the belief that, like caged birds occasionally set free, they do not know how to use their liberty; the Sultana Haybétoullah, sister to his Sublime Highness, the Light of the Ottoman Empire, is particularly attached to this extraordinary *passe-temps*.⁷⁹

Boats as public vehicles of transport were also potential locations for flirtations when the passengers were of mixed sex. Of course, these boats were used mostly by the women of the lower and middle classes, the upper classes being able to move around in private comfort. Two decrees issued with an interval of three years in the sixteenth century – 23 Şevval 988/1 December 1580 and 24 Şaban 991/13 September 1583 – include the stipulation that women and men should not mingle in the boats (*pereme [prama]*). In the first of these,

78 Boratav, *Nasreddin Hoca*, p. 175, anecdote no. 313. There are linguistic signs in this anecdote that point to an earlier rather than later Ottoman date of compilation.

79 Pardoe, [Julia], *The City of the Sultan; and Domestic Manners of the Turks, in 1836*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), pp. 34–5.

there is even the specification that young women (*taze avretler*) should not go on a boat ride with free and easy roughs (*levend taifesiyile*).⁸⁰

Evidence of the pleasures of a boat ride is given in the following anonymous folk song (*türkü*). It is in Hamdi Hasan's edition of minstrel songs and anonymous folk songs in manuscripts of libraries in Sarajevo.⁸¹ Hamdi Hasan thinks it likely that most of the anonymous songs in his edition were sung in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸²

Come, girls, let us go to the pier!
Let us find a suitable boatman.
Let us pay for our fare⁸³ with white zolota.⁸⁴
Row us with coquetry, my dear boatman!

Don't row us into those waves!
It is God's order, no fault of the boatman!
Spread a silk prayer-carpet in its stern.
Row us with coquetry, my darling boatman!

Its middle mast stayed at Tophane.
May the boatman have a heart of stone!
You get up from there and sit [at ease]! Let the girls row!
Row us with coquetry, my dear boatman!

Across Istanbul is Galata.
Don't row askew! Take us straight to Balat!
Our pocket money⁸⁵ is gold and zolota.
Row us with coquetry, my dear boatman!⁸⁶

A very similar song in the same collection has a strophe which shows that boat riding was enjoyed by the wives of the intellectual class, too.

80 Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı*, pp. 61–3.

81 Hasan, Hamdi, *Saray-Bosna Kütüphanelerindeki Türkçe Yazmalarda Türküler* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1987).

82 Hasan, *Saray-Bosna Kütüphanelerindeki Türkçe Yazmalarda Türküler*, pp. 13–14.

83 Text: *Navlunumuza* “for our freight”; it is likely that “freight” stands for “fare” here.

84 See Hinz, Walther, *Islamische Währungen ungerechnet in Gold* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), pp. 22, 49, 54, 70 on the silver coin *zolota* (“zelot”/“isholotta”/“isolate”), apparently of Polish origin.

85 *Harşelığımız* for *harçlığımız*.

86 Hasan, *Saray-Bosna Kütüphanelerindeki Türkçe Yazmalarda Türküler*, p. 194.

The husband of some of us is a mollah⁸⁷ or a professor.⁸⁸
 We took permission and are going thus together.
 We are contemplating the Hünkar gardens.
 Row with coquetry, handsome boatman!⁸⁹

They have their husbands' permission, are in a group so that each of them is under group-supervision, and have no immodest intentions, but the spirit of the whole is nevertheless quite frivolous. And pleasure rides on boats could indeed lead to a flirtation, as in the following case involving two non-Muslims. The renowned historian Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (Hammer until 1835; 1774–1856) relates the following anecdote in his memoirs, of which only about a sixth, not including this anecdote, has been published.⁹⁰ The event took place in 1799, when Hammer was 25 years old. This was during his first visit to Istanbul, which would last one year.

The evening before my return from Büyükdere⁹¹ to town, I also went with the ladies Hübsch and others on a pleasure trip to the nearby promontory of Kireçburnu,⁹² which is famous for its good food and wonderful figs, and in this month [August] is often visited by caiques⁹³ full of ladies from Pera,⁹⁴ Greek or Armenian ladies. Nearest to our large and high caique was one with veiled women, one of whom, of extraordinary beauty, I constantly gazed at through my lorgnette, and who replied to the outstanding attention paid her not ungraciously with a half-smile. Totally sunk in contemplation of her, I soon became the object of the remarks of the ladies in my company, who, in order to tease me, started on the return trip much earlier than I would have wished. All the arrows of feminine mockery and malice with which I was persecuted during the return trip made no effect on the decision swinging deep in my soul to follow up the adventure.

87 *Munla* for *molla*.

88 *Müderris*.

89 Hasan, *Saray-Bosna Kütiüphanelerindeki Türkçe Yazmalarda Türküler*, p. 196.

90 For detailed information on Hammer-Purgstall's memoirs see Wentker, Sibylle, "Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's erste Reise nach Istanbul im Spiegel seiner 'Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben'", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 25 (2005), 225–47. I am very grateful to Sibylle Wentker for having put the German original of this anecdote at my disposal.

91 *Bujukdere*; *passim*.

92 *Kuedschburni*; *passim*.

93 *kayıks*; in the original: *Kaikēn*.

94 In the original: *Perotinnen*.

As soon as we had returned to Büyükdere at sundown, I parted from the company under the excuse of making preparations for the departure on the morrow, ran down to the village, rented a *caïque* and hastened again to Kireçburnu. All the *caïques* had already left. I ran into the coffee-house to get detailed information about the beautiful unknown lady. The coffee-maker did not know with certainty, but he thought that she was the wife of a rich Armenian, Miansophie Hirmakesch,⁹⁵ who, by the way, had forgotten her slippers there. I, ignorant idiot, hastened in greatest dissatisfaction back to Büyükdere, and when at a late hour I met the company of Baroness Hübsch on the quay as I had promised, she took me aside and laughingly teased me about my sulkiness, the reason for which she had guessed rightly. As she was a sincerely good woman and I felt great confidence in her, I confided the truth to her and my dismay at not finding the lovely Armenian again. But when she heard about the slippers that had been left behind and of my stupidity in not taking it upon myself to deliver them myself, she first increased my desolation by informing me that this was the sign of the greatest favour, since according to the accepted, symbolic language of love this meant: "You may follow me to where I take these off, that is right into my bedroom!" I decided to make use of this explanation received at midnight on the quay of Büyükdere as soon as possible and to fetch the slippers the next morning. At dawn I again went in a *caïque* to Kireçburnu, but unfortunately in vain, because the slippers had been fetched a quarter of an hour earlier. [Back] in Pera, I went to a lot of trouble to find my beautiful unknown lady, but in vain. The wife of a certain Hamisch,⁹⁶ an Ottoman under-footman of the Embassy, to whom I turned for this reason with money and good words, deceived me for weeks, making me pay her money for searching trips which she said she undertook, without my ever being able to find out the slightest thing.⁹⁷

Hammer's anecdote shows that at the end of the eighteenth century, at least some supposedly respectable women were able and willing to flirt in a way that was barely visible to others.

Festive occasions offered chances for surreptitious eye-contact in earlier days. The great crowds watching the festivities (*surs*) in honour of the circumcision of the sultans' sons and the marriage of their daughters and close

95 Thus in the original.

96 Thus in the original.

97 Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (AÖAW), Hammer-Purgstall, Joseph von, "Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben", vol. III, notebook 3, pp. 13–14.



FIGURE 6.2 *Departure of the süre for Mecca, "Les Turcs: départ pour la Mecque", from Amicis, Constantinople, p. 421.*

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relatives gave women opportunities for at least looking around. In Metin And's fundamental book on Turkish arts and crafts at Ottoman festivities⁹⁸ we find contemporaneous Ottoman miniatures of some of these festivities. It stands to reason that the place women occupy in the composition of miniatures is a reflection to a certain extent of their social visibility, even though we have to take into account the miniature painter's personal style, predilections, and so on. To get a good idea of this we would have to study all the available miniatures. As this would lead too far here, we shall have to content ourselves with a first impression. Let us start with some miniatures on the festivities of 1582 in honour of the circumcision of Murad III's son Mehmed. In plate 3⁹⁹ on the

98 And, Metin, *Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1982).

99 This and the following picture plates are from And, *Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları*, as is the information on the provenance of the pictures, such as in this case, *Şehinşahname II*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi B. 200.

circumcision of poor and converted children: the plane is cut horizontally into two roughly equal parts, the upper part contains the background in form of a building, the lower part contains the action. In the lower part one unattended woman is carrying a child, another unattended woman is holding a child by the hand, and a third woman (who may be attended by a man) is holding two children by the hand. They are not together but dispersed over the lower half of the picture, which also contains a greater number of men. Plate 10¹⁰⁰ is similarly structured to plate 3. In the lower part two unattended women are standing beside an official and a third (possibly attended by a man) is pleading with this official. They are in a horizontal line roughly in the middle of the picture in front of the background (the building), so occupy the central field of vision. A fourth woman is sitting at the foot of a column near the lower border of the miniature, slightly off-centre, and a man is bending down towards her, speaking to her. A greater number of men are dispersed in the lower half. In these two miniatures women are part of the action in the picture. That women are not found more frequently in miniatures is, of course, directly (though probably not only) related to the fact that the action in the miniatures generally does not comprise them. In several miniatures with women solely in the role of spectators we find a stereotypic arrangement, namely, four rows of people, standing vertically behind each other as a border of the lower right-hand side: one row of children or a single child in front, one row of three women behind the children, and two rows of three men each behind the women (Plate 43¹⁰¹: three children – three women – two x three men. Plate 58¹⁰²: one child – three women – two x three men. Plate 100¹⁰³: two children – three women – two x three men. Plate 113¹⁰⁴: three children – three women – two x three men). Among the miniatures on the festivities of 1720 in honour of the circumcision of Ahmed III's sons Süleyman, Mehmed, Mustafa, and Bayezid and the marriage of a number of his relatives, we find plate 29¹⁰⁵ in which a group of nine women is standing together, filling in the lower right-hand corner in the form of a triangle, with six janissaries in a diagonal row widening the triangle, standing between them and the main scene. As spectators, the women are out of the central field of vision but are still well visible in the miniatures because they are rendered as a block.

100 *Hünername II*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 1524.

101 *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 1344.

102 *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 1344.

103 *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 1344.

104 *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 1344.

105 *Surname-i Vehbi I*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi A. 3593.

In the miniatures the women look perfectly demure but they could act boisterously among themselves, as the following passage out of a *surname* (the genre depicting in verse or prose, or both, festivities on the occasion of imperial circumcisions or weddings) shows. This passage is from the prose *Surname* (Book of Festivities) of Hafiz Mehmed Efendi on the festivities of 1720 mentioned above.¹⁰⁶

As women were also present as spectators at the festivities most of the time the festivities lasted, it was desired that they, too, should have their share of the imperial festivity's banquet. [The Keman-keşan Tekye (convent) was chosen as a suitable locality, all the men in it were sent out and food for the women was carried in. Then] the womenfolk entered the *tekye* laughing [...]. And concurring reports state that inside, saying, "This is an imperial banquet only for us", they unceremoniously unbound their veils, and joked with each other, saying "Hey, speedy (*yelli*)¹⁰⁷! You've eaten a lot, won't you leave us something?!" And it was so, that even when they had reached perfect satiety, they were not content, and saying, "Hey, dear little so-and-so was not here, let her not be deprived, my dear", some filled their handkerchiefs, some their kerchiefs, and those who had nothing [else] their veils [with food] and carried it away.¹⁰⁸

One wonders how the women who used their veils for carrying food adequately covered their faces once outside. To judge by their behaviour, these were women of the popular classes, who, as we have seen, were so visible at the festivities that the need to organize a private banquet for them was felt.

Roughly a century later, the poet Enderunlu Vasıf (d. 1824) wrote a humorous poem containing a mother's advice to her young daughter (33 strophes) and the latter's reply (32 strophes).¹⁰⁹ The mother addresses her daughter with the words

106 Arslan, Mehmet, *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri*, 4–5: *Lebib Sûrnâmesi*, *Hâfiz Mehmed Efendi (Hâzin) Sûrnâmesi*, *Abdi Sûrnâmesi*, *Telhîsü'l-beyân'ın Sûrnâme Kısmı* (Istanbul: Sarayburnu Kitaplığı, 2011), pp. 295–447.

107 *Yelli* can also mean "he/she who passes a lot of gas", which would suit a spirit of familiarly indecorous humour.

108 Arslan, *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri*, 4–5, p. 410.

109 *Başlangıcından Günümüze Kadar Büyük Türk Klâsikleri: Tarih, Antoloji, Ansiklopedi*, vol. VIII (Istanbul: Ötüken-Söğüt, 1988), pp. 112–15.

You coquette, you've now turned thirteen

and this section of the poem has the refrain

Don't be a gadabout, be a little lady!

One of the lines of this section shows that private space need not be impermeably separated from public space:

Don't have dealings with men by making signs from windows!

A strophe from the daughter's answer shows that she is more than ready to flirt also outside her home; the last line is the refrain of this section of the poem:

I am a freshly matured tree in the rose-garden of coquetry.
I have grown husky from singing songs in orchards.
I'll trim and put on my fez that is the latest fashion,
Get into the coach dressed up in all my finery,
And search for a sweetheart of fifteen years for me!

Of course, this is a satiric poem and should not be taken literally; but even so, it is clear that a tendency to frivolous behaviour in the younger generation is being observed and censured.

Even discreet flirting in public was not approved by society. And flagrant flirting could lead to a tragic end. In Fanny Davis's words:

In Abdülmecit's period [Abdülmecid I, r. 1839–1861] the women drove about in open landaus, guarded by eunuchs on horseback. Two women, daring too much for their time and place, threw kisses to a French officer as they passed him on Galata Bridge. No doubt thinking a gentleman could do no less, he threw kisses back, whereupon a eunuch struck him in the face. As the kisses had been too much for his gallantry, the insult was too great for his pride, and he pulled his sword and ran it through the eunuch. The result was an international incident. The French, however, maintained that their officer had been provoked, and the crisis subsided.¹¹⁰

110 Davis, Fanny, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 136.

We do not know whether the women actually threw kisses or not. But their behaviour was probably such that the officer felt at liberty to throw *them* kisses.

Faced with strict rules of seclusion, the Ottoman women found ways of circumventing them. We have already seen that they had a special, alluring gait. And here is Pardoe's contemporary testimony on the higher-class Ottoman women's effective use of their eyes in the year 1836. She writes that after having taken her morning bath, a Turkish lady may

[. . .] put on the *yashmac* and *feridjhe* [sic.], and sally forth, accompanied by two or three slaves, to pay visits to favourite friends; either on foot [. . .]; or in an araba, or carriage of the country, all paint, gilding, and crimson cloth, nestled among cushions, and making more use of her eyes than any being on earth save a Turkish woman would, with the best inclination in the world, be able to accomplish; such finished coquetry I never before witnessed as that of the Turkish ladies in the street. As the araba moves slowly along, the *feridjhe* is flung back to display its white silk lining and bullion tassels; and, should a group of handsome men be clustered on the pathway, that instant is accidentally chosen for arranging the *yashmac*. The dark-eyed dames of Spain, accomplished as they are in the art, never made more use of the graceful veil than do the orientals of the jealous *yashmac*.¹¹¹

Two lines out of a folk poem (*mani*) from Kúnos's collection are evidence of how daringly women of the popular classes could look at men in the nineteenth century, and also a reminder that oral literature is not restricted to rural environment.

What an alluring¹¹² glance
The girls of Beyoğlu [Pera] have!¹¹³

In the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman Muslim woman went out of her house with the coat-like *ferace*,¹¹⁴ she covered her head and face with a white

111 Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan*, 1, p. 33.

112 *Yaman*.

113 Kúnos, "Türkische Volkslieder (Schluss)", 4, p. 38.

114 Pakalın, Mehmet Zeki, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 601–2, s.v. "Ferace".

cloth called *yaşmak*.¹¹⁵ The *yaşmak* did not cover her eyes and nose and one could also partially see her eyebrows and mouth. And it could be very thin,¹¹⁶ so that rather than hiding the features, it only hid any blemishes in the face. In short, the veil called *yaşmak* did not always do justice to its meaning, since the Turkish verb *yaşmak* means “to cover, to hide”.

Yasemin Avcı gives information about various edicts of the nineteenth century having to do with sartorial questions and outings.¹¹⁷ For example, an imperial edict of 1821 tried to hinder the mingling of men and women in pleasure grounds. Women's returning late from the pleasure grounds on the Bosphorus became the subject of edicts of prohibition, even containing the stipulation of punishment (Avcı cites an edict of 1837). Edicts criticized women for not complying with the Muslim sartorial rules in market places, in Beyoğlu and in pleasure grounds, for using tulle instead of the (regular) *yaşmak* (edict of 1891), for promenading in open carriages (*arabas*) where everyone passed, and for remaining in places such as Fenerbahçe and Sarıyer on the outskirts of Istanbul until night time (edict of 1891). Avcı gives a short passage from such an edict (an *irade* of 1888), which remarks that the non-compliance with the sartorial rules was such as to cause astonishment even on the part of foreigners.¹¹⁸ That a certain *laissez-aller* with respect to clothing did not escape the notice of foreigners is illustrated by Davis's relating that Théophile “Gautier, about 1875, heard merry voices as the gilded, painted, and curtained *arabas* passed, and sometimes glimpsed a lovely face with the veil thrown back”.¹¹⁹

The relative freedom of women during outings in carriages to pleasure grounds and other places gave some opportunity for women and unrelated men to “see” each other. Fazıl Gökçek remarks that this was one plot device used by authors of the second half of the nineteenth century to bring about a first acquaintance between women and unrelated men.¹²⁰ He also points out

115 Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, III (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), p. 606, s.v. “Yaşmak”.

116 Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, I, p. 328, s.v. “Çarşaf”.

117 Avcı, Yasemin, “Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tanzimat Döneminde 'Otoriter Modernleşme' ve Kadının Özgürleşmesi Meselesi / 'Authoritarian modernity' in the Ottoman empire in the Tanzimat period and the question of women's liberty”, *OTAM (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)*, 21 (2007), pp. 8–10.

118 Avcı, “Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tanzimat Döneminde 'Otoriter Modernleşme' ve Kadının Özgürleşmesi Meselesi”, p. 9.

119 Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, p. 136.

120 See Gökçek, Fazıl, “Tanzimat Dönemi Roman ve Hikâyelerinde Kadın-Erkek İlişkilerinin Düzenlenişi ile İlgili Bazı Tespitler”, in *Küllerinden Doğan Anka – Ahmet Mithat Efendi Üzerine Yazılar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2012), pp. 79–93.

that the “impediment of the veil” could be used for comic effect, too, as Ahmed Midhat (d. 1912) did in his short story “Gençlik” (Youth). In this story the lady apparently wore a veil too thick for the man to distinguish her features, which led to a ridiculous case of mistaken identity, the object of his gallantry turning out to be his own aunt!¹²¹ Nevertheless, a prolific and innovative literary figure such as Ebüzziya Tevfik (d. 1913) could take a conservative stand and defend “the necessity of veiling for Muslim women”.¹²²

The authorities’ repeated attempts to enforce greater respect of the rules of segregation were not nearly as successful as they wished, though much too successful in the opinion of some critics. For example, on Ahmed Cevat’s (Emre, 1878–1961) views in his book *Bizde Kadın* (Women in Our Society)¹²³ İrvin Cemil Schick writes: “His devastating critique of spatial segregation by gender in both the urban setting of Istanbul and the rustic excursion spots that surrounded it deserves to be much better known today”.¹²⁴

Messages such as the one Hammer supposedly misunderstood are a means of communication wherever one may not communicate freely and easily. There is also a type of coded communication used in the Ottoman empire and commonly called “language of flowers”.¹²⁵ This is not the practice of giving flowers symbolic meanings, commonly known under this name in Europe. It is a sort of coded communication in which a number of small portable ordinary objects, such as flowers, fruits, vegetables, seeds, twigs, a needle, a stone, ink, hair, etc., function as signifiers. The signifieds are a number of short messages which rhyme with the appellations of the signifiers. The code is the rhyme relation between the signifiers and the signifieds. An example: the signifier “leaf (*yaprak*)” has the signified “Either love me or leave me” (*Ya sev beni ya bırak*).

121 Gökçek, “Tanzimat Dönemi Roman ve Hikâyelerinde Kadın-Erkek İlişkilerinin Düzenlenişi ile İlgili Bazı Tespitler”, p. 90.

122 Türesay, Özgür, “An almanac for Ottoman women: notes on Ebüzziya Tevfik’s *Takvümü’n-nisâ* (1317/1899), in *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives*, Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 233, footnote 28, and for a detailed account Türesay, Özgür, “*Mecmua-i Ebüzziya*’da Tesettür Meselesi ve Feminizm Tartışmaları”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 87 (March 2001), pp. 16–23.

123 Ahmed Cevat, *Bizde Kadın* (Istanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1328/1912).

124 Schick, İrvin Cemil, “Print capitalism and women’s sexual agency in the late Ottoman empire”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 31/1 (2011), p. 209. I sincerely thank İrvin Cemil Schick for providing me with this and other related articles of his.

125 For detailed information see Ambros, Edith Gülçin, “The ‘language of flowers’ and Ottoman Don Juans (*zenpâres*)”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 95 (2005), 19–43.

The code: the rhyme relation; here *-rak* (*yaprak – burak*). The receiver of the object must know what the rhyming message is (or can be, since some signifiers have more than one signified). The first known and quite detailed account of this was given by du Vignau in 1688.¹²⁶ This was followed by 16 examples given by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a letter she wrote from Istanbul in 1718.¹²⁷ In the course of time several lists of various lengths were made by, among others, Hammer-Purgstall. It is more than likely that such a secret ‘language’ was used at least partly because of the need for secrecy in exchanging messages of an emotional nature in unsanctioned love relationships. In fact, du Vignau writes that this need combined with widespread illiteracy led to its use, adding, however, that literate people also found pleasure in using it.¹²⁸ Men and women of all classes seem to have used it. Du Vignau and Lady Montagu were in contact with the higher classes. But a manuscript list that was possibly compiled already in the eighteenth century, published by this author,¹²⁹ addresses more particularly the popular classes as it contains some vulgar expressions. It bears the title

On the explanation of the womanizers’ (*zenpare*) riddles: These are the “meanings” that are necessary to the brethren at all times, each of which is worth a thousand piasters [if used] at the right time.

Conclusion

Illicit contact between the sexes was forbidden, but the findings of this study show that there was some modest but continuous frivolity and flirtation going on in both the urban and rural Ottoman environment through the centuries.

126 du Vignau, *Le secrétaire turc, contenant l'art d'exprimer ses pensées sans se voir, sans se parler & sans s'écrire...* (Paris: Michel Guerout, 1688). I thank Palmira Brummett sincerely for bringing this work to my attention. On “Du Vignau” being a pseudonym of Edouard de La Croix see Ghobrial, John-Paul, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, & Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 3–5. A book on *Le secrétaire...* is in preparation by Gerhard F. Strasser and Semih Tezcan.

127 *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Written During Her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa; to Which are Added Poems by the Same Author*, stereotype edition (Paris: P. Didot, 1800), pp. 159–161.

128 Du Vignau, *Le secrétaire turc, contenant l'art d'exprimer ses pensées sans se voir, sans se parler & sans s'écrire*, pp. 4–10.

129 See Ambros, “The ‘language of flowers’ and Ottoman Don Juans (*zenpâres*)”, pp. 21, 27–43.

The study is based primarily on literary works and concentrates on the venues of opportunities for flirtatious behaviour. The semi-private space of the *mahalle* and the village offered opportunities on a daily basis especially to women of the lower classes. The relative freedom of natural public space was bound to the fair seasons in the city, but not in villages where women helped with the farming. The opportunities offered by mingling in crowds in a large city were less routine and mainly at the disposal of the popular urban classes. The women of the higher and wealthier classes, both rural and urban, were much more secluded and this situation started to change gradually only in the eighteenth century.

The findings also illustrate how Ottoman women used elusive methods to circumvent the rules of seclusion. Three of these – a certain gait, special glances, ‘the flower language’ – have been mentioned, but there must have been more.

An Imagined Moral Community: Ottoman Female Public Presence, Honour and Marginality

Ebru Boyar

According to the sixteenth-century Ottoman historian Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, if men did not control women, then, due to their carnal needs, women would “pursue their desires, and rent the curtain of chastity and make unclean the veil of the grace of virtue and rush to mix with men who are not related”. Unable to defeat “the demon of desire”, they were not able to distinguish between good and evil.¹ His views were to be echoed almost 300 years later by Basiretçi Ali Efendi who condemned both the inappropriate behaviour of Muslim women during their excursions to Beyoğlu, and their male relatives who allowed their “hussies” to behave in such a way.² Such male responsibility for female virtue was not merely a social expectation, but became part of legal practice when misbehaving women were entrusted to male relations, as was the case, for example, in 1564 when Rukiye, daughter of Mahmud from the *mahalle* (neighbourhood) of Kanber in Bursa, a woman who had been warned numerous times about her conduct by “just Muslims” but who had taken no notice and who was mixing with men not related to her, was entrusted to her brother Seyyid Yusuf for “controlling and guarding” by order of the sultan and a *hüccet* of the *kadı* of Bursa.³

This vision of men being responsible for the moral rectitude of the women of their households did not, however, reflect the reality on the ground, as indicated by the Turkish proverb “not men but virtue and honour protect women”.⁴ What in fact controlled women’s virtue and honour was a complex and amorphous system of social control imposed by an ‘imagined moral community’,

1 Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Mevâ’idü’n-nefâis fî-ķavâ’idi’l-mecâlis*, Mehmet Şeker (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), p. 364.

2 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, Nuri Sağlam (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), p. 109.

3 6 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (972/1564–1565), 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), vol. 1, no. 497, pp. 270–1, 972 (1564/1565).

4 Tülbentçi, Feridun Fazıl (ed.), *Türk Atasözleri* (Istanbul: İnkılâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1963), p. 230.

a fluid and flexible structure which invested every member of society with the perceived right to impose moral standards and protect honour, and thus dictate female conduct, for at the heart of honour lay female behaviour. The grip of this imagined moral community was strengthened by mechanisms of collective honour, as evidenced in the concept of “mahallenin namusu” (the honour of the *mahalle*) or “köyün namusu” (the honour of the village). This concept of collective honour legitimized the actions of members of a community who interfered in the lives of others who were not related but whose conduct they felt able to censure and control. Women who did not conform, or were suspected of not conforming, to honour and virtue as perceived by the imagined moral community had their honour called into question and were in danger of losing their respectability and becoming social outcasts.

The desire to protect women's honour had less to do with concern for women than it did with concern for the well-being of society as a whole, for an immoral woman meant an immoral society. As Şemseddin Sami, a leading intellectual, put it in the late nineteenth century, “Just as a woman is a concrete example of good morality and can protect the morality of society which is worthy of praise, so the bad morals and dissipation of a woman can destroy the morality of society”.⁵ Inappropriate female attire could lead not only other (female) “people of virtue” (ehl-i irz) and “possessors of chastity” (sahibe-i ismet) astray, something which concerned Ahmed III in 1726,⁶ but also men, for according to a popular song from the early twentieth century “*çarşafs*⁷ slit up the sides, voluptuous legs revealed, cover up, oh devilish loose women, for when the traders see you, they faint”.⁸

It is clear that women were a common presence in Ottoman public space throughout the life of the empire, as discussed in the introduction to this volume. Their right to be out all night for the celebrations at the beginning of Ramazan in Cairo was even written into their marriage contracts, their husbands' having no right to prevent this or even to ask their wives where they had been, according to Evliya Çelebi.⁹ The state responded to female presence

5 Ş. Sami, *Kadınlar* (Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1311), p. 7; for the modern Turkish version of the text, see Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar*, İsmail Doğan (ed.) (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1996), p. 14.

6 Aydın, M. Akif (ed.), *Kadı Sicillerinde İstanbul. XV. ve XVII. Yüzyıl* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), p. 162.

7 A woman's outdoor garment. See Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı* (Istanbul: Türkiye Basımevi, 1946), p. 133.

8 Koçu, Reşat Ekrem, *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Sümerbank Kültür Yayınları, 1969), p. 9.

9 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi. Mısır, Sudan, Habeş (1672–1680)*, vol. x (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938), p. 356. Such a dispensation was special and did not apply to other

at sultanic celebrations such as circumcisions by ensuring their protection and arranging for their comfort, as Ahmed III did, for example, arranging food in the Okçular Tekkesi in Istanbul for the women attending the celebrations for the circumcision of his sons and placing janissaries at the door to ensure their safety.¹⁰ While on occasion banning the presence of women for reasons of security, the state could also intervene to prevent over-zealous control of female public presence. In 1580 Murad III (1574–1595), who had earlier issued an order that young women should not be allowed to travel around on boats together with unruly men (*levends*), reacted to the over-zealous application of this order by the “group of virtuous men” (“ehl-i ırz taifesi”), who were applying it to old women and preventing them from taking the ferries from one side of the water to the other in the capital. This order, the sultan noted, while applying to young women was not intended to inconvenience the old and poor.¹¹

While a public female presence was a norm, the main question in the context of honour as defined by the imagined moral community was not the fact of women being visible in public space but how their behaviour there was perceived. While women visiting the graves of their relatives or the shrines of holy personages was acceptable, drinking wine, arrack and coffee and eating together with unrelated men, as various Christian women did in Damascus when they visited cemeteries where “they engaged in every scandalous behavior, and pranced around, and trespassed all limits”, according to an outraged priest, was not.¹² Similarly, while spending time in open spaces was a central part of Ottoman social life, for both men and women alike,¹³ such spaces were also infamous locations for illicit and immoral activities. In 1748, three women from Karamürsel, Emetullah, the wife of Arnavudoğlu, İldicioğlu’s wife Ümmügülsüm and his daughter Hadice were accused of exceeding the bounds of proper behaviour, of not keeping themselves concealed from unrelated

celebrations, see Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi Mısır, Sudan, Habeş (1672–1680)*, x, p. 387.

10 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet Ağa, *Nusretname*, İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (ed.) (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1962), vol. II, fascicle II, p. 401. See also Seyid Vehbi, *Sûrnâme (Üçüncü Ahmedin Oğullarının Sünnet Düğünü)*, Reşad Ekrem Koçu (ed.) (Istanbul: Çığır Kitabevi, 1939), p. 36.

11 Ahmet Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1553–1591)* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1935), no. 6, p. 41.

12 Quoted in Sadji, Dana, *The Barber of Damascus. Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 30.

13 See for example, Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 205–8.

men and of indulging daily in “very familiar intercourse and prostitution with unrelated men night and day in lodgings and vineyards and orchards”.¹⁴

Unseemly female behaviour in public was always of concern to the state, which issued orders throughout the centuries to control it, responding, for example, to request of the *kadı* of Yoros that the practice of women and *lev-ends*, who, on the pretext of visiting the grave of Akbaba near the village of Deresekili, came together in mixed groups “in contravention of the holy law” and behaved in a way certain to cause sedition, should be stopped.¹⁵ Reports of immoral female behaviour were regularly passed to government officials, as was the case, for example, in 1904 when news was received that Muslim women resident in Heybeliada were not observing the rules of veiling, but were sitting around with their hair displayed in places such as night clubs and hotel gardens, while some Muslim women had created a drinking den in the shop of someone called Ponti in Yeşilköy.¹⁶ In part in relation to concerns over public morality sultans frequently sought to regulate female attire. In 1702 Sultan Mustafa II, noting that women had given up their customary garments which they had worn of old and were instead using tight-fitting *feraces* and covering themselves with muslin veils so flimsy that they were visible to unrelated males, ordered the *kadı* of Edirne to ensure that from now on those who were not mindful of proper dressing were warned that they would be punished.¹⁷ The state did not always, however, respond to ‘immoral’ female behaviour in the way that some might have required. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali was very disappointed at the failure of the authorities who would not even take seriously the information about the behaviour of Cairene women who met soldiers when they went to visit religious shrines in order to arrange rendezvous in “the usual places of sin and sedition”.¹⁸

14 Kala, Ahmet et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Külliyyâtı II. İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri. İstanbul'da Sosyal Hayat 1* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), p. 291.

15 *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (972/1564–1565)*, I, no. 1297, pp. 267–8, 25 Zilkade 972 (24 June 1565).

16 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul (hereafter BOA), İrade Hususi, 74, 18 Rebiülahir 1322 (2 July 1904), in Engin, Vahdettin (ed.), *Sultan Abdülhamid ve İstanbul'u* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2001), p. 56.

17 Özcan, Abdülkadir (ed.), *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099–116/1688–1704)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), p. 179; See also Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât. Tahlil ve Metin (1066–116/1656–1704)*, Abdülkadir Özcan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 745.

18 Tietze, Andreas (ed.), *Mustafâ Âlî's Description of Cairo of 1599* (Vienna: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), p. 115; and also see Gelibolulu

Much of the policing of female public behaviour was not, however, provided by the state but orchestrated by the community and it was the perception of the imagined moral community which largely set the parameters of respectability in the public space and which dictated whether a woman was respectable or not, a member of the society or an outcast.

Definitions of Respectability

Female respectability is generally discussed in relation to female seclusion. The term often referred to in this context is “*muhaddere*”, which appears in legal documents, such as *fetvas* and *kanunnames*,¹⁹ and was sometimes used interchangeably with “*ehl-i perde*” (veiled, chaste woman).²⁰ Leslie Peirce takes the term *muhaddere* to mean “respectable”²¹ or “honourable”.²² According to Peirce, *muhaddere* “in sixteenth century thinking connoted a reputation for chaste behavior and its corollary, observation of the protocols of veiling and seclusion”.²³ The term “links moral status with controlled visibility of the female body”.²⁴ However, the exact definition of the concept of *muhaddere* was not so clear cut. While according to the sixteenth-century *şeyhülislam* Ebussuud Efendi, a woman who was accompanied by servants and attendants and who carried herself in a dignified manner, could be counted as *muhaddere*, even if she went to the *hamam*, a wedding or on an excursion,²⁵ Çatalcalı

Mustafa Ali, *Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâtü'z-zâhire*, Orhan Şaik Gökyay (ed.) (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1984), p. 47.

- 19 See for example, Düzdağ, M. Ertuğrul (ed.), *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), p. 55.
- 20 Akgündüz, Ahmed, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri. 8. Kitap. III. Murad Devri Kanunnâmeleri – III. Mehmed Devri Kanunnâmeleri* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1994), p. 114.
- 21 Peirce, Leslie, “‘The law shall not languish’: social class and public conduct in sixteenth-century Ottoman legal discourse”, in *Hermeneutics and Honor. Negotiating Female “Public” Space in Islamic/ate Societies*, Asma Afsaruddin (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 140; Peirce, Leslie, “Domesticating sexuality: harem culture and Ottoman imperial law”, in *Harem Histories. Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Marilyn Booth (ed.) (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 105.
- 22 Peirce, “Domesticating sexuality”, p. 129.
- 23 Peirce, “Domesticating sexuality”, p. 105.
- 24 Peirce, “‘The law shall not languish’”, p. 140.
- 25 Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı*, no. 154 and 155, p. 55.

Ali Efendi, the *şeyhülislam* in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, a man not known for extremely conservative views,²⁶ ruled that only a woman who did not leave her house “by night or day”, except in cases of dire necessity, could be *muhaddere*.²⁷ Thus, for Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, a woman who appeared in court, destroyed her position as a *muhaddere* woman. However, according to the same collection of *fetvas*, if a woman who was not *muhaddere* did not appear in court when summoned to do so, she was to be punished.²⁸ The lack of clarity about the term *muhaddere* continued in the next century. According to a *fetva* issued by Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, who was the *şeyhülislam* between 1718 and 1730, if a woman went out and engaged in business affairs with men (shopping, for example), then she could not be *muhaddere*.²⁹ *Muhaddere* was thus a ‘concertina’ term, expanding and contracting its meaning according to period and, apparently, the personality of the authority setting the parameters of what it meant.

As noted by Leslie Peirce, *muhaddere* was a social norm not an Islamic one,³⁰ for it was not peculiar to Muslims but applied to all Ottoman women, as stressed by Ebussuud Efendi.³¹ To be *muhaddere* required wealth, just as respectability did, for example, in fifteenth-century southern Spain where upper class women veiled and were secluded.³² It was therefore out of the reach of most Ottoman women. This clearly did not mean that most Ottoman women were not respectable or honourable, but does require a more restricted understanding of the term *muhaddere*, for it carried with it both respectability and high social status, and cannot be understood more generally as defining Ottoman female honour nor can it be taken as a term around which to centre a discussion of Ottoman female honour.³³

26 İpşirli, Mehmet, “Çatalcalı Ali Efendi”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. VIII (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), pp. 234–5.

27 Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları. Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi- Cild-i Sâni*, H. Necâti Demirtaş (ed. and annotated) (Istanbul: Kubbealtı, 2014), p. 12.

28 Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları. Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi- Cild-i Sâni*, pp. 12 and 252.

29 Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetâvâ*, Süleyman Kaya, Betül Algın, Zeynep Trabzonlu and Asuman Erkan (eds.) (Istanbul: Klasik, 2011), no. 1822, p. 354.

30 Peirce, “Domesticating sexuality”, pp. 141–42.

31 Düzdağ, Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi *Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı*, no. 156, p. 55.

32 Mujica, Bárbara (ed.), *Women Writers of Early Modern Spain. Sophia's Daughters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. xxvi.

33 Peirce, Leslie, *Morality Tales. Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 154–61.

Ottoman legal texts such as *fetvas* and *kadı* court records (*sicils*) in fact offer other, more general terms for female respectability, such as “afife” (chaste),³⁴ “saliha” (pious),³⁵ “ehl-i irz” (people of virtue) and “ismet” (chaste),³⁶ which carried no connotations of social status, wealth or age. Quite what such terms encompassed changed, of course, according to location and period, as the concept of what made a respectable woman varied according to the perceptions of local imagined moral communities.

The most common term used for women (and also on occasion for men), who were not respectable was “yaramaz” (unruly, badly behaved or, literally, useless or good for nothing), an adjective that did not simply refer to adulterous female behaviour but had a wider meaning including an element of disturbing order and social peace. Women could also be defined as respectable/not respectable by using the phrases “kendi halinde olma/olmama” (to be/not to be within their own bounds) or in “sui hal” (misconduct). Women, regardless of religion, could be categorised into “pious (*saliha*) and sinner (*facire*)”, a categorization used, for example, by the sultan in relation to clothes regulations at the beginning of the eighteenth century.³⁷

All such terms were flexible and slippery, and dependant on individual or collective interpretation rather than being clearly established definitions. What placed a woman ‘within’ or ‘without bounds’ was often the verdict of her community. In the late seventeenth century, Saliha, daughter of Abdullah from Yahşibeğ *mahalle* in Bursa, was accused of stealing an axe and a white bath wrap from her female neighbour, both items being found in Saliha Hatun’s house. There were no witnesses who saw her stealing these items, but four men from her *mahalle* were asked about the “condition” (“keyfiyet-i hal”) of Saliha Hatun and each testified that “in truth the aforesaid Saliha Hatun does not keep within her bounds and, she goes out and about in bad (*yaramaz*) places and she is not a good woman”.³⁸ These men’s impression of Saliha Hatun’s moral character was sufficient for her to be condemned as a thief.

34 See for example, Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü’l-Fetâvâ*, no. 584, p. 118; Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları. Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi- Cild-i Evvel*, p. 243.

35 See for example, Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları. Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi- Cild-i Evvel*, pp. 245 and 247.

36 Aydın, *Kadı Sicillerinde İstanbul*, p. 162.

37 Aydın, *Kadı Sicillerinde İstanbul*, p. 162.

38 Abacı, Nurcan, *Bursa Şehri’nde Osmanlı Hukuku’nun Uygulanması (17. Yüzyıl)* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), p. 193, note 189, from Bursa Şeriye Sicilleri, B 145/360, 18 A 3 (1097–1098/1685–1686).

Just as the community's verdict on the propriety of its female members could result in condemnation, so, too, could it bring about the reverse, for a woman perceived as honourable by the community was accepted as such. For instance according to a *fetva* issued by the eighteenth-century *şeyhülislam* Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, a man's insulting his wife by calling her "adulterous" could be grounds for divorce and the retention of her dowry (*mehr*) by the woman if she was recognised as chaste (*afife*) by the community.³⁹ The power of social perception was such that the opinion of the community could count for more than witnesses in a court case. If there was doubt about the chaste character of a woman, even if she produced witnesses to testify to her upright character, this would not automatically remove doubts about her in the eyes of the authorities. When in Istanbul, Ayşe, the daughter of Hacı İsmail, was accused of being a prostitute by Hacı Salih, she took him to the court for slander and produced two legally acceptable male witnesses to testify to her good character. But the *kadı* did not punish Hacı Salih for slander because "it is not sure that the aforementioned Ayşe is chaste (*afife*)".⁴⁰

The imagined moral community thus had the power to label a woman honourable or dishonourable as it thought fit, leaving the woman concerned with no recourse against this judgement. Such social perceptions of respectability were fluid, mutated through time and were modified by a range of factors such as location, custom, social status and age. While in the mid-sixteenth century, it was acceptable for a woman to send letters explaining her dreams to a *şeyh*, as Asiye Hatun from Üsküp (Skopje) did, despatching her dream letters (whose contents could be interpreted mystically but were also of a sexual nature) first to the Halveti Şeyh Muslihüddin Efendi in Uziçe (Užice in modern Serbia) through the intermediary of a "hoca" woman who was her confidant, and then, on his death to his son and successor, letters which it was even deemed permissible to put together in a manuscript, making the private dreams of Asiye Hatun in effect public property,⁴¹ by the following century women merely going to listen to a *şeyh* could be taken as an immoral act and condemned, at least by some.⁴²

39 Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l-Fetâvâ*, p. 118, no. 584.

40 Akgündüz, Ahmet, et al., *Şer'îye Sicilleri Seçme Hükümler II* (Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1989), p. 93.

41 Kafadar, Cemal, "Mütereddüt Bir Mutasavvıf: Üsküplü Asiye Hatun'un Rüya Defteri 1641–1643", in *Kim Var İmiş Biz Burada Yoğ İken. Dört Osmanlı: Yeniçeri, Tüccar, Derviş ve Hatun* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012), pp. 125–34.

42 Develi, Hayati (ed.), *XVII. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair Risâle-i Garîbe* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998), p. 28.

Social concepts of honour and respectability also varied from location to location, there being a stark contrast, for example, between what was acceptable female behaviour in the Arab provinces of the empire and in the Anatolian heartland. In a sixteenth-century miniature from Baghdad women were depicted listening to an *imam* from the gallery in the mosque without their faces being covered.⁴³ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali was shocked by women, even the wives of high ranking men of the society (*ayan*), riding around on donkeys in Cairo, behaviour which would have been condemned in Anatolia (Rum). Worse even than this in Gelibolulu's estimation was the fact that although prostitutes elsewhere were punished by being publicly displayed on donkeys, in Cairo women exhibited themselves riding about on them of their own volition, leaving him scornfully to suggest that prostitutes were presumably punished there by being placed on camels.⁴⁴ For Evliya Çelebi, however, women riding donkeys, while odd, was still acceptable as the donkey was the usual mode of transportation there.⁴⁵ Women riding horses was similarly regional. According to Naciye Neyyal Hanım, who was the wife of Tevfik Bey [Biren], the governor of Jerusalem between 1897 and 1901, women riding horses in Jerusalem was "customary",⁴⁶ something it certainly was not among the Turks for whom such behaviour was not dignified.⁴⁷

The fluid and unfixed nature of the concept of respectability was reflected in that of the imagined moral community itself, for the community was far from a fixed entity and was composed of various layers and strands that were sometimes in opposition. Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, was highly critical of what he regarded as the lax ways of the grand *vezir* Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Paşa (d. 1730) and regarded his construction of swings and see-saws in various parts of Istanbul as paving the way to immorality, for such entertainments were used by women, whose squeals of excitement as they flew backwards and forwards on the swings filled the air and their drawer strings were displayed for all to see. With or without the permission of their husbands, women flocked to these entertainments and,

43 Bağcı, Serpil, Filiz Çağman, Günsel Renda and Zeren Tanındı, *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Istanbul: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2006), p. 247.

44 Tietze, *Mustafâ Âlî's Description of Cairo of 1599*, pp. 113–4. Also see Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâti'z-zâhire*, pp. 46–7.

45 Taştan, Yahya Kemal, "Evliya Çelebi'de Mısır: 16. ve 17. Yüzyıllarda Meşruyet ve Muhalefet", *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 11/2 (2011), p. 37.

46 Hürmen, Fatma Rezan (ed.), *Ressam Naciye Neyyal'in Mutlakıyet Meşrutıyet ve Cumhuriyet Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2004), p. 51.

47 Hürmen, *Ressam Naciye Neyyal'in Mutlakıyet Meşrutıyet ve Cumhuriyet Hatıraları*, p. 57.

as *kadıs* regarded women's desire for entertainment as legitimate, husbands, fearful of being divorced, were left with no option other than to acquiesce. The result, according to Şemdanizade was that "in each *mahalle* there no longer remained five women who could be called people of virtue".⁴⁸ Interestingly, while Şemdanizade's objections to the female frequenting of pleasure grounds can be considered an example of the views of a member of a more conservative segment of eighteenth-century Ottoman society, one can find the same reasoning being put forward in the early twentieth century by Salahaddin Asım, a man who objected to reducing women to mere sexual objects, defended the abolition of veiling and championed the rights of women to be educated and to work shoulder to shoulder with men. For Salahaddin Asım "every meadow, which was the greatest location for the action and occurrence of prostitution, was in effect the most extensive and most mixed brothel and to go there is the equivalent of going to a brothel", for these were places where men and women came to agreements, bargained and thus resembled the salons of brothels where, before retiring to private rooms, women were selected, the only difference being that while in the brothel men chose women, in the open air 'brothel' women could also choose men.⁴⁹

Conflicting views of respectability can also be seen in the reaction of old women in Istanbul to the new female fashions in the early twentieth century, when elderly women even resorted to physically attacking young females whose dress accentuated their natural beauty, an action which led to their banishment from the capital.⁵⁰ According to Reşat Ekrem Koçu, women who used excessive amounts of rouge were regarded as "hussies"⁵¹ and those who applied too much makeup were considered "prostitutes". A popular song from nineteenth-century Istanbul described the makeup and life style of such women thus: "Don't apply makeup morning to night/ don't wander round the streets from morning to night/ don't upset the heart of your esteemed husband/ I am heartily sick of this/ don't tell me that this is fashion".⁵² Women in this period were not even allowed to wear or carry flowers in public as

48 Aktepe, Münir (ed.), *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Târîhi. Mür'it-tevarih 1* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976), p. 3.

49 Salahaddin Asım, *Türk Kadınlığının Tereddisi Yahut Karışma* (Istanbul: Türk Yurdu Kitabhanesi (Resimli Kitab Matbaası), n.d.), pp. 215–16; for a modern Turkish version, see Salahaddin Asım, *Osmanlıda Kadınlığın Durumu*, Metin Martı (ed.) (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1989), p. 145.

50 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, Alpay Kabacalı (ed.) (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), pp. 32–3.

51 Koçu, *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*, p. 12.

52 Koçu, *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*, p. 99.

such actions were considered an indication of flirtatiousness and those women who did so were labelled “harlots” and “hussies”.⁵³ Not only what women wore, but when, where and with whom they wandered about in public was sometimes sufficient to establish views about their characters. Such views, although completely unfounded, could be acted on with dramatic consequences. In Bursa in 1911 two drivers, Hasan and Süleyman, attacked Abdullah son of Mehmed from the *mahalle* of İkiKapılı Mescit, his wife Hadice, his brother-in-law Şirin Efendi and his son Ahmed at night, wrongly thinking that the men were “womanizers” and the woman a “prostitute”.⁵⁴

The power of misconceived perception and of gossip could also touch women from the upper echelons of society. The poet Fitnat Hanım, who was regarded as a pioneering female character and whose poetry was held in high esteem, was described by Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi in a report he submitted to Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) as “a poet and famous harlot”.⁵⁵ Even if such women had the connections to protect themselves, they were still vulnerable to unsubstantiated gossip about their morals. It was presumably concern for such moral interpretation of their behaviour that made Ottoman women very cautious over the males they met when in public. Even the most ‘Europeanized’ female members of the Ottoman upper class such as Princess Nazlı, the granddaughter of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt and Princess Vicdan Halim objected to meeting “a Turkish gentleman” who was also on board the British vessel *Devastation*, which they visited in the company of Lady Layard, the wife of the British ambassador, in July 1878. They had no such scruples, however, about talking to European gentlemen but, as Lady Layard noted in her diary, “they could not speak to Turks”. She added that the princesses were “delighted at the civility of our gentlemen”, when they were provided with eau de cologne and cold water by the captain of the ship.⁵⁶ On another occasion Lady Layard’s guest, Madame Hilmi Paşa, did not wear her *yaşmak* while watching a tennis match, despite the fact that the British ambassador and secretaries were present.⁵⁷ In order not to give any space to hostile gossip,

53 Koçu, *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*, p. 28.

54 Kaplanoğlu, Raif, *Meşrutiyet’ten Cumhuriyet’e Bursa (1876–1926)* (Istanbul: Avrasya Etnografya Vakfı Yayınları, 2006), p. 257, note 455.

55 Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi, *Sultan İkinci Abdülhamid Han’a Takdim Edilen Jurnallerin Tahkik Raporları (1891–1893)*, Raşit Gündoğdu, Kemal Erkan and Ahmet Temiz (eds.) (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), p. 65.

56 Kunalalp, Sinan (ed.), *Twixt Pera and Therapia. The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), p. 126.

57 Kunalalp, *The Constantinople Diaries of Lady Layard*, p. 151.

high class Ottoman women had therefore to avoid the company not of foreign but of Ottoman men.

'Acceptable' Marginality

Although women, from every stratum of society, were subject to the moral scrutiny of society and were under constant threat of the dire effects of gossip, a reality which remained constant throughout the empire's history and throughout its territories even if the factors which defined respectability changed, certain groups were allowed to act outside the accepted norms of the society. One such group was the gypsies, who, marginal to settled communities, and legally accepted as such, paid a separate tax to the state, even Muslim gypsies paying the *cizye*.⁵⁸ The gypsy communities set their own moral code to which the women adhered and were involved in prostitution⁵⁹ in which both their own women, female slaves and the women from other societies were engaged.⁶⁰ The acceptability of such gypsy prostitution, at least for a certain period and region, is indicated by the fact that under the 1530 "Kanunname-i Kıbtıyan-ı Rumeli" (the law regarding the gypsies of Rumeli) the state taxed gypsy women who were involved in illicit relations in Istanbul, Edirne and Sofia at the rate of 100 *akçes* per month.⁶¹ Further, when gypsy communities involved in prostitution were punished, they were usually punished not for prostitution per se but for creating social disorder and sedition.⁶²

Such communal marginality allowed gypsy females greater public visibility and their appearance in public without veils was tolerated, at least in late nineteenth-century Istanbul when Warwick Goble painted them in this way, while he depicted other urban women in veils and *feraces*.⁶³ In his newspaper column, Ahmed Rasim, writing in the late nineteenth century, vividly

58 Altınöz, İsmail, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Çingeneler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2013), pp. 234–60.

59 Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, 2001), pp. 45–6.

60 *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, I, no. 563, pp. 308–9, 972 (1564/1565).

61 Barkan, Ömer Lütfi, *xv ve xvi inisi Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları. Birinci Cilt Kanunlar* (Istanbul: Bürhaneddin Matbaası, 1943), p. 249.

62 Akdağ, Mustafa, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kaygısı. Celalî İsyânları* (Ankara: Barış, 1999), pp. 150–2.

63 van Millingen, Alexander, *Constantinople Painted by Warwick Goble Described by Alexander van Millingen* (London: A. & C. Black, 1906), between pp. 52 and 53.



FIGURE 7.1 *Female gypsy flower sellers, "Flower-sellers. Some of the gypsies wear garments rivalling in brilliancy the flowers they sell", in Van Millingen, Alexander, Constantinople Painted by Warwick Goble Described by Alexander van Millingen (London: A. & C. Black, 1906), between pp. 52 and 53.*

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described three or four beautiful and graceful gypsy dancers whom he met on an excursion to Büyükdere, their head covers decorated with flowers, wearing faded and torn light blue cloaks, red *entaris* (loose robes) with *şalvars* (baggy trousers), their fingers covered with henna, their eyelashes blacked with kohl, their teeth like snow and the locks of their hair braided like cords.⁶⁴ This permissibility and, to a certain extent, acceptability of such gypsy female appearance in public even led a writer in the newspaper *Hadika* to suggest in 1873 that Muslim gypsy girls be employed in the place of Armenian actresses in Turkish-speaking theatres because “their accent is suitable for the pronunciation of the

64 Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları*, Nuri Akbayar (ed.) (Istanbul: Oğlak Klasikleri, 2005), pp. 57–8.

Ottoman language” while, in this case, “their moral unsuitability need not be considered”.⁶⁵ In a period when Muslim women were not allowed to appear on stage, such a suggestion was made to protect the Turkish language and to ease the development of the theatre, as Greek and Armenian actresses were not considered capable of pronouncing Turkish correctly.⁶⁶ That the status of gypsy removed a woman from social moral condemnation by inserting her in a separate and distinct moral code was not found palatable by all. When Cenab Şahabeddin visited Cairo at the end of the nineteenth century he was horrified to see covered women mixing with unrelated men, both foreigners and locals, in a park at night. That the Cairenes described these women as gypsies, thus wishing “to lighten” the issue, did nothing to soften his condemnation. “If these loose-moraled girls are really gypsies”, he asked, “why then is permission given for them to wander among Muslim women?” For him they were nothing other than “women who sell their bodies”.⁶⁷

Apart from gypsies, there were other marginal female groups whose behaviour was not subjected to the moral norms of society, and whose public visibility was thus subject to less control. Girls who sang and danced in public escaped public censure. Evliya Çelebi, commenting on the Ethiopian slave girls in Mecca, who were “tawny as raw aubergines” and who “set hearts aflutter”, noted that these girls, who danced in the coffee houses, were “the pride of Arabia and no cause for shame”.⁶⁸ Metin And has argued, on the basis of illustrations in Johannes Lewenkew’s album from 1586, that female dancers, sometimes dressed in men’s clothes, not only performed in front of female audiences in public space, that is outside the *harem*, but also danced with their male colleagues in public in the late sixteenth century.⁶⁹ *Ghazeyehs*, public-dancing girls, were permitted to dance on the streets unveiled in Cairo and “often perform in front of the house, or in the court” according to Edward Lane, who, however added that “by many persons, even this is not deemed strictly

65 *Hadika*, 27 Ocak [sic.] 1289, no. 53, quoted in And, Metin, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1839–1908)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1972), p. 118.

66 And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1839–1908)*, pp. 114–18.

67 Cenab Şahabeddin, *Hac Yolunda*, Nurullah Şenol (ed.) (Istanbul: Bordo Siyah Klasik Yayınları, 2004), pp. 122–3.

68 Dankoff, Robert and Sooyong Kim (eds. and trans.), *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (London: Eland, 2011), p. 361; see also Kate Fleet’s chapter, “The extremes of visibility: slave women in Ottoman public space”, in this volume.

69 And, Metin, *Kırk Gün. Kırk Gece. Eski Donanma ve Şenliklerde Seyirlik Oyunları* (Istanbul: Taç Yayınları, 1959), p. 65.

proper".⁷⁰ Even if not considered entirely proper, a social blind eye was turned in these instances to women entertaining men.⁷¹

Other women were exempt from social censure for behaviour, which would in normal circumstances have been considered improper, due to their work or to their special status. Midwives, for example, were allowed to see their patients at odd hours of the day and night and were often accompanied by unrelated men, relatives of females in labour, when they went to attend to women in need.⁷² Madness and madness associated with holiness could be factors allowing women to behave outside the accepted bounds of moral behaviour set by the imagined moral community. The fact that Elfi Kadın from Edirne, who died in 1712, was able to wander through the streets with her face unveiled was due not to any status accorded to her because of age,⁷³ but to the fact that she was "obsessed by divine love" ("meczube") and that she was well-known among the people of Edirne for her miracles and divinations.⁷⁴

The *Mahalle* and the Removal of Respectability

Although definitions of respectability and honour were fluid, fuzzy and flexible, once a woman was perceived by society as no longer respectable, the security of her "private" domain evaporated and she became vulnerable to direct intervention by the state, the neighbourhood, or the society at large. The most effective instrument in marking her as respectable or not was the *mahalle*, a quintessential element in Ottoman social make up and the imagined moral community par excellence. Although the goodwill of one's neighbour could be viewed sceptically as a very well-known Turkish proverb, "the neighbour's

70 Lane, Edward, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: Everyman's Library, 1963), pp. 195, 384–89.

71 See for examples, Yılmaz, Fikret, "Boş Vaktiniz Var mı? Veya 16. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Şarap, Eğlence ve Suç", *Tarih ve Tolum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 1 (2005), 11–49; Beyru, Rauf, *19. Yüzyılda İzmir'de Yaşam* (Istanbul: Literatür Yayınları, 2000), pp. 260–2.

72 See for example, Enfi Hasan Hulus Halveti, "Tezkiretü'l-müteahhirîn". *XVI. ve XVIII. Asırlarda İstanbul Velîleri ve Delîleri*, Mustafa Tatcı and Musa Yıldız (eds.) (Istanbul: MVT Yayıncılık, 2007), p. 102.

73 Seniority could be a factor which eased female public visibility. For an example see Develi, *Risâle-i Garîbe*, p. 28. Leslie Peirce discusses the various phases of female life cycle in her article "Seniority, sexuality, and social order: the vocabulary of gender in early modern Ottoman Anatolia", in *Women in the Ottoman Empire. Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.) (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1997), pp. 169–96.

74 Enfi Hasan Hulus Halveti, "Tezkiretü'l-müteahhirîn", p. 101.

hen looks like a goose and the neighbour's wife looks like a maiden to the other neighbour",⁷⁵ clearly shows, the Ottoman system gave much responsibility to the neighbours and neighbourhoods over policing social order and, if necessary, imposing it. Inhabitants of a *mahalle* stood as guarantors (*kefil*) for each other, and any crime, such as theft or murder, within the borders of a *mahalle* was subjected to collective punishment, and the members of the *mahalle*, under the leadership of local notables and *imams*, priests or rabbis, were responsible for self-policing in order to ensure that order was maintained within its borders.⁷⁶ While the *mahalle* could mark a woman as dishonourable, it could also choose not to. Although adultery was a crime according to Islamic law, witnesses were not under an obligation to report it to the authorities. A clause in the *kanunname* of Selim I (1512–1520) from 1520 stated that if someone discovered adultery and did not report it to the *kadı*, there was no punishment. On the other hand, interestingly, if a person was aware of theft and did not report it to the *kadı*, it remained a crime for which a fine of ten *akçes* was imposed.⁷⁷ A similar clause appeared earlier in the *kanunname* of Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481).⁷⁸ The granting of such power to neighbours was not necessarily thought a good thing, Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, for example, remarking approvingly that among the Cairenes no one wanted to spy on their neighbours.⁷⁹

In this environment, the inhabitants of the close-knit *mahalles*, bound together by the pressure of collective responsibility, watched each other closely and even reported unruly behaviour to the inhabitants of other *mahalles*, if deemed necessary. Such close scrutiny hampered laddish behaviour, according to Ahmed Rasim.⁸⁰ *Mahalle* inhabitants, unhappy about the behaviour of women in the quarter, could warn or counsel them in order to encourage them back onto the 'right path', or they could report them as immoral to the authorities. Complaints from residents of a *mahalle* could be grounds for punishment,

75 Tülbentçi, *Türk Atasözleri*, p. 261.

76 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 121–8; Boyar, Ebru, "The Ottoman city: 1500–1800", in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, Peter Clark (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 284.

77 Yücel, Yaşar and Selami Pulaha (eds.), *1. Selim Kânünnâmeleri (1512–1520)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 150.

78 Barkan, "cvî Hâzihî Süret-i Kanun-ı Padişahî. Sultan Mehmed Bin Murad Han Tâbe Tekâ Allahü", in *xv ve xvi inîci Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları*, clause 12, p. 388.

79 Tietze, *Mustafâ Âlî's Description of Cairo of 1599*, p. 108.

80 Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-i Atik*, Ali Hayalioğlu (ed.) (Istanbul: Üç Harf Yayıncılık, 2005), p. 261.

including exile from the *mahalle*,⁸¹ as was the case in 1628 of Sema Hatun bint Mehmed from the Debbag Yunus *mahalle* in Istanbul. Leading members of the *mahalle* community accused her of being a constant source of sedition in her own house and of receiving unrelated men in her home. Wanting her removed from the *mahalle*, they took her to court, stating that they had many times asked her to leave but with no effect. As a result, the *kadı* ordered that she should move to another *mahalle* within three days.⁸² Earlier, in 1588, four respectable male members of Debbagin *mahalle* in Ankara complained about Yasemin bint Mehmed who was accused of being “yaramaz” and a prostitute. They wanted her removed from their *mahalle* not only because of her immoral conduct in receiving unrelated men into her house day and night, but these upright members of the *mahalle* were also concerned that her presence would bring about serious consequences: “someday blood will flow in our *mahalle* because of her”.⁸³

Suspicion alone could be sufficient for a woman to be expelled from her *mahalle*. According to a *kanunname* from 1740/1741 (1153), “if the population of a *mahalle* or a village complains that someone is a thief or a prostitute, and if the population does not want that person and even if there is only suspicion and the matter is well-known to the people, then that person should be exiled from the *mahalle*”.⁸⁴ Proof of character could also be used against an individual in court, even if entirely unrelated to the case in hand. In April 1688, Havva bint Mustafa, an inhabitant of a village in the district of Bolu, took Mehmed Bey ibn Kasım Bey to court, accusing Mehmed Bey of having failed to return to her a chest containing 500 *guruş* and 500 *altın* (gold coins) which she had received from her husband and which she had entrusted to him. Mehmed Bey denied that Havva had given him any such chest and, accusing Havva of

81 Punishment by exile for what was perceived as immoral behaviour by the inhabitants of the *mahalle* could also happen to men, see the case of a man from Antep in 1752 who was accused of sexual harassment, drinking wine and bringing prostitutes to his house, actions which led not just to his own exile but to that of his parents and siblings as well, Güzelbey, Cemil Cahit and Hulusi Yetkin (eds.), *Gaziantep Şer'i Mahkeme Sicillerinden Örnekler (Cilt: 81–141) (Milâdî 1729–1825)* (Gaziantep: Yeni Matbaa, 1970), p. 60.

82 Karaca, Yılmaz et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri. İstanbul Mahkemesi 3* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 450, p. 316, 24 Cemaziülahır 1027 (18 June 1618).

83 Ongan, Halit (ed.), *Ankara'nın İki Numaralı Şer'îye Sicili, 1 Muharrem 997–8 Ramazan 998 (20 Kasım 1588–11 Temmuz 1590)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2014), no. 188, p. 21, Şevval 997 (Ağustos/Eylül 1589).

84 Quoted in Ergenç, Özer, “Osmanlı Şehrindeki “Mahalle”nin İşlevleri ve Nitelikleri Üzerine”, in *Şehir, Toplum, Devlet. Osmanlı Tarihi Yazıları* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013), p. 81, note 28.

having slandered him, he requested that Havva's character be investigated. As a result witnesses, who stood surety for Mehmed Bey's "upright and religious" character, described Havva as a "slanderer", suspected of being a prostitute, a woman "always out and about with men" who had slandered Mehmed Bey in this matter.⁸⁵

A *fetva* of Ebussuud Efendi about the position of a female singer in a *mahalle* is a very clear indication of the level to which a community's collective will could dominate the behaviour of an individual. In answer to the question "if a woman was a singer and she taught her own or other people's slave women the *saz*, and she had no quarrel with anyone, is it permissible for the people of the *mahalle* to expel her solely for teaching?", Ebussuud Efendi found that it was legally permissible.⁸⁶

Apart from lodging complaints with the authorities and taking unwelcome residents to court, the inhabitants of a *mahalle* had another, more direct method of intervention which they could apply, and that was the raid, an action which resulted in a very public display for the woman (or man) raided. Although order within the city was the responsibility of the *subaşı* and one of the duties of the *ases* (security personnel) was to conduct raids,⁸⁷ the inhabitants of a *mahalle*, either acting together with these officials or independently of them, and under the leadership of respectable members of the society and those, such as the *imam*, who, quasi officially, conducted relations between the *mahalle* and the government, could launch a raid against the house of someone suspected of immoral behaviour. The existence of this raiding mechanism graphically demonstrates just how the public/private divide dissolved when collective honour was at issue. The aim of such raiding, which constituted a collective act by an imagined moral community for the protection of honour, was not limited to catching couples in illicit relations but was, more generally, intended to apprehend men and women, who were not married or related, together in the same place.⁸⁸ Raids could thus be directed against drinking gatherings of men alone or those in which women were involved. Sexual

85 Çöpoğlu, Binnaz (ed.), *Bolu Şer'îye Sicili. 1687-1688 Tarihli 836 No'lu Defterin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirmesi* (Bolu: BAMER Yayınları, 2008), no. 167, pp. 242-4.

86 Düzdağ, Şeyhülislâm Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı, no. 999, p. 202.

87 Tosuner, Tayfun (ed.), *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân. Yeniçeri Kanunları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2011), p. 133; Ergenç, Özer, XVI. Yüzyılda Ankara ve Konya (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012), pp. 84-97.

88 See for example, Günalan, Rifat et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil (H. 987-988/ M. 1579-1580)* (İstanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 570, pp. 283-4.

relations were thus not necessarily at the forefront of raiding, which was rather aimed at any activity of which the *mahalle* did not approve.

In the late period of the Ottoman empire, raiding, which, at least for Istanbul, was seen as an ordinary event or a right of the *mahalle*,⁸⁹ could become in effect a collective lynching. A description of *mahalle* raiding in Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's novel *Tebessüm-i Elem* (A Smile of Sorrow), published in 1923, shows just where a raid could lead. In a violent night-time raid against the house of a *mahalle* resident, Uncu Ahmed, which was being used as a brothel, a rain of stones left no window unbroken and even people in the crowd were struck. Trying to prevent the crowd from entering his house, Ahmed came under abuse and insults from the *mahalle* ruffians, and despite their efforts to calm the inhabitants, the police were unable to assuage the anger of the crowd. In reply to Ahmed's attempt to clear himself, Hasan Efendi, one of the leading figures in the raid, replied: "A man like you who earns his living from dishonest trade cannot live in a respectable *mahalle*".⁹⁰ Immorality within the *mahalle* was regarded as a stain on collective honour, to such an extent that in the eighteenth-century *Zenannâme* (Book of Women), written by Enderunlu Fazıl, one of the men taking part in the raid cries out "I cannot wear a horn on my headgear", demanding that the "shameless pig" be removed from her house. In this case the man was not personally involved in any immoral action but felt himself so besmirched by the immoral goings on of this woman that he perceived himself as cuckolded by it.⁹¹

Apart from the public intervention of a raid, women (and men) could become the highly-visible targets of gossip, from which there was very little protection. Direct accusations could result in court appearances and punishment. Hanafi Islamic law required witness statements from those who had witnessed the act itself in order to prove adultery,⁹² and unfounded accusations of adultery or sexual assault could result in hefty fines and punishments, since *kazf* (false accusation) was a crime.⁹³ It was for this reason that calling a woman a "whore" or "adulterous" or using terms such as "pander" in the heat

89 See for example, Sükan, Işık, "Yağlıkçının Hindi Cihan Karısı", in *Âsitâne Efsaneleri* (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2007), pp. 71–6.

90 Gürpınar, Hüseyin Rahmi, *Tebessüm-i Elem* (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2012), pp. 30–42, quotation p. 34.

91 Enderunlu Fazıl, *Zenânnâme. Kadınlar Kitabı. The Book on Women*, Filiz Bingölçe (ed.) (Ankara: AltÜst Yayınları, 2006), p. 198.

92 Imber, Colin, "Zinâ in Ottoman law", in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), pp. 176–7.

93 See for example, Yücel and Pulaha, *1. Selim Kânünnâmeleri (1512–1520)*, pp. 32 and 150.

of the moment could result in a court case, as was the case for Hacı Halil ibn Bahşayış who, in February 1534, had to confess in court that he had told Resul ibn İbrahim that his wife and mother were “not good women” but prostitutes, and that Resul himself was a pander.⁹⁴ In the same year, in a different part of the Ottoman empire, in Jerusalem, a Jewess Nuna bint Rubin, went to the *kadı* court and presented a complaint against Nasim ibn Musa for calling her a prostitute. Two witnesses supported her claim and Nasim ibn Musa was flogged.⁹⁵ If, however, such accusations were made indirectly, that is not in the presence of the person accused, it would appear that no punishment was applied. A *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* Çatalcalı Ali Efendi stated that “if Hind says “Zeyneb is a prostitute, the *subaşı* has raided her house several times”, without Zeyneb being present, and Zeyneb then hears this and says “in my absence you reviled me”, is it permissible to punish Hind? No”.⁹⁶ The only recourse for a person who claimed to have been slandered was, generally, to produce witnesses to the fact in court, a route chosen by a certain Halil who went to court in 1519 claiming that Umur, Yusuf, Ali, Elif and Hacı had thrown doubt on his daughter’s virginity, an accusation he refuted by having his daughter examined by “truly pious, upright and religious” women.⁹⁷

Slander was both powerful and public. Apart from verbal accusations, symbols, such as a horn hung on the door of a house or affixed to an individual’s home were highly visible signs of perceived immorality which likewise served to expose a woman publicly. One symbol, widely used in Anatolia, was the smearing of tar on a clearly visible part of a house, such as an outer door,⁹⁸ used, for example, to mark a house where a woman was, or was suspected of, acting immorally. At the end of the seventeenth century, part of the courtyard of the house of Mehmed, an inhabitant of the *mahalle* of Şeyh Lütfullah in Balıkesir, was smeared with tar. In consequence, the *kadı*, summoning witnesses from the *mahalle*, took statements about the character of Mehmed’s

94 Aköz, Alaaddin (ed.), *Kanunî Devrine Ait 939–941/1532–1533 Tarihli Lârende [Karaman] Şer’iye Sicili. Özet-Dizin-Tıpkıbasım* (Konya: Tablet Kitabevi, 2006), p. 129.

95 Cohen, Amnon (ed.), *A World Within. Jewish Life as Reflected in Muslim Court Documents from the Sijill of Jerusalem (xvth Century). Part One (Texts) and Part Two (Facsimiles)* (Philadelphia: Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), Part I, no. 410 (d), p. 31; Part II, 4/410 (d), F/20, 24 Rebiülahir 941 (2 November 1534).

96 Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları. Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi- Cild-i Evvel*, pp. 250–1.

97 Günalan, Rifat et al. (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 2 Numaralı Sicil (H. 924–927/M. 1518–1521)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 85, pp. 96–7.

98 Çetin, Cemal, “Anadolu’da Kapiya Katran Sürme Vak’aları: Konya Şer’iyye Sicilleri Işığında Hukukî, Kültürel ve Toplumsal Boyutları (1645–1750)”, *Turkish Studies*, 9/1 (2014), pp. 137–8.

wife and daughter.⁹⁹ People who had had tar smeared on their houses applied to the court to clear their own names. For example, in 1645–1750, the owners of a considerable number of houses involved in tar smearing incidents applied to the court in Konya.¹⁰⁰ Tar represented a black stain on the one's honour, and blackening someone's face was used as a punishment in Anatolia. It was given, for example, as a punishment for a person who was pimping in the *Alaüddevlé Bey Kanunu*¹⁰¹ and the *Bozok Kanunnamesi*.¹⁰²

For a woman to be labelled a prostitute had significant ramifications for it left her exposed without the protection of either family, society or the state. She was seen as challenging the imagined moral community and as seeking to build a life outside its boundaries and control. Fear of being called a prostitute made women, especially those who had neither husbands nor sons nor anybody who could extend them protection, vulnerable and targets of unscrupulous officials or *mahalle imams*.¹⁰³ During the reign of Süleyman I (1520–1566), the *naib* of Hamideli (today's Isparta-Burdur), Hayreddin, was accused of abusing his position by threatening a perfectly upright woman whose husband was away on military campaign with exposure as a prostitute and of abducting and raping her. Although Hayreddin was ultimately punished for his behaviour by being sent to the galleys in Rhodes,¹⁰⁴ in most cases state authorities did not act to protect women who were subjected to violence nor was it much concerned to punish those who used violence against women once such women's respectability had been called into question by the imagined moral community. If a woman was regarded as dishonourable, she did not then deserve any protection, even if what was being done to her would normally be unacceptable. A dishonourable woman was thus 'beyond the pale', as an event recounted by Şanizade shows. In April 1820, a virtuous and very beautiful woman got on a *bostancı* boat at Yemiş jetty in Istanbul to go to Fındıklı jetty. On the way, the two oarsmen abducted her at knifepoint and hid her under a small carpet. In

99 Su, Kamil, *xvii ve xviii inci Yüzyıllarda Baltkesir Şehir Hayatı* (Istanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1937), pp. 106–7.

100 Çetin, "Anadolu'da Kapiya Katran Sürme Vak'aları", pp. 154–6.

101 Barkan, "xxix 'Alâ-üd-devle Bey Kanunu", in *xv ve xvi inisi Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları*, p. 121, clause 14.

102 Barkan, "Bozok Kanunnâmesi", in *xv ve xvi inisi Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları*, p. 125, clause 14.

103 Gerlach, Stephan, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1577–1578*, vol. II, Türkis Noyan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), pp. 624, 640–1.

104 *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1993), vol. I, no. 1256, p. 550, 28 Ramazan 967 (22 Haziran 1560).

order to load food, the boat approached Kumkapı. As it did so, another boat drew level and the men on board noticed that there was someone under the carpet. Thinking that this must be a prostitute, they wanted to seize her. A fight broke out, during which the woman shouted out “I am a virtuous woman”. Several people on the jetty at Kumkapı heard her and, realising that she was a virtuous woman, rescued her and handed her over to the Segbanbaşı Ağa, who, keeping her in custody, made inquiries about her virtue in her *mahalle* as well as among those officials who dealt with prostitutes. Finding out that she was indeed a virtuous woman, she was released and the two oarsmen were executed in Yedikule.¹⁰⁵

What would have happened to this woman had she not been ‘virtuous’ does not require too much imagination as prostitutes were very vulnerable even if they were in the custody of a state official. One night in the summer of 1886 four prostitutes from Çengelköy in Istanbul were entrusted with their papers to a policeman, Arapgirli Mustafa Efendi, to be delivered to Beylerbeyi. Instead of taking these women directly to the destination to which he had been instructed to convey them, the policeman, together with his friends the gendarme Yusuf and Koca Hüseyin and Deli Hüseyin from the military (“nizamiye efradından”), took them to another location where they raped them. The details of what had happened were revealed when the women complained about what had been done to them. As a result, although there was no mention of suing these men for abuse of their official position, abduction and rape, the policeman Arapgirli Mustafa Efendi was fired from the police force and the conduct of the other three men was reported to their superiors. This incident at the end of the nineteenth century perhaps indicates that why the woman seized on the boat in 1820 cried out that she was ‘virtuous’ was not only to get help but also to protect herself from any possible abuse by the state officials themselves.¹⁰⁶

The power of such public social condemnation could be crushing, as was the case for Emine, the heroine of Refik Halid (karay’s) short story “Yatık Emine”, published in 1919. Accused of prostitution, Emine, who was given the nickname “yatık” (docile), was sent into exile from Ankara to a small, isolated and out-of-the-way town in the middle of the Haymana plain. Emine’s arrival was not met with pleasure by the population and the authorities were annoyed that women of bad character were exiled to their town. While the more upper echelons of the town sought to ensure that no opportunity was given “for the corruption of the public morality of the town”, the gendarme and

105 Şanizade Ataullah Efendi, *Şânî-zâde Târîhi [Osmanlı Tarihi (1223–1237/ 1808–1821)]*, Ziya Yilmazer (ed.) (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 361–2.

106 BOA, ZB. 77/20, 7 Zilhicce 1303 and 25 Ağustos 1302 (6 September 1886).

the more conservative element isolated Emine on account of her reputation, while men among the population never took their eyes off her. In the end, left alone, unemployed, hungry and without protection, Emine froze to death in the middle of the winter.¹⁰⁷

The Public Presence of the Prostitute

While social moral condemnation could bring about the ruin of a woman, as was the case with Yatık Emine, powerlessness was not necessarily the outcome of social marginalisation. Indeed, thanks to the flexible nature of Ottoman society and law,¹⁰⁸ such marginalisation could even empower a woman when it came to prostitution. Although deemed outside the bounds of accepted good moral behaviour, prostitutes were both a visible and common feature of Ottoman social fabric, and their services were in demand. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the journalist and ‘moralist’ Basiretçi Ali Efendi, acknowledged the impossibility of “the total removal from the world” of prostitution since “various and ignorant natures always incite those inclined to addiction into the ways of lust and lasciviousness”.¹⁰⁹ Obviously the power of such “lust and lasciviousness” was so strong that even the members of the religious establishment were led astray. Molla Ali, Molla Yusuf and Molla İbrahim from Fatih Medrese in Istanbul were caught with prostitutes and as a result they were sent to Lemnos as prisoners (*kalebend*). There they fell into such penury and poor health that their fellow members of the religious establishment on the island petitioned Istanbul in 1793 for them to be pardoned.¹¹⁰

Although widespread, prostitution was generally illegal until the late Ottoman empire. However, this illegality could be rather fuzzy. In the aforementioned 1530 legal code on gypsies, the illegal or illegitimate (“nameşru”) practices of gypsy women were taxed in some parts of Rumeli. Guilds of prostitutes existed in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in Cairo and

107 Refik Halid [Karay], “Yatık Emine”, in *Memleket Hikâyeleri* (Istanbul: Semih Lûtfi Kitabevi, n.d.), pp. 7–31.

108 For a discussion of adultery and prostitution in the Ottoman legal system see Imber, “Zinâ in Ottoman law”, pp. 175–206 and Sariyannis, Marinos, “Prostitution in Ottoman Istanbul, late sixteenth-early eighteenth century”, *Turcica*, 40 (2008), pp. 37–43.

109 Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, p. 193.

110 BOA, C. MF. 58/2896, 5 Zilhicce 1207 (14 July 1793).

were registered with the *subaşı*,¹¹¹ while in eighteenth-century Damascus the governor, having failed to expel them from the city where their highly visible presence caused a storm of protest from the upright citizens, registered the prostitutes and taxed them at a rate of ten *guruş* per person in an attempt to control their activities.¹¹² Ambrosio Bembo, in Aleppo in 1671, noted that the *subaşı* “receives many fees from the taverns of the Christians, from the public prostitutes, who must be 1,000 [in number] and who must pay a fee every month (of eight reales each). He also receives fees from men he finds with prostitutes, if they are not soldiers (who alone have the right to frequent such women).”¹¹³

Illegal or not, there were brothels everywhere. According to the traveller Lithgow, who was in Istanbul in 1610 to 1611, there were 4,000 brothels in the Ottoman capital alone which belonged to both “Turks and Levantines”.¹¹⁴ This figure may be questionable, but Ottoman sources, such as Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname* for the seventeenth century, Latifi’s *Evsaf-ı İstanbul* (Description of Istanbul) from the sixteenth and Ahmed Rasim’s *Fuhş-i Atik* (Prostitution in Old Times) and Abdülaziz Bey account of Istanbul life in the late nineteenth century, confirm the abundance of such establishments in the Ottoman capital. Many Ottoman cities had certain areas known for prostitution, such as Beyoğlu, Galata and Cihangir in Istanbul, Bab al-Luq in seventeenth-century

111 Baer, Gabriel, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times* (Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1964), pp. 33–5, 85. Writing in the 1830s, Edward Lane also noted that “all the known prostitutes in Egypt paid a kind of income-tax (“firdeh”); and that the amount of this tax collected by the government had reached such a high level that this was “not less than one-tenth of the firdeh of all the inhabitants”, Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, p. 388, note 1.

112 Tamari, Steve, “The Barber of Damascus: Ahmed Budayri al-Hallaq’s chronicle of the year 1749”, in *The Modern Middle East. A Sourcebook for History*, Camron Michael Amin, Benjamin C. Fortna and Elizabeth B. Frierson (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 568.

113 Bargellini, Clara (trans.) and Anthony Welch (ed. and annotated), *The Travels and Journals of Ambrosio Bembo* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), p. 59.

114 Lithgow, William, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures, and painefull Peregrinations of long Nineteene Yeares Travayles, from Scotland, to...* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1623), p. 155.



FIGURE 7.2 *An Ottoman prostitute, "Cortegiana Turca", in de Nicolay, Nicolas, Le navigazione et viaggi nella Turchia (Anversa: Giuglielmo Silvio, 1576), p. 288. REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.*

Cairo,¹¹⁵ Sakızlılar *mahalle* in İzmir,¹¹⁶ Bara in Thessaloniki,¹¹⁷ and Bab Idriss in Beirut¹¹⁸ in the late Ottoman period.

Prostitutes did not remain within the walls of the brothels, out of public gaze though clearly very much public through reputation, for they were highly visible in Ottoman public space. Prostitutes were presented as characters in everyday life in plays put on for *bayrams* and other celebrations, and their relations with men were used as elements of humour.¹¹⁹ They operated in a wide range of public spaces, in *bekar odaları* (unmarried men's barracks), janissary barracks, shops or workshops such as tanneries, boathouses (*kayıkhaneler*),¹²⁰ *mesire yerleri* (public gardens and pleasure grounds),¹²¹ *hamams*, stables, *köy odaları* (public village rooms)¹²² and even in graveyards, leading to the common phrase “mezarlık orospusu” (whore of a graveyard).¹²³ The level of prostitute presence was such that Dernschwam, who was no fan of Ottoman society or political structures and who visited Istanbul in the middle of the sixteenth century, claimed that it was difficult to distinguish between who was and who was not a prostitute.¹²⁴ Salahaddin Asım, who defended the removal of veiling at the beginning of the twentieth century, noted that one of the most important reasons for unveiling was that it prevented the problem of separating a “family woman” from a “woman of pleasure”,¹²⁵ a situation that left honourable women under suspicion and made it easy for men to make unflattering remarks about women on the streets, in the markets, at the *mesire yerleri*, or even for such women to be subject to physical abuse.

115 Dankoff and Kim, *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, p. 402.

116 BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 502/23, 30 Zilhicce 1308 and 20 Temmuz 1307 (2 August 1901).

117 BOA, TFR. I. ŞKT. 159/15810, 2 Temmuz 1324 and 15 Cemaziülahir 1326 (15 July 1908).

118 BOA, DH. MKT. 1117/58, 21 Şubat 1322 (6 March 1907).

119 Nutku, Özdemir, *IV. Mehmet'in Edirne Şenliği (1675)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1987), pp. 133–6.

120 Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Osmanlı Döneminde İmamlar ve Bir İmanın Günlüğü* (Istanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı, 2001), p. 144.

121 Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1577–1578*, p. 572.

122 For the use of *köy odaları* for prostitution in the villages of Edremit, see Yılmaz, “Boş Vaktiniz Var mı? Veya 16. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Şarap, Eğlence ve Suç”, pp. 43–4.

123 Ahmed Rasim, *Fuḫḫ-i Atik*, pp. 263–4.

124 Dernschwam, Hans, *İstanbul ve Anadolu'ya Seyahat Günlüğü*, Yaşar Önen (trans.) (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1992), p. 184.

125 Salahaddin Asım, *Türk Kadını'nın Tereddidi Yahut Karışma*, p. 40; Salahaddin Asım, *Osmanlıda Kadını'nın Durumu*, p. 34.

Although both Dernschwam and Salahaddin Asım referred to the problem of distinguishing prostitutes from other women in public, all rendered the same by their capacious outer garments which failed to protect them from male attention,¹²⁶ the problem was perhaps not as great as this might imply, for customers and prostitutes clearly found ways to identify each other. The protagonist of the seventeenth-century poet Niyazi's poem "Baskın Destanı" (The Ballad of the Raid) did not have much difficulty in spotting the head-gear and arched eyebrows of the woman with whom he wanted to sleep. The woman responded to his signal, setting off to her house while he followed discreetly. She then passed on to him the details of their appointment: "She said: this is my house, do you see?/ With its new door painted red/ Our appointment is at three, I shall wait for you/ Bring a great deal of money".¹²⁷ A similar situation was described in the 1944 short story "Yağmur Altında İnsanlar" (People under the Rain), written by Oktay Akbal, one of the important figures of modern Turkish literature. In the story, a prostitute, dressed no differently from the other cinema-goers, trawled for customers outside a cinema. With subtle yet sexually-loaded movements, the woman, who clearly had about her something which other women did not, drew the attention of a man who was waiting outside the cinema with the express purpose of picking up a prostitute, and entered into silent bargaining with him.¹²⁸

Subtle signals were clearly not always necessary for, despite the concerns of Dernschwam and Salahaddin Asım, prostitutes could be very conspicuous indeed in the public space. In seventeenth-century Cairo, in the quarter of Bab al-Luq, "prostitutes wandered round in hoards".¹²⁹ Tournefort, who visited Istanbul at the beginning of the eighteenth century, disparagingly noted that "in Istanbul there are such dissolute and out-of-control women that while moving as if to adjust their jackets, they display everything that a feeling of shame would dictate should be hidden in the middle of the street and they earn their livelihoods with that disgusting profession".¹³⁰ A *ferman* of Selim III (1789–1807), dated 17 November 1790, contained an order that

126 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, p. 32.

127 Niyazi, "Baskın Destanı", in *Şiir Defteri. Yunus Emre'den Bugüne Kadar Türk Edebiyatının Her Çeşitten En Güzel Şiirleri*, Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk (ed.) (Ankara: Edebiyat Yayınevi, 1965), pp. 91–2.

128 Akbal, Oktay, "Yağmur Altında İnsanlar", in *Önce Ekmekler Bozuldu* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2008), p. 45.

129 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi. Mısır, Sudan, Habeş (1672–1680)*, p. 517.

130 Tournefort, Joseph de, *Tournefort Seyahatnamesi*, Teoman Tunçdoğan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005), vol. II, pp. 69–70.

prostitutes should be prevented from wandering around publicly.¹³¹ That prostitutes were not in fact removed from the public space is clear for 60 years later, in 1844, the scribe Hristaki, one of the clerks of the Hungarian ambassador, regarded prostitutes wandering around openly in the streets of Istanbul as “a disgrace” and he condemned such behaviour saying that “in European countries it is not like this, there are special areas and those who want to, go there, it is not in the open”.¹³²

Not only were prostitutes to be seen in public spaces but they could even be there by invitation of the authorities. Fathi al-Daftari, the treasurer of Damascus, “publicly entertained prostitutes because they had become a social factor to be reckoned with”.¹³³ He invited them to take part in the wedding celebrations in April–May 1743 for his daughter and gave them lavish presents. They could also have gatherings openly. Ibn Budayr, a barber in eighteenth-century Damascus, related an event when prostitutes, made up, without veils and with their hair loose, gathered together and processed through the streets and the markets of the city with lanterns, candles and incense burners in their hands, singing, clapping and playing tambourines to celebrate the recovery from illness of a lover of one of the prostitutes.¹³⁴ Individual prostitutes or courtesans could be famous in their own right. According to a *kadı* record from the seventeenth century, Fatma bint İsmail was described by the *subaşı* of Bursa who took her to court as being “from among the prostitutes famous for their trade”¹³⁵ and Selim III, in his drive to clear Istanbul of the presence of prostitutes, selected the “famous” prostitutes Kumlalı Cemile, Şumnulu Çavuşkızı, Ezme Büzme Hanım, Sakızlı Fatime, Topal Emine, Kara Fatime whom he had strangled as an example to others, their bodies inserted into sacks and hung from various gates of the city.¹³⁶ It was the famous prostitute Salamun who, unveiled and intoxicated, knifed a *kadı* on a Damascus street in the mid-eighteenth century, an action for which she was condemned to death.¹³⁷ Rana, a famous courtesan in nineteenth-century Istanbul whose name was linked

131 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadika-i Vekâyi'*, Adnan Baycar (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1998), p. 194.

132 Kırılı, Cengiz (ed.), *Sultan ve Kamuoyu. Osmanlı Modernleşme Sürecinde “Havadis Jurnalleri” (1840–1844)* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), no. 534, p. 259; for a similar condemnation see Kırılı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, no. 269, pp. 171–2.

133 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Public morality in 18th century Ottoman Damascus”, *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 55–56 (1990), p. 190.

134 Sadji, Dana, *The Barber of Damascus*, pp. 188–90.

135 Abacı, *Bursa Şehrinde Osmanlı Hukuku'nun Uygulanması (17. Yüzyıl)*, p. 193.

136 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadika-i Vekâyi'*, pp. 203–4.

137 Rafeq, “Public morality in 18th century Ottoman Damascus”, p. 183.

with men from the upper echelons of society and about whom a song was written, was to be seen in a small boat rowing up and down the waters of Göksu and Kalender, dazzling the eyes of men and making women jealous and curious about why she attracted such male admiration.¹³⁸ Among the frequenters of the summer theatre in Beyoğlu were famous prostitutes who, finding themselves unoccupied, would come out to find customers. Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil described such women, whom he observed at the theatre and whose names he still remembered years later. The women, “each of whom had a special fame among their own followers”,¹³⁹ sat immediately behind the seats occupied by the officials of the governorship of Beyoğlu and Sultan Abdülhamid II’s agents and even if they tried from time to time to look serious, they “mostly could not control themselves” and, wafting waves of perfume, they threw themselves into attracting the attention of those around them and in particular that of the officials and the agents.¹⁴⁰

Although immoral, generally illegal and hence punishable throughout most of the Ottoman period, prostitution flourished, shielded and empowered by networks of power, profit and protection. One important element in such networks was the pimp. Pimping was not perceived as an honourable occupation. For the anonymous author of the *Risale-i Garibe*, it was ranked as one of the basest professions together with being a policeman, a tax collector and an usher in court.¹⁴¹ Despite this unattractive reputation, it was an occupation that attracted many, both men and women. Old women pimped in the Bab al-Luq district in Cairo in the seventeenth century,¹⁴² and Jews in Galata in Istanbul or high-up officials in the capital, such as Forsa Halil, acted as pimps.¹⁴³ Family members could pimp their wives and daughters, leading to Salahaddin Asım’s use of the term “family brothel”.¹⁴⁴ Slave dealers could act in effect as pimps, despite the prohibition on using slaves for sexual usage,¹⁴⁵ by renting their slave girls out for prostitution for very short periods to the Polish and Moldavian embassies in return for payment. Such behaviour

138 Ulunay, Refi Cevad, *Eski İstanbul Yosmaları*, Metin Martı (ed.) (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, n.d.), pp. 10–11.

139 Uşaklıgil, Halit Ziya, *Kırk Yıl*, Nur Özmel Akın (ed.) (Istanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2008), p. 772.

140 Uşaklıgil, *Kırk Yıl*, p. 772.

141 Develi, *Risâle-i Garîbe*, p. 25.

142 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi. Mısır, Sudan, Habeş (1672–1680)*, x, p. 381.

143 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 125.

144 Salahaddin Asım, *Türk Kadınlığının Tereddidi Yahut Karılaşıma*, p. 232; Salahaddin Asım, *Osmanlıda Kadınlığın Durumu*, p. 156.

145 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 202.

was punished by the state and slave dealers lost their licenses. the number of slave dealers dropping from around 100 to 60 according to the 1640 *narh* regulations.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes pimping was used to earn extra income as in the case of a courier in Antep in 1753, who pimped his three wives to other men telling the customers that these women were “so-and-so’s wife from his hometown”. In his case this extra income came at a very high price, for after an investigation conducted as a result of a complaint, his execution was ordered.¹⁴⁷

The ability of pimps and brothel owners to function effectively depended to an extent on the strength of the networks they established. Part of such protection came from connections to foreign states in the late period of the empire, a period in which a large number of brothels were run by non-Ottoman subjects. In 1907, for example, of the ten state registered brothels in Beirut, only one was owned by an Ottoman subject, while five of the owners were Greek, three French and one Austrian. The prostitutes working in the brothel run by the Ottoman subject were foreigners.¹⁴⁸ In a similar way, the number of Ottoman subjects among the Jewish white slave traders who were active in the late period of the empire were very few, the majority being Russian.¹⁴⁹ It was to this backing which the pimp Uncu Ahmed in Gürpınar’s novel appealed when he attempted to prevent the police from opening the door of his house by declaring “I hold a foreign licence. I will not open the door until an official from the embassy arrives”.¹⁵⁰

While pimps’ networks of contacts were important in offering prostitutes protection, the power of their clientele was more significant. Janissaries and *sipahis* had the muscle to protect their prostitutes and to prevent intervention by the authorities or an outraged community. According to Evliya Çelebi, there was a limitless number of prostitutes under military protection in Cairo and even the *subaşı* could not touch them.¹⁵¹ Similarly, ‘Azm As’ad Paşa, the governor of Damascus in the mid-eighteenth century, did not do anything to stop the increasing number and public visibility of the prostitutes when he was

146 Kütükoğlu, Mübahat S. (ed.), *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), pp. 257–8; see also Kate Fleet’s chapter, “The extremes of visibility: slave women in Ottoman public space”.

147 Güzelbey and Yetkin, *Gaziantep Şer’i Mahkeme Sicillerinden Örnekler (Cilt: 81–141) (Milâdî 1729–1825)*, p. 62.

148 BOA, DH. MKT. 1117/58, 21 Şubat 1322 (6 March 1907).

149 Bali, Rifat N., *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854–1922* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), pp. 58–62.

150 Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, p. 39.

151 Dankoff and Kim, *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, p. 394.

asked to do so by the notables, since, according to Rafeq, “he was rather anxious not to antagonize his troops who enjoyed their company. Another reason was apparent in the attitude of his *mutasallim* who, instead of implementing a decision he had taken for expulsion, found it more profitable and expedient to tolerate their presence and tax them”.¹⁵² *Sipahis* and *levends* in Istanbul even took prostitutes, dressed in men’s clothes, to coffee houses at night during Ramazan of 1622.¹⁵³ A Janissary clientele did not always, however, guarantee protection from the state, as Ümmi bint Mustafa found when she was caught drinking with janissaries and taken to court in 1579.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps not as powerful and daring as soldiers, the *esnaf*, thanks to their close-knit occupational organizations, their standing within the society and the mechanism of bribery, were also able to protect their prostitutes.¹⁵⁵

Courtesans and prostitutes whose clients came from the top echelons of society could be afforded most effective protection. Such clients could include the sultan, for, according to gossip in circulation in the nineteenth century, Mahmud II had a penchant for “light-moraled women” and had relations with such non-Muslim women during his tours around Istanbul in disguise.¹⁵⁶ Other powerful and well-connected men of state were also among the customers of courtesans and prostitutes, the name of Kamil Paşa, the son of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa of Egypt, for example, being linked with that of the famous courtesan Rana. That such men could provide most effective protection, related more to their desire to preserve their own reputations than to concern for the prostitutes, is clear from a spy report presented in 1892 to Sultan Abdülhamid II by Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi. The report from 7 March noted that certain named high officials of state frequented a house near the Sultan Selim Mosque which was used as a brothel and run by a woman from Bursa. According to this report, men of the *mahalle*, who were described as “a base gang” in the document, concerned by the activities occurring in the house, wished to organise a raid against it but were prevented from doing so, and hence a public scandal was avoided.¹⁵⁷ The complex nature of prostitution networks can be seen

152 Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, *The Province of Damascus 1723–1783* (Beirut, Khayats, 1970), p. 186.

153 Hüseyin Tuği, *Musibetnâme. Tahlil-Metin-İndeks*, Şevki Nezih Aykut (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2010), p. 154.

154 Günalan et al., *Üsküdar Mahkemesi 51 Numaralı Sicil (H. 987–988/M. 1579–1580)*, no. 115, pp. 112–13, 5 Zilkade 987 (24 December 1579).

155 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 127.

156 Örik, Nahid Sırrı, *Eski Zaman Kadınları Arasında. Hatıralar* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1958), p. 12.

157 Kırmızıade Mehmed Neşet Efendi, *Jurnallerin Tahkik Raporları (1891–1893)*, pp. 97–8.

in Ahmed Cevdet's 'eulogy' for the death of the famous brothel owner Langa Fatıma in 1854:

After the famous Langa Fatıma, resident of an ordinary *mahalle* in the district of Edirnekapı, who ran a select and elegant brothel and against whom even the influence and jurisdiction of the gendarmerie commander had no effect, died, bidding farewell to her brothel, on 28th day of Şevval, Istanbul's largest brothel closed and from then on no brothel of comparable magnificence opened. On her death, various poets composed a chronogram for her passing, "Langa Fatıma has died".¹⁵⁸

Prostitutes could themselves on occasion arrange matters to their own satisfaction without the intervention of pimps or clients. In the sixteenth century, Gerlach referred to prostitutes bribing *ases* and the *subaşı*,¹⁵⁹ and recorded one incident when unmarried women and women whose husbands were absent had bribed the religious authorities to ensure that their names did not appear on a list of prostitutes which the sultan had ordered to be compiled.¹⁶⁰ Money and other favours were used to procure false witnesses who would testify to the upright character of women accused of adultery and prostitution.¹⁶¹ The ability of a prostitute to bribe her way out of trouble is illustrated in the eighteenth-century erotic poetry collection of Enderunlu Fazıl, *Zenanname*, in which the poet described how a wise and experienced prostitute bribed her way out of a raid conducted by *mahalle* residents. With the men waiting at her door hurling abuse and demanding that that "irreligious" woman come out of the house, assuring her that the "community" was waiting for her on the doorstep and complaining that her immoral behaviour would be contagious, spreading "from house to house", she calmly invited the *imam*, who was leading the raid, to check her house. Once the *imam* entered, she "drew him to one side and placed a few *mangırs* [copper coins] in his hand". Pleased with the bribe, the *imam* declared "I did not see anything shameful about this woman/ she is as clean as soap", even going so far as to defend her by saying "This attack on the upright woman is too much/ if there is a stain it is on my turban not on her". After having provided such a comprehensive defence of her reputation, the *imam* invited her to explain who the man in her home was. The, now

158 Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir 1-12*, Cavid Baysun (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), p. 50.

159 Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü, 1577-1578*, p. 522.

160 Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü, 1577-1578*, p. 624.

161 Kırılı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, no. 269, pp. 171-2.

wrongfully accused, ‘innocent’ woman explained that the man was her aunt’s unmarried son whom, she declared, “I brought up at my knee” and she threatened the crowd with going to the *kadı* or *vezir* to complain.¹⁶² Although Enderunlu Fazıl’s satire was fiction, it was no doubt based on experience and resonated with his audience. The chain of bribery was long and stretched into top government circles, leading sultans to be suspicious of the actions of their own officials. In April 1545, Süleyman wrote to the *kadı* of Istanbul and the *subaşı* Sinan Çelebi to enquire whether the “immoral” (“*yaramaz*”) women who had been imprisoned for life by his *ex-subaşı* Hızır, who had been removed for dishonest practices, had been released. Süleyman wanted to learn not only if they had been released or not, and, if released, by whom, but also to assure himself that the women imprisoned had indeed been the right women and that they had not in fact been released by some trick or other, and other women, under the same names, imprisoned in their place.¹⁶³

When all else failed, those incontrovertibly caught in the act could plead devilish intervention. In June 1592 the Üsküdar *subaşı*, Müstedam ibn Abdülmennan requested the *kadı* to investigate the house of a certain Mustafa in the *mahalle* of Toygar Hamza in Üsküdar where it was thought a prostitute was present and indecent acts were being perpetrated on holy days. In a room of the house Satılmış ibn Hızır was found in bed with two women, Fatma bint İbrahim and Huri bint Hüner Çelebi. In their defence they claimed that “the devil made us do it”.¹⁶⁴

The Impact of Association

It was not just prostitutes themselves who were highly visible, both physically and by reputation, but their visibility became a vehicle of shame by association for others. Public shame was clearly very powerful, indeed more so sometimes than actual physical punishment. Tevfik Bey [Biren], governor of Konya in 1902–1903 who argued that going to prison was, rather than a punishment, a mark of prestige, found a way of punishing men who seized women and took them off to the mountains. Rather than imprisoning them, he cut the tassels of their *fezes* in the middle and left them “docked”, reducing their honour

162 Enderunlu Fazıl, *Zenânnâme*, p. 200.

163 Sahillioğlu, Halil (ed.), *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951–952 Tarihli ve E-12321 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002), no. 445, pp. 322–3.

164 Günalan, Rifat, et al. (eds.), *Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri Üsküdar Mahkemesi 84 Numaralı Sicil (H. 999–1000/1590–1591)* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), no. 426, p. 272, 29 Şaban 1000 (10 June 1592).

among other *kabadayıs* (ruffians) “to nothing”.¹⁶⁵ The level of fear associated with prostitution and public shaming can be gauged from Niyazi’s account in his “Baskın Destanı” of a nightmare in which his trip to the house of a prostitute with the intention of sinning ended with his head in the hands of an executioner.¹⁶⁶ The “gentleman” customer in a poem by Enderunlu Fazıl “wept and wailed” while struggling to do up his belt, as inhabitants of the *mahalle* beat on his door.¹⁶⁷ The *mahalle* raid was itself in essence a public shaming mechanism. Abdülaziz Bey who narrated very vivid scenes of raiding in late nineteenth-century Istanbul, described how those caught in a raid were escorted to the police station by crowds of people who humiliated and even physically attacked them.¹⁶⁸ In order to avoid such public humiliation men were willing to pay large sums in bribes. According to Spandounes, thought to have visited Istanbul in 1503,

If a Christian is caught in a sexual act with a Turkish woman, he can either be lashed or forced to become a Muslim. I have known of men who paid 500, 1,000 or even 2,000 ducats to avoid this penalty. If a Christian or a Turk is found in bed with a woman not his wife, he is paraded around the town sitting backwards on an ass with entrails on his head and the animal’s tail in his hand. A man of status in these circumstances escapes penalty and the shame by paying 1, 500 ducats.¹⁶⁹

What was regarded as shameful was not the frequenting of a brothel but being caught doing so. For this reason the protagonist of Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar’s novel, *Çamlıca’daki Eniştemiz* (Our Uncle in Çamlıca), Deli/Hacı Vamık Bey, a character based on the author’s aunt’s ex-husband, preferred not to go to

165 Hürmen, Fatma Rezan (ed.), *Bürokrat Teyfik Biren’in 11. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2006), vol. 1, p. 263.

166 Niyazi, “Baskın Destanı”, pp. 91–4.

167 Enderunlu Fazıl, *Zenânnâme*, p. 198.

168 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri*, Kazım Arısan and Duygu Arısan Günay (eds.) (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), pp. 339–41. See also Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-i Atik*, p. 261.

169 Spandounes, Theodore, *On the Origin of Ottoman Emperors*, Donald M. Nicol (trans. and ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 130–1. For other vivid accounts of the public nature of such punishments, see Tournefort, *Tournefort Seyahatnamesi*, 11, p. 72; Heberer, Michael, *Osmanlı’da Bir Köle. Bretenli Michael Heberer’in Anıları 1585–1588*, Türkis Noyan (trans.) (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003), pp. 212–3.

brothels, fearing exposure in a raid, and instead he had his own pimp who provided women for him, bringing them to his mansion in Çamlıca.¹⁷⁰

The source of the fear created by a raid which revealed debauchery, described by Niyazi as “a more intricate craft even than watchmaking”,¹⁷¹ was not only the wrath of the *mahalle* inhabitants or the violent hand of the state. The fear for some arose from domestic reasons. For Nahi, who was one of a group of young men planning an orgy with prostitutes and who was known as “the son-in-law of an infidel *imam*” addicted to pleasure, the source of fear over a raid was his wife: “my father-in-law has no importance. He has been raided several times. But my wife is a terror, she petrifies me”.¹⁷²

For a respectable man to be caught with a prostitute, or worse still, to be forced to marry such a woman, meant a black stain on his honour. While the *kanunnames* of Selim I and Süleyman I forbade the marrying of an adulterous couple even if they wished to do so, this had, by the time of Selim III, become a form of punishment. According to Ahmed Cavid, Kayserili Sekbanbaşı Ömer Ağa forced men, who had been caught with prostitutes, to marry them as a punishment. Fearful of finding themselves in such a shameful position the men apparently began to keep their distance from this type of woman.¹⁷³ Some men, however, described by the anonymous author of the eighteenth-century text *Risale-i Garibe* as “animals and infidels and Jews”,¹⁷⁴ did marry prostitutes. In some cases such men may have been the prostitutes’ pimps or patrons who sought to protect the women and keep them out of prison. That this may have been the case is perhaps supported by Selim II’s (1566–1574) order issued in 1568. After an investigation held in Istanbul, prostitutes were imprisoned. Selim allowed those men who wished to marry these women to do so, but stipulated that the couples were to leave the capital. Any man who stayed in Istanbul with the prostitute whom he had married was to be imprisoned.¹⁷⁵

170 Hisar, Abdülhak Şinasi, *Çamlıcadaki Eniştemiz. Hıkâye* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, n.d.), p. 290.

171 Niyazi, “Baskın Destanı”, p. 94. For a full translation of this poem into English, see John R. Walsh’s translation, “The Raid”, in *The Penguin Book of Turkish Verse*, Nermin Menemencioglu (ed.) in collaboration with Fahir İz (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 151–4.

172 Ulunay, *Eski İstanbul Yosmaları*, pp. 202–3.

173 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadîka-i Vekâyi*, p. 204.

174 Develi, *Risâle-i Garibe*, p. 31.

175 *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975–976/1567–1569)*, 3 vols. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1997–1998), vol. 1, no. 623, p. 305, 5 Recep 975 (5 January 1568).

Punishment of Prostitutes

While public shaming was apparently feared and effective for the customers, just how effective it was for the prostitutes themselves is questionable. Prostitutes caught in a raid in Gürpınar's *Tebessüm-i Elem* certainly seemed unconcerned while being taken to the police station, for the majority of them "were obviously accustomed and indifferent to such disreputable displays in their base lives, and those who had gone through such experiences many times laughed fearlessly with their faces exposed, as if going to a wedding, and they in truth enjoyed themselves more than those who had caught them".¹⁷⁶ It was perhaps for this reason that the most common punishment applied to prostitutes was exile, Mustafa II, for example, ordering Edirne to be "purified and cleansed" of prostitutes in 1703, an investigation being conducted "*mahalle* by *mahalle*" and any woman without a guarantor (*kefil*) being expelled.¹⁷⁷

Prostitutes were also subjected to other punishments, such as fines, beating, bastinado imposed in Bursa, for example,¹⁷⁸ and imprisonment. Punishments tended to be particularly stringent in Ramazan, a month in which Abdülhamid II noted that the precepts of Islam should be strictly observed and Muslim women should cover themselves in accordance with religious requirements.¹⁷⁹ Immoral behaviour in this month could have particularly dire consequences. When the *bostancıbaşı* in Istanbul caught men having "open relations" with prostitutes in April/May 1596 (Ramazan 1004), five women were killed and thrown into sea, a *levend* had his head cut off and two *sipahis* had their pay stopped and were imprisoned.¹⁸⁰

There was, however, no fixed, standard punishment, and punishments varied location to location and period to period. The general tendency of the Ottoman state was to leave the regulation of prostitution up to society but to intervene directly at times of crisis when the state felt the need to demonstrate its power. It was also important for the sultans to project an image of concern about public morality, particularly in Istanbul, or in Edirne when the sultan was resident there. According to the seventeenth-century Ottoman historian

176 Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, p. 93.

177 Özcan, *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099–1116/1688–1704)*, p. 218.

178 Gerber, Haim, "The social and economic position of women in an Ottoman city, Bursa, 1600–1700", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12/3 (1980), p. 239.

179 BOA, İrade Hususi, 88, 28 Şaban 1322; BOA, İrade Hususi, 94, 30 Şaban 1322; BOA, İrade Hususi, 99, 30 Şaban 1322, in Engin, *Sultan Abdülhamid ve İstanbul'u*, pp. 56–7.

180 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, 2 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), vol. II, p. 597.

Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, to maintain order in the empire “it is necessary for base men to be fearful and the good to be secure”.¹⁸¹ It was for this reason that the *bostancıbaşıs* kept a tight control on the open areas under their jurisdiction in Istanbul and the *vezirs* and *kaymakams* monitored such issues as immoral behaviour, adultery and the consumption of alcohol. Prostitution was considered potentially seditious and a threat to order. Sultans, such as Süleyman I,¹⁸² therefore mounted campaigns against prostitution in Istanbul. When Selim II came to the throne, he set out to locate prostitutes during his tours of the city in disguise,¹⁸³ a policy pursued by his son Murad III.¹⁸⁴ Selim III’s vigorous campaign aimed at cleansing Istanbul of vice in 1790 resulted in the round-up and imprisonment of prostitutes and the death of six famous prostitutes whose bodies were hanged in sacks from different city gates. The remaining prostitutes were warned to desist from their activities, the swinging corpses of their colleagues a graphic illustration of what would happen if they did not.¹⁸⁵

Apart from any state concern for its own prestige, the level of punishment imposed on prostitutes could also depend on the personality of the individual official in charge. According to Naima, the janissary *ağa* Köse Mehmed Ağa, who was active around 1633 in Istanbul, took great care over imposing punishments and “hanged any prostitute who fell into his hands”. Köse Mehmed Ağa’s fame for cruelty was such that anyone summoned to see him would first perform his religious ablutions and prepare his will. Such cruelty was not, however, in the end “advantageous” for he was later put to death by the sultan’s “sword of subjugation”.¹⁸⁶

What lay behind capital punishment of prostitutes was not the activity itself but the danger to society that prostitution was perceived to pose and it would appear that capital punishment was not normally resorted to. The case of Sabire, daughter of Nurullah, from Bigadiç, a town in the region of Balıkesir, provides a clear idea of the series of punishments a prostitute could experience during the course of her career and highlights the fact that capital punishment was very much a last resort. In 1735, Sabire, a resident of Umur Bey *mahalle*

181 Anhegger, Robert, “Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi’nin Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtına Dair Mülâhazaları”, *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 10 (1953), p. 376.

182 Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü, 1577–1578*, p. 600.

183 7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975–976/1567–1568), vol. I, no. 623, p. 305, 5 Receb 975 (5 Ocak 1568).

184 Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü, 1577–1578*, p. 600.

185 Ahmed Cavid, *Hadîka-ı Vekâyi*, pp. 203–4.

186 Naima, *Târih-i Na’îmâ*, 4 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2007), vol. II, p. 740.



FIGURE 7.3 *"Punishment of a harlot"*, from Dumont, Jean, *A New Voyage to the Levant* (London: n.p., 1705) between pp. 266 and 267.

REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE SKILLITER CENTRE FOR OTTOMAN STUDIES LIBRARY, NEWNHAM COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

in Balıkesir was taken to court. According to the case against her, she was a prostitute, an adulteress and a troublemaker who had persistently had social intercourse with unrelated immoral men. Despite being punished by being paraded round the markets of the town mounted on a donkey, as a deterrent to others, and numerous orders to desist from her ways, all of which she took no notice of, Sabire returned to her old profession and her trouble making and sinful behaviour increased day by day. At this point all the people of the town came to an agreement and exiled her from Bigadiç to Balıkesir, whereupon she openly set up shop in the Umur Bey *mahalle* and constantly brought to her house chaste women from good families, some by trickery and deceit and some with menaces and intimidation, and incited them into banditry, adultery and theft.¹⁸⁷ At the end of the trial the *kadı* ordered her execution.¹⁸⁸ This punishment was not for prostitution but because of Sabire's seditious behaviour which posed a threat to the order of the society and the moral rectitude of its women.

Legalizing Prostitution

Up until the late Ottoman period, the state's approach to prostitution was flexible and unsystematic and it intervened directly only when prostitution posed a threat to public order or challenged state authority. The factor which was to change the state's treatment of prostitutes and prostitution and to result in the development of a more systematic approach and, inadvertently, to a greater recognition of the status of prostitutes was the shift in the late nineteenth-century state's attitude to sexually transmitted diseases, primarily syphilis, a disease which was considered one of the main reasons for the decline in the Ottoman population and for sapping the strength of the Ottoman army.¹⁸⁹ Although the Ottomans had been aware well before this date about the sexually transmitted character of syphilis, Evliya Çelebi noting the direct

187 Su, *XVII ve XVIII inci Yüzyıllarda Balıkesir Şehir Hayatı*, pp. 107–8, 28 Zilhicce 1147 (21 May 1735).

188 Su, *XVII ve XVIII inci Yüzyıllarda Balıkesir Şehir Hayatı*, p. 109.

189 See Boyar, Ebru, "Profitable prostitution: state use of immoral earnings for social benefit in the late Ottoman empire", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1–2 (2009), 143–57; Boyar, Ebru, "An inconsequential boil' or a 'terrible disease'? Social perceptions of and state responses to syphilis in the late Ottoman empire", *Turkish Historical Review*, 2/2 (2011), 101–24.

link between syphilis and prostitutes,¹⁹⁰ this disease was not perceived in the earlier period as a direct or dangerous threat for the state. State mechanisms aimed at dealing with prostitution or unruly women, which had before been regarded as adequate, were now insufficient in the face of rampant syphilis which was at this point perceived as threatening the very fabric of Ottoman society. Prostitution was thus no longer a moral, religious or order-related issue which could be dealt with in an *ad hoc* and unsystematic fashion. Expulsion, widely used before, simply meant the transfer of the problem from one location to another. What was now required was the locating, controlling and treating of syphilitic prostitutes in order to prevent the spread of the disease.

This enforced change in approach to prostitution created two major problems for the state, one of which concerned intervention and the other, legislation. It now became necessary for the state to intervene directly in areas where it had previously relegated surveillance to local communities, such as the *mahalle*. The state had also now to initiate legislation over prostitution. Whereas traditionally women could be viewed as either morally good or morally bad, those of virtuous character being left strictly alone, the distinction now required was between syphilitic and non-syphilitic women, which was not at all the same thing, and drew the state into a dichotomy between effective medical treatment, which required medical checks of women regardless of their moral quality, and respect for the mores of traditional society which required non-intervention into the realm of the *harem*.

This was not an easy task to achieve, as is clear from the problems experienced in Kastamonu over the implementation of pre-nuptial health checks and the limiting of medical examinations of women to mouths, necks, hands and elbows only.¹⁹¹ In some locations of the empire even seeing women, never mind touching them, was out of the question. In 1887 an order was issued on the request of the governorship of Hakkari that women of the *kaza* of İmadiye should not be included in the general population census, because the people of İmadiye were from tribes with “a savage disposition” and hence registering their women was “impossible”.¹⁹²

For prostitutes, however, the result of the new approach was that they were required to undergo detailed regular physical examinations, were registered and were charged fees for these examinations and treatments. Beginning in Beyoğlu, this practice spread to other large cities, such as İzmir and Thessaloniki. There were calls for the opening of official brothels, Ahmed Şerif arguing in

190 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi. Mısır, Sudan, Habeş (1672–1680)*, x, pp. 516–7.

191 Boyar, “‘An inconsequential boil’ or a ‘terrible disease’?”, p. 121.

192 BOA, DH. MKT. 1413/83, 24 Receb 1304 and 6 Nisan 1303 (18 Nisan 1887).

1913 that this would counter secret and unchecked prostitution.¹⁹³ Salahaddin Asım had earlier argued for the urgent need to open officially recognized Muslim brothels which would, on one hand, prevent the immoral effects of clandestine ‘family’ brothels, where females were sold by their male or female relatives, and, on the other hand, would prevent the spread of syphilis and similar diseases which were devastating Anatolia.¹⁹⁴ While not all authorities co-operated, the governor of the province of Kastamonu denying the existence of prostitutes in the region¹⁹⁵ despite the fact that prostitution was said to be rampant there,¹⁹⁶ the state’s new policy towards prostitution, motivated by the need to deal with the increasing problem of syphilis, had the effect of *de facto* recognising prostitutes who, in turn, began to demand their rights as workers in this new political climate.

In July 1908, 22 prostitutes from various brothels in the quarter of Bara, a poor and disease-ridden region outside the Vardar Gate of Thessaloniki, submitted a petition to the Inspectorate of the Province of Rumeli about their medical check-ups. They wanted to reduce the frequency of the check-ups which they were then undergoing twice a week, to change the equipment used, complaining that the use of what is described in the document as a “çifte makeine”, presumably forceps of some sort, was damaging them, and to ensure that this check-up was free, rather than charged for as it was at present, and conducted in their own brothels by the municipal doctor.

Defining themselves as “sermaye kızlar”, prostitutes, these women, who signed their names under the petition, described their profession as “nameşru”, a word signifying illegitimate or morally questionable rather than illegal, but stated that they were forced into this work in order to earn their basic livelihood, thus legitimizing their work as prostitutes. They then listed their demands. At present one of the hospital doctors, a certain Papasoğlu, was employed to check the brothels. Papasoğlu insisted that all the prostitutes come to the brothel owned by someone called Bizu in the document, and that they be given medical check-ups there, Bizu charging each woman a fee for the use of the premises. Protesting against this fee, the women also complained about the style of the check-ups to which they were subjected by Papasoğlu, whose violent methods left some of the women injured and unable to work.

193 Ahmet Şerif, *Anadolu’da Tanîn*, Mehmet Çetin Börekçi (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), p. 415.

194 Salahaddin Asım, *Türk Kadınlığının Tereddidi Yahut Karışma*, pp. 232–4; Salahaddin Asım, *Osmanlıda Kadınlığın Durumu*, pp. 156–7.

195 Boyar, “‘An inconsequential boil’ or a ‘terrible disease?’”, p. 116.

196 Ahmet Şerif, *Anadolu’da Tanîn*, p. 415.

As well as demanding better medical treatment, the women also insisted that their treatment should be in line with that of prostitutes in other regions. Stressing that the twice-weekly check-ups were applied only in Thessaloniki, they demanded that check-ups should be conducted once a week, as was the case with prostitutes in brothels in other parts of the empire. Further, again in line with other areas of the empire, they wanted the check-ups to be conducted by municipal doctors who were, as elsewhere, to come to each individual brothel, in contrast to the clearly loathed and heavy handed Papasoğlu whose medical handling was such that, in the words of the petition, “not one of us can stand it”. Very critical of Papasoğlu, whose professionalism they called into question, the women noted that despite these excessive and over-frequent check-ups, syphilitic women were not in fact being diagnosed or sent to hospital for treatment. The treatment by Papasoğlu was thus represented as a failure in terms of public health.

This 1908 petition thus sheds an interesting light on the shift in relations between prostitutes and the state, prompted presumably by the state’s enforced policy shift towards prostitution. In fact, the inherent consequences of the need for medical measures to treat and prevent syphilis in combination with the recognising and legitimising of prostitutes, and establishing of a regulated system which necessarily removed the fuzzy flexibility and amorphous nature of the previous way of handling the problem of prostitution was understood by the Abdülhamidian government. Once prostitution was *de facto* legalised and medical treatment required, the government was inevitably drawn into a conflict with traditional society, its careful power balance with the *mahalle*, through which much social control had been exercised, was undermined, and unpopular intervention into the private realm was inevitable. Prostitutes, as shown by the 1908 petition, had now become a vocal professional group like any other. Here, while acknowledging that their profession might not fit well into the norms of moral society, the prostitutes state clearly that their work was their livelihood and in effect claim that, as a working group, a group that under the new government approach was recognised, registered and taxed, they had rights which they demanded from the state. They were also aware of the conditions of prostitutes elsewhere in the empire, and demanded parity of treatment.¹⁹⁷ By the early twentieth century, therefore, prostitution had in effect become legalised, due to the need to systematize the state’s fight against syphilis and to the lack of funds to do so effectively, and prostitutes were able to demand better treatment as a right.

197 BOA, TFR. I. ŞKT. 159/15810, 2 Temmuz 1324 and 15 Cemaziülahır 1326 (15 Temmuz 1908).

While the state increasingly concerned itself with a division between syphilitic and non-syphilitic, and prostitutes gained a new type of public visibility as workers with rights, society itself continued to focus on the contrast between the “family woman” and the “woman of pleasure”, and the moral discourse of the bad woman leading a man astray remained dominant. Within this understanding, the imagined moral community kept its centrality as witness to the moral character of a woman. Enver Paşa, the War Minister and one of the CUP triumvirate, initiated the novel project in 1917 of setting up a women workers battalion. A woman who wished to apply to join this battalion had to be healthy and, in particular, without any contagious diseases. But medical cleanliness was not sufficient as she was also obliged to present a certificate which was issued by the *muhtar* of the *mahalle* where she lived and was ratified by the police force of that region,¹⁹⁸ stipulating that she was “honourable” and “virtuous”.¹⁹⁹

This approach was apparent even well into the twentieth century. The protagonist, the market gardener Bayram in Sait Faik Abasıyanık’s story, “Menekşeli Vadi” (The Valley of Violets), published in 1948, recounted his disastrous moral descent. “I went to Beyoğlu with flowers in my arms. I sold flowers at Çiçek Pazarı. I made 19 lira. I had never drunk alcohol, now I drank it. I had got married three years ago but I had never embraced a painted, scented woman, now I did. After that I did not go home”.²⁰⁰ At the end of the story, Bayram repented and returned home to his family who took him back without comment. Despite medical requirements, shifts in state policy or the rise of a recognised professional prostitute, the imagined moral community continued to shape social attitudes and to dictate the boundaries of respectability.

198 Karakışla, Yavuz Selim, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Kadın Askerler. Birinci Kadın İşçi Taburu (1917–1919)* (Istanbul: Akıl Fikir Yayınları, 2015), p. 52.

199 “Belge 1 (10 Eylül 1917) Birinci Ordu-yı Hümayûn’a Mensûb Kadın Birinci İşçi Taburu Hidemât-ı Dâhiliye Ta’lîmât-nâmesi Müsvedde Hâlinde. 10 Eylül 1333. İstanbul Matbaa-i Orhâniye 1333”, in Karakışla, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Kadın Askerler. Birinci Kadın İşçi Taburu (1917–1919)*, p. 140.

200 Abasıyanık, Sait Faik, “Menekşeli Vadi”, in *Lüzumsuz Adam* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), p. 39.

The Public Presence and Political Visibility of Ottoman Women

Ebru Boyar

As we have seen throughout this volume, women were visible in Ottoman public space far more than has traditionally been thought. This is true for the political space too where women were involved in politics both as the objects of policy and as active political agents campaigning for change or protesting over conditions they found unacceptable. Imperial women could have a direct impact on high politics, being visible by reputation if not through actual physical presence, while women from less elevated social circles were able to seek their rights through petitioning the authorities or through direct, and highly visible, public action. The changing political atmosphere of the late Ottoman period, especially the rise of novel political ideas such as parliamentarism and constitutional government, not only resulted in changes in men's political consciousness and in their demands but also influenced women's position as political actors in Ottoman society, and their contribution in the political arena was sought after by men who now looked to them in order to further their own political desires. With the arrival of the new medium of the press in the nineteenth century, too, women, who in this period became increasingly politicised and whose place in the political arena was more and more seen as both necessary and legitimate, further emerged into visibility through their writings in the newspapers and journals, many of which were aimed specifically at women.

Components of Policy

Ottoman royal women were components of Ottoman high politics from the beginning of the Ottoman state and thus had a political public presence. Given the importance of pomp and pageantry as a means for sultans to establish their authority and legitimacy in the eyes of the Ottoman population as well as to convey a message of power and might to the outside world,¹ royal

¹ Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 47–65.

weddings were important occasions for public display. The wedding procession of Ahmed I's (1603–1617) daughter was described in detail by Crescenzo dei Crescenzi, who noted that the wealth and power displayed was so great that Greeks and Armenians who saw it converted to Islam.²

Ottoman royal women's marriages or the marriages of Ottoman sultans and princes to princesses from other dynasties not only gained political significance in the public arena because of the high visibility of such celebrations, but also because of the fact that such marriage alliances made these women important assets in Ottoman political machinations. In the early Ottoman period, Ottoman princesses were married to the rulers of neighbouring *beyliks* for political alliances, Melek Hatun, daughter of Murad I (1362–1389), for example, becoming the wife of the Karaman ruler, Alaeddin Ali Bey,³ while Ottoman sultans themselves married the daughters of neighbouring Christian rulers and Turkmen *beys*. In 1346 Orhan married the Byzantine emperor John Kantakouzenos's daughter Theodora, a union considered by the contemporary Doukas as an "abominable betrothal";⁴ Murad I married Tamar, the sister of the tsar Šišman of Tarnovo around 1371, Bayezid I (1389–1402) married Olivera, the sister of Stephen Lazarević of Serbia,⁵ and, in the following century, Murad II (1421–1444, 1446–1451) married his son Mehmed (later Mehmed II, 1444–1446, 1451–1481) to Sitti Hatun, the daughter of the ruler of the Dulgadiroğlu *beylik*, Süleyman Bey, in 1450, hoping "through this marital alliance... to gain added assistance and help from Turgatir", although he "would not accept Turgatir's family as equal to his in power and wealth".⁶ The aim of such marriage alliances was either to bolster the vassalage relationship between the Ottomans and other states or to ensure friendly relations. Others, however, had a more aggressive intention. The marriage in 1490 between Bayezid II's (1481–1512) daughter and Göde Ahmed, himself the product of the politically calculated marriage between Mehmed II's daughter Gevgerhan Sultan and Akkoynlu Uzun Hasan's son Uğurlu Mehmed who took refuge in Ottoman lands after his unsuccessful revolt against his father, was for the

2 Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, pp. 60–2.

3 Uluçay, M. Çağatay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1980), pp. 6–7.

4 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, Harry J. Magoulias (ed. and trans.) (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), p. 73. Also see Zachariadou, Elizabeth A., "Notes on the wives of the emirs in fourteenth-century Anatolia", in *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), IV, pp. 66–8.

5 Imber, Colin, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650. The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 92–3.

6 Doukas, *Decline*, p. 186.

purpose of Ottoman expansion into Akkoyunlu territories.⁷ When he received the news that his son-in-law had taken the Akkoyunlu throne (although this was in fact only to be a very brief reign), Bayezid joyously declared, according to the chronicler Oruç Bey, that “the Persian *vilayet*, too, is ours”,⁸ and despatched the news to various states, including Venice which was at that time seeking an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Akkoyunlu.⁹

Although the practice of marriage alliances with foreign powers did not continue for long and Ottoman sultans, after the early period, either did not marry or married concubines in the *harem*, the Ottomans continued to use marriage for political purposes, this time to cement the loyalty of the men of state to the sultan. Süleyman I (1520–1566), for example, married his daughter Mihrimah Sultan to Rüstem Paşa, one of the most famous of Ottoman grand *vezîrs*, who became very influential in palace politics and was a very close ally of Hürrem Sultan in the removal and death of Şehzade Mustafa, the eldest and very popular son of Süleyman I.¹⁰ For political reasons, sultans could marry their daughters off to high dignitaries at a very young age. Ümmügülsüm Sultan, the daughter of Ahmed III (1703–1730), was married off when only two years old,¹¹ and İbrahim married off his daughters Gevherhan Sultan when she was three¹² or four years of age¹³ and Beyhan Sultan when she was two.¹⁴

Influential Actors

Ottoman women therefore had a public presence as components of the political game of power. Once married, such women did not simply disappear into the *harems* of their husbands or become sexual objects or mere bearers of children, for such women were able to assert an influence in the political arena and to act as visible political actors at different levels and in different

7 Boyar, Ebru, “Ottoman expansion in the East”, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 2. The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*, Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (eds.) (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 85–7.

8 Oruç, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi [Osmanlı Tarihi 1288–1502]*, Necdet Öztürk (ed.) (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2007), p. 173, facsimile 118a.

9 Boyar, “Ottoman expansion in the East”, p. 86.

10 Turan, Şerafettin, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1997), pp. 28–30.

11 Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*, pp. 63, 85.

12 Uluçay, Çağatay, *Harem* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1971), p. 93.

13 Uluçay, *Harem*, p. 93.

14 Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*, p. 65; Uluçay, *Harem*, p. 93.

roles. Murad II's sister (whose name was probably İldı Hatun),¹⁵ the wife of Karaman Bey İbrahim, acted as a pivotal intermediary between her brother and her husband in the process of making an agreement between the two and securing a pardon for İbrahim, who had revolted against the Ottomans, as he frequently did.¹⁶ Women in the sultan's *harem*, such as Hürrem Sultan, concubine, then *haseki* (favourite) and finally wife of Süleyman I and mother of Selim II (1566–1574), Nur Banu Sultan, *haseki* and then wife of Selim II and mother of Murad III (1574–1595), Safiye Sultan, *haseki* of Murad III and mother of Mehmed III (1595–1603), Mahpeyker 'Kösem' Sultan, concubine of Ahmed I and mother of both Murad IV (1623–1640) and İbrahim (1640–1648), Hadice Turhan Sultan, *haseki* of İbrahim and mother of Mehmed IV (1648–1687), were influential women with political power and influence in their own right, not simply because of their proximity to the source of political power, that is the sultan, but because of their desire and ambition to use such power.¹⁷ Their independent political position was recognized to such an extent that requests for promotion could be presented to the *valide sultan* directly.¹⁸ Some could function on occasion as *de facto* rulers. In 1596, during the absence of her son Mehmed III on the Egri campaign, the *valide sultan* Safiye released all the prisoners in Istanbul and Galata, except those who were in prison for "notorious crimes", and even satisfied the creditors of those who were imprisoned for debt in order to celebrate her son's victory in the Egri campaign, according to the English merchant John Sanderson.¹⁹ They could act publicly in what they saw as the best interests of their sons even as late as the mid-nineteenth century. The mother of Abdülaziz (1861–1876), Pertevniyal Sultan ordered the recitation in various imperial mosques in the capital of a "meaningless and pointless prayer" which was intended to break the magic spell she felt had been cast over him, an idea which proved something of a mistake for it led to

15 Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*, p. 13.

16 Uzunçarşılıoğlu, İsmail Hakkı, "Karamanoğulları Devri Vesikalarından İbrahim Beyin Karaman İmaretı Vakfiyesi", *Belleten*, 1/1 (1937), p. 120; for another copy of this *ahdname* kept in Konya İzzet Koyunoğlu Müzesi, see Aköz, Alaaddin, "Karamanoğlu II. İbrahim Beyin Osmanlı Sultanı II. Murad'a Vermiş Olduğu Ahidnâme", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 24/38 (2005), 71–92.

17 Peirce, Leslie P., *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 229–65.

18 See for example, Orhonlu, Cengiz (ed.), *Osmanlı Tarihine Âid Belgeler. Telhîsler (1597–1607)* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1970), no. 11, pp. 10–12.

19 Quoted in Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, p. 68.

question marks about the sultan's mental health among the populace.²⁰ Imperial women could even give public speeches, Mustafa I's (1617–1618, 1622–1623) mother, for example, being asked by the janissaries to make a public address during the deposition of Osman II and the enthronement of Mustafa I in 1622.²¹

The power and influence of such women extended beyond the borders of Ottoman lands. Safiye Sultan was apparently asked for her support over English capitulations and as a response, told Elizabeth I, "God willing, action will be taken according to what you said. Be of good heart in this respect! We do not cease from admonishing our son, His Majesty the Padishah, and from telling him: "Do act according to the treaty!" God willing, may you not suffer grief in this respect!"²² Although such women from the imperial *harem* did not generally appear in public and when they did so they were shielded from view in their carriages and surrounded by an entourage, their political importance meant that they were very much in the public sphere through reputation.

Their public presence was further reinforced by the *vakıfs* they endowed and the buildings they sponsored, edifices erected both for charitable purposes and for the construction of power and legitimacy. Hadice Turhan Sultan was personally involved in completing the long-abandoned project of Safiye Sultan, the Yeni Valide Mosque Complex in Eminönü, which "fully established and securely legitimated the queen mother's power and advertised her piety".²³ Erecting such buildings also created occasions for public visibility and display for these women. The opening ceremony of the mosque built in Üsküdar by Emetullah Gülniş Rabia Sultan, the mother of Mustafa II (1695–1703), turned into a great public event attended by Mustafa II and high-up Ottoman dignitaries. The *valide sultan* herself, accompanied by the imperial *harem*, visited the mosque the day after the ceremony, a service was held and after a long prayer she returned to the city.²⁴

20 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma'rûzât*, Yusuf Halaçoğlu (ed.) (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980), p. 54.

21 Arslantaş, Nuh and Yaron Ben Naeh (trans.), *Anonim Bir İbranice Kroniğe Göre 1622–1624 Yıllarında Osmanlı Devleti ve İstanbul* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2013), p. 36.

22 Skilliter, Susan A., "Three letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Sâfiye to Queen Elizabeth I", in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, S.M. Stern (ed.) (Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1965), doc. II, p. 139 (for English translation).

23 Thys-Şenocak, Lucienne, *Ottoman Women Builders. The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), p. 187.

24 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet Ağa, *Nusretname*, İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (ed.) (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1969), vol. II, fascicle II, pp. 269–70.

Women were also active on the political scene as intermediaries between imperial women in the *harem* and the outside world. Such women were able to benefit from their position by taking bribes and selling influence.²⁵ Political involvement could have dire consequences. Infamous for their involvement “in the matter of appointments and dismissals which were the business of the *vezirs*”,²⁶ Meleki Kalfa and her husband, Şaban Halife, were killed and their bodies were hung from the plane tree in the famous Plane-tree Incident in 1656. Jewish women, known as *kiras*, had close links with the palace, acting as economic and sometimes as political agents of *harem* women. Some of them too suffered the fate of Meleki Kalfa. Bula Rika, who was accused of sorcery and of acting for the mother of Mustafa II in order to prevent the crowning of Murad IV, was imprisoned, beaten to death and finally strangled by the janissaries.²⁷ Perhaps the most infamous *kira* was Esperanza Malchi, who served Safiye Sultan, and who earned the sultan’s trust to such an extent that she communicated with Queen Elizabeth in Safiye Sultan’s name. She amassed a huge fortune due to her close and cordial connections with the imperial *harem* and her control of customs taxes. In 1600, the *sipahis* who were paid in debased *akçe*, perceived her as the main culprit of the state’s dire economic situation and were incensed that while they were paid in debased coin, she was enjoying the very lucrative customs tax farm (*iltizam*). As a reaction to this, and despite the *şeyhülislam*’s issuing a *fetva* allowing her exile from the capital but not her execution, *sipahis* seized her, hacked her to pieces, “attached a rope to the foot of her carcass, dragged her corpse along and then left it at At Meydanı”.²⁸

Proximity to power not only created opportunities for women to achieve political prominence at the centre of the empire, but also in the provinces. Wives of important provincial dignitaries clearly played political roles, sometimes very prominent ones. During the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, Sit Nafisa, the wife of Murad Bey who was resisting the invasion and was on the run, was detained by the French authorities, accused of sending tobacco, fur

25 See for example Pedani, Maria Pia, “Safiye’s household and Venetian diplomacy”, *Turcica*, 32 (2000), p. 17; Ahmet Refik, *Tarihîte Kadın Sımaları* (Istanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931), pp. 53–5.

26 Naima, *Târih-i Na’îmâ*, 4 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2007), vol. IV, p. 1657.

27 Arslantaş and Naeh, *Anonim Bir İbrânicî Kroniğe Göre 1622–1624 Yıllarında Osmanlı Devleti ve İstanbul*, p. 64.

28 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî (1003–1008/1595–1600) II*, Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), pp. 854–5.

and 500 gold coins (*mahbubs*) to her husband.²⁹ In 1804 she was arrested again, this time by Mehmed Ali Paşa by whom she was accused of “trying to win over several senior army officers to the side of the mamluk rebels by promising to pay their salaries”.³⁰

Non-elite Female Political Activity

Participation, and visibility, in the political arena was not restricted to elite women, for women who were not members of, nor connected to, the royal or the provincial elite were also, wittingly or unwittingly, part of political scene. They gossiped about politics, supported or simply became spectators of revolts, had political views and favourite sultans or *paşas*, protested, revolted, became the targets of violence or used violence, women stoning the entourage of the French ambassador on his way to Jerusalem in 1547, for example, when requested to provide fodder for his horses.³¹ Political changes, turmoil, wars and revolts affected their lives equally, and they responded to these challenges in various ways.

In a general sense, women were part of the everyday scene of politics. They were participants in the poisonous and dangerous world of gossip when “the tongue of the people”³² could touch and destroy even very prominent statesmen. In 1655, the rumour which circulated “in the public markets and in the offices of state and even reached women and children” that the *vezir* İbşir Mustafa Paşa was going to exterminate the janissaries and the *sipahis* of Istanbul, incited the events which resulted in the brutal killing of İbşir Mustafa Paşa in a janissary revolt.³³ They were politically active as individuals seeking their rights through the courts and through petitions to the sultan. More

29 Moreh, Shmuel (trans.), *Napoleon in Egypt. Al-Jabartî's Chronicle of The French Occupation, 1798*, introduction by Robert L. Tignor (Princeton and New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1995), p. 65.

30 Hathaway, Jane (ed.), *Al-Jabartî's History of Egypt* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), p. 231.

31 Chesnau, Jean, *D'Aramon Seyahatnamesi. Kanuni Döneminde İstanbul-Anadolu-Mezopotamya*, Işıl Erverdi (trans.) (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2012), p. 69. Examples of similar behaviour can be found in the nineteenth century, see Boyar, Ebru, “British archaeological travellers in nineteenth-century Anatolia: Anatolia ‘without’ Turks”, *Eurasian Studies*, 1/1 (2002), p. 105.

32 İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevî Tarihi*, 2 vols., Murat Uraz (ed.) (Istanbul: Neşriyat Yurdu, 1968), vol. II, p. 452.

33 Naima, *Târîh-i Na'îmâ*, IV, p. 1607.

interesting than female petitioning itself is perhaps the degree to which the state apparently took such petitions seriously, being willing to listen and respond to women even on personal or trivial matters.³⁴ Deli Hüseyin Paşa's interaction with the women of Istanbul is a very good example of a statesman's willingness to incorporate women into the political scene. Deli Hüseyin Paşa served under the sultans Murad IV and İbrahim in various posts including, briefly, as grand *vezir*, grand admiral (*kaptan-ı derya*) and the commander of Hanya (Chania) on Crete (*Hanya muhafızı*). He was executed in 1659 as a result of allegations of corruption and tyrannical behaviour against the *reaya*. As noted by the contemporary Ottoman historian Naima, Deli Hüseyin Paşa was very popular among the common population, particularly among the women:

They relate that when he [Hüseyin Paşa] set out on campaign from Istanbul with a great entourage, all the people, even the women of the city, turned out in great crowds to watch. Dressed in armour and wearing a helmet and mounted in a stately fashion on horseback, he greeted the population drawn up along the route with a great shout and committed them to the protection of God with a prayer. When he met the ranks of women, he shouted out "Peace be with you women! Sustenance of heaven and angels of the earth! You give birth to the *ulema* and the pious and the bold, brave heroes. May Almighty God bless you bountifully, do not forget to pray for us". Men and women with screams and cries prayed fervently with their souls and hearts, "may God entrust you to the sultan, that is how it should be for a heroic *vezir*".³⁵

The population was very disturbed by the execution of such a popular *paşa* for they were not aware, according to Naima, of his ill-doing: "all the common people were his supporters and eulogised him and they showed sadness and grief saying "What a pitiable thing that they killed such a celebrated *vezir* because of malice". For how long did the people of the world in social gatherings, in the markets and in the towns occupy themselves with praying for his soul and with censuring, blaming and slandering those responsible for his death".³⁶

When dissatisfied with their conditions, women could react violently and collectively, as women did in late-nineteenth-century Istanbul when they

34 See for examples, Derin, Fahri Ç. (ed.), *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'-Nâmesi* [*Osmanlı Tarihi (1648-1682)*] (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), p. 50; Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, I, fascicle 1, p. 42.

35 Naima, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, IV, pp. 1827-8.

36 Naima, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, IV, pp. 1827-8.

stormed the Ministry of Financial Affairs in protest at the delay in payment of their husbands' wages.³⁷ In 1794 more than 1,000 women, under the leadership of a female *hoca*, destroyed a church in Bursa, injuring those who tried to prevent them. They claimed that the church had been rebuilt higher than was permitted and they believed that, as a result of this, their prayers would not be accepted by God and that it would not rain.³⁸ At the end of the nineteenth century leadership was provided by the wife of the late *imam*, who was also the present *imam's* mother, "a dark-visaged dame, with a sharp tongue",³⁹ who led local women in a determined protest against the enclosing of land adjacent to their village on the Bosphorus by the owner, an action which prevented the women and children of the village from enjoying the land which they were accustomed to use during their outings. Armed with sticks and stones, the women of the village attacked the workmen but were unsuccessful in their attempt to bring the building work to a halt. They therefore sent a petition to the sultan and representatives to discuss the issue with the authorities, but to no avail.⁴⁰ Political disagreements could result in female-on-female violence, as was the case of janissary wives at the beginning of the nineteenth century who fought each other in a *hamam* with *hamam* bowls and clogs in a brawl occasioned by janissary politics, the wives violently supporting the different sides taken by their husbands.⁴¹ As Kate Fleet has demonstrated in her chapter on female consumption, Ottoman women reacted violently to scarcity of food, voicing their complaints loudly in public and even attacking security forces. Less violently, many women protested passively against the state's dress codes by simply disobeying them.⁴²

Women's discontent or violent political reaction was clearly something that political authorities tried to avoid or prevent. The state thus kept a strict eye on activity among the population, and among women, and watched out for sparks of unrest which might lead to unwanted political consequences. This was the case, for example, over a religious gathering of "men and women" in the Fatih

37 van Millingen, Alexander, *Constantinople Painted by Warwick Goble Described by Alexander van Millingen* (London: A. & C. Black, 1906), pp. 250–1.

38 Kaplanoğlu, Raif, *Meşrutîyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa (1876–1926)* (Bursa: Avrasya Etnografya Vakfı Yayınları, 2006), p. 46.

39 van Millingen, *Constantinople*, p. 252.

40 van Millingen, *Constantinople*, pp. 252–4.

41 Cabî Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târihi (Târih-i Sultân Selîm-i Sâlis ve Mahmûd-ı Sâni) Tahlîl ve Tenkidli Metin*, 2 vols., Mehmet Ali Beyhan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. I, p. 507.

42 For details see Kate Fleet's chapter, "The powerful public presence of the Ottoman female consumer", in this volume.

Sultan Mehmed Mosque in 1692/1693 (1104) which the governor of Istanbul (*kaymakam*) Hüseyin Paşa had been informed might turn into a seditious incident (*fitne*). What in fact happened was a riot occasioned by the governor's unannounced arrival to investigate the gathering. When the women saw him entering the courtyard of the mosque, screams broke out and the women, all massing together, dashed for the stairs. In the ensuing crush two little children and three pregnant women died, as did seven or eight very elderly men, and many women aborted, according to Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa. Aware of and distressed by what had happened, the *paşa* immediately withdrew.⁴³ Although in fact there was no seditious political activity and the women were killed as a result of crowd panic, the incident serves to show the extent to which women were perceived as active participants on the public political scene. It was this perception that lay behind Mahmud II's use of female spies in the *hamams*. The contemporary Cabi recorded that in 1809 a female spy who operated in the Sultan Bayezid *hamam* in Istanbul provided a report on the conversation of women there who had been discussing politics and who were, as a result, arrested and imprisoned.⁴⁴

One way in which the state sought to control potentially dangerous female political activity was to incorporate its female population into public celebrations organized for Ottoman victories, royal births, marriages and circumcisions, the departure or arrival of the navy or army and for the pageants organized for the reception of foreign embassies, for these were the occasions used to augment the legitimacy of state, display its power, and to integrate the population into the mechanisms of politics. The inclusive nature of such displays is clearly expressed by the seventeenth-century Ottoman Armenian Eremya Çelebi in his description of the magnificent celebrations for the Crete expedition in 1657, when the entire population of Istanbul "down to the girls shut up in their houses" went to see them.⁴⁵ Girls who were normally not granted permission to leave the house were thus apparently able to take part in a public political celebration. Some women, even if they did not physically join in festivities on the street, were still a part of this tableau of celebration, viewing them from their houses when, in the words of Topçular Katibi Abdülkadir Efendi, writing in the seventeenth century, "the population of the world joined together in great crowds in the market places, a crush of people, the *ulema* and

43 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât. Tahlil ve Metin (1066–1116/ 1656–1704)*, Abdülkadir Özcan (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 447.

44 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, I, p. 392.

45 Eremya Çelebi Kömürçüyan, *İstanbul Tarihi. XVII. Asırda İstanbul*, Hrand D. Andreasyan and Kevork Pamukçyan (eds. and trans.) (Istanbul: Eren, 1988), p. 294.

the pious, the rich and the poor, dervishes and imams and *hatibs*, and even, all in their houses, women and boys, big and little".⁴⁶

Change and Continuity and the Creation of a New Political Woman

While women continued to participate, protest and petition as they always had, the nineteenth century saw a shift in the political sphere which was inevitably reflected in the way women themselves behaved politically within the empire. Pageantry was now publicised in a new way, through the medium of the press. The wedding ceremony of Saliha Sultan, Mahmud II's daughter, in 1834, for example, was covered in the first official Ottoman newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi*. Reforms introduced in the face of the increasing dangers with which the empire was threatened triggered a new and more inclusive definition of political participation which sought to incorporate more elements of Ottoman society through parliamentarism. Women were brought into, and indeed sought entry into, this new political mechanism, even if not to the same extent as men. In this context, women became more politicised. They were also presented with increased opportunities for sociability in public spaces, such as parks, schools outside the *mahalle* where girls could socialize with people not from their immediate neighbourhood, or venues for entertainment such as the theatres and shops of Beyoğlu which were now more accessible to females than they had previously been. Factories employed female workers, such as tobacco and silk workers, who worked together with members of other religious and social groups, in Beirut, Thessaloniki or Bursa, for example, and charitable organizations allowed women to organize and act together in a formal public space with a pre-set political and social agenda. All such spaces created new opportunities for female political consciousness and activity. Such opportunities were augmented by new technological developments in transportation and communication, in particular the development of the Ottoman printed press, which resulted in an increased public political presence of women as they were exposed to new forms of political participation and new ideas. Such changes gave women a greater awareness of the world beyond their limited localities, and made them more accessible targets of political propaganda and indoctrination.

New political ideas were especially developed and supported by the new Ottoman elite, the Young Ottomans, and it was these intellectuals who called

46 Yılmaz, Ziya (ed.), *Topçular Kâtibi 'Abdülkâdir (Kadrî) Efendi Tarihi (Metin ve Tahlil) 1* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), pp. 13–14.

for changes in Ottoman political structure and who sought ways to create a strong sense of belonging to the Ottoman state, territory and society. Within this new political agenda, a new role for women was also being defined. As Namık Kemal, one of the prominent representatives of the Young Ottomans, argued, the socially and religiously defined role of women in the family, which represented a microcosm of the state as a whole, was now to be transformed into a duty towards the motherland (*vatan*): “people are to be found in a household, but there exists a motherland, the guarantor of independence and peacefulness of the household itself, that requests a service from us for the production and educating of our children and for the protection of independence and peacefulness”.⁴⁷ Since the family household was the smallest unit that made up the empire, a peaceful, harmonious and happy family life was a prerequisite for a peaceful, prosperous and felicitous state.⁴⁸ Şemseddin Sami, a leading intellectual, too, attributed a pivotal role to women in the well-being of the ‘nation’ as a whole, for he argued that

the situation of a community/nation [ümme] is always in proportion to the condition of its women. A community in which its women are well behaved and educated [terbiyeli], is a well behaved and educated community, the community with uneducated women is crude and uneducated [terbiyesiz], a community in which the women are efficient and industrious is a rich and prosperous community, a community in which the women are spendthrift and lazy, is a poor and ruined community, a community in which the women are honourable, is an honourable community, a community in which the women squander foolishly, is a dissolute community.⁴⁹

The centrality of women as a ‘civilizing’ influence was also highlighted by the famous poet and thinker Tevfik Fikret in his 1902 poem “Hemşirem İçin” (For My Sister), a lament for his sister who had died at a young age as a result of her husband’s cruelty. “Certainly if a woman is base”, he wrote, “mankind becomes

47 Namık Kemal, “26. Aile”, *İbret*, 19 November 1872, no. 56, in *Namık Kemal ve İbret Gazetesi*, Mustafa Nihat Özön (ed.) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1997), p. 203.

48 Namık Kemal, “26. Aile”, p. 203.

49 Ş. Sami, *Kadınlar* (Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1311), p. 47. For a modern Turkish version, see Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar*, İsmail Doğan (ed.) (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1996), p. 47.

base”.⁵⁰ In this new line of thinking, women now had greater responsibilities towards their motherland and their nation, and had a role in raising the moral level of society. At the same time, women were to be accorded respect and to be educated and trained in a fashion which would enable them to fulfil these responsibilities.

Given this drive to a new form of female political participation, it is not surprising that women were the target of a range of publications aimed specifically at them. Such publications were not simply for entertainment, but aimed to educate the Ottoman female for her new role serving the social, political and economic needs of the state. While men had a pioneering role in these publications, owning, running or writing for many of them and thus setting their agenda,⁵¹ there was a growing body of female writers, among whom were Fatma Aliye [Topuz] and Halide Edip [Adivar], probably the best known female figures from the period. These women did not on the whole differ in their political approach from their male counterparts. In an article published in *Kadın* (Woman), a journal brought out in Thessaloniki and close to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), on the third anniversary of the 1908 Revolution, the author approached the importance of this date from the perspective of women and argued that the revolution had opened the way to female “advancement” (“terakki”).⁵² This “advancement” however, was situated within the framework of the political view of the journal, whose writers were mostly CUP supporters, and was thus designed to complement the CUP ideology of the period.

One area in which the increase in female political awareness and active participation was particularly striking was the charitable organisations. Although women had been involved in charitable works throughout the existence of the empire, giving alms, setting up *vakıfs* and bequeathing money for charitable purposes after their deaths, the modern charitable organizations which developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century allowed Ottoman women to be part of institutional networks where they not only contributed materially and through individual effort but also attended meetings and organized social events to raise funds. They therefore attained a high level of public physical visibility and mobility as members of a charitable organization and thus as active participants in the political arena. A fairly large number of the female associations which were set up in Istanbul, in particular after the 1908 Revolution, were charitable organisations while other organisations, such as the *Hilal-i*

50 Tefrik Fikret, *Rübâb-ı Şikeste*, Kemal Bek (ed.) (Istanbul: Bordo Siyah Klasik Yayınlar, 2007), p. 364.

51 Çakır, Serpil, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis, 2011), p. 407.

52 “10 Temmuz Dolayısıyla Kadınlar”, *Kadın*, no. 10, 10 Temmuz 1327 (23 July 1911), p. 5.

Ahmer (Red Crescent), opened their doors to women, and female branches of political party organisations, such as the CUP, were established.⁵³ Through these organisations, women won legitimacy in the public arena and began to gain experience in forming groups and operating together. The close relations with the political administration of certain of these organisations, such as the *Hilal-i Ahmer*, further contributed to the politicisation of women who held positions within them.

Women and the Motherland

While the conditions discussed above allowed women to take a new political role in the public arena, the speeding up of this process and its dissemination to a wider segment of society, was only possible because of the extraordinary conditions through which the Ottomans lived in the final period of the empire's existence. Wars, defeats, migrations, revolts and revolution propelled women onto the political stage, where they took a more prominent and active role, and precipitated a greater acceptance among wider sections of the society of female participation which thus gained increased legitimisation.

In this context war had a two-fold effect on female visibility, for it made women visible as victims of atrocities who could legitimately be used for propaganda purposes, and it required active female participation in the war effort. In August 1877, the Ottoman government delivered an album of photographs to the British embassy in Istanbul. The photographs showed the injuries of women who had been subjected to Russian and Bulgarian atrocities in the war. These women appeared uncovered and displaying parts of their bodies, such as their backs, heads, and legs, clearly indicating an Ottoman acceptability of female display, in this case to a foreign, non-Muslim power, for the purposes of propaganda and in an attempt to gain the attention of and to elicit sympathy from the British government and from British public opinion.⁵⁴

Women were now expected to contribute to the war effort, as Basiretçi Ali Efendi made clear in his column in the Istanbul newspaper *Basiret*, when he wrote of his expectation of active female participation and his encouragement and appreciation of Ottoman women's efforts to extend their charity to

53 Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler. Cilt 1. İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi, 1908–1918* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), pp. 503–9.

54 The National Archives, London, FO 78/2583, 23 August 1877.

Ottoman soldiers through activities such as making bandages.⁵⁵ Basiretçi Ali Efendi's expectations from women were framed very much in terms of religion and patriotism, and arose from pragmatic requirements. They were also, to a certain extent, temporary expectations, limited to the specific necessities of the day rather than conceived of as a permanent condition. Namık Kemal, on the other hand, had in mind a more comprehensive role for women in a political sense. In his 1873 play, *Vatan yahud Silistre* (Motherland or Silistria), which created such a sensation when it was first performed in Gedikpaşa Theatre in April 1873 that it paved the way for his exile, Namık Kemal worked on a concept of a motherland to which every Ottoman, male or female, owed his/her existence and towards which everyone thus had a responsibility. In this play, set during the Crimean War, the main male protagonist, İslam Bey, explained to his fiancé Zekiye that he had decided to volunteer to fight in Silistria and expressed his passionate support for the motherland, which deserved the support of the, so far passive, female population:

Just think. When it comes to the need to protect the motherland, which guards the right to life for all, the children of the motherland had to be driven forcibly to the frontier. While the motherland is the true mother of all, many men exploit her, both in her health and her sickness. While every inch of the motherland is soaked with the blood of our ancestors, no one wants to shed two tears for it. While the motherland feeds 40 million souls, she still does not have even 40 people willing to die for her. While the motherland allowed many nations to survive through her military might, now she needs the protection of other states in order to survive. While our men do not know the meaning of motherland, our women do not even hear the word! Well, call it conceit, call it pride, call it madness, call it whatever you will, I see that the motherland is in need of you and me.⁵⁶

Only four years after Namık Kemal wrote this play, inspired by story of a Kurdish girl who, during the Crimean War, had dressed as a man in order to follow her fiancé and had fought at Kars where she had been killed,⁵⁷ Zafer Hanım wrote, in 1877 during the Ottoman-Russian War, *Aşk-ı Vatan* (Love of

55 *Basiret*, 9 Receb 1293 and 18 Temmuz 1292, in Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, Nuri Sağlam (ed.) (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), pp. 518–19 (30/31 Temmuz 1876).

56 Namık Kemal, *Vatan yahud Silistre* ([Egypt: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1908]), pp. 26–7.

57 Tansel, Fevziye Abdullah, *İstiklâl Harb'inde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), pp. 1–2.

the Motherland), motivated by the desire to contribute to the war effort with her pen, for, although she wished to take part in the war she was unable to do so because she was a woman.⁵⁸ Twenty years after Zafer Hanım's lamentation about being unable to fight at the front, an Ottoman woman did secretly managed to serve in the Ottoman army. In 1897 it was discovered as the result of a medical examination that Aydınlı Köse Mehmed (Unbearded Mehmed from Aydın), who had served in the army in Thessaloniki for two years, was in fact a woman named Ayşe. Although there is no information about how Ayşe Hanım managed to keep her sexual identity a secret for so long, it is known that Abdülhamid II showed a personal interest in her case and ordered her to be brought to Istanbul. He provided her with a substantial sum of money and a monthly salary, and ensured that she did not return to her old ways.⁵⁹

Ayşe Hanım was an exception and female contribution to the defense of the motherland still did not include fighting at the front, although women's desire for such service remained in the air. In 1913, during the Balkan Wars, the poet İhsan Raif, daughter of Köse Raif Paşa, called on all men to go to the front to avenge the motherland and to save it from the enemy who was "trampling" its honour ("ırz ve namus"). In her poem "Feryad-ı Vicdan" (The Cry of Conscience) she declared: "If it was possible, I too would go, I would be a standard bearer/ I would give my life, I would have received glory ["şan"], and I would have been happy".⁶⁰ The reason for Zafer Hanım's and İhsan Raif's desire was clearly expressed by Fatma Aliye Hanım, one of the speakers at a meeting at Darülfünun, the university in Istanbul:

These lands are soaked with the blood of our ancestors. Because our connection to this [land] is naturally very strong, the struggle for the defence of the nation is manifest too among our women. Those ancestors are the ancestors of women too; this motherland is also the motherland of women; the future of the nation includes too the future of women, because half of this nation is made up of women.⁶¹

58 Zafer Hanım, *Aşk-ı Vatan*, Zehra Toska (ed.) (Istanbul: Oğlak, 1994), pp. 22–4.

59 BOA, İradeler Tasnifi, İrade-i Hususiye, 749/55, 17 Receb 1315 and 30 Teşrin-i sani 1313 (12 December 1897), in Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "LXVI. Osmanlı Ordusunda "İlk" Kadın Asker: Kızları da Alın Askere (1897)", *Eski Hayatlar Eski Hatıralar. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Belgelerle Gündelik Hayat (1760–1923)* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015), pp. 397–406.

60 İhsan Raif, "Feryâd-ı Vicdan", in *Balkan Savaşlarında Kadınlarımız*, Şefika Kurnaz (ed.) (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2012), p. 114.

61 Fatma Aliye, "Fatma Aliye Hanım'ın Konuşması", in Kurnaz, *Balkan Savaşlarında Kadınlarımız*, p. 57.

If women were not allowed to fight against the enemy on the battlefields, they should at least aid them by sewing clothes as was suggested by Ümm-i Vicdani Hacı Emine in her poem published in the newspaper *İkdam* in September 1912: “Our men give their lives, they gain glory [“şan”] . . . Let us sew shirts for our warriors, let us at least sew underwear”.⁶² As such views show, the wish to fight for the motherland with every possible means and to do so within a newly formed political structure was now a legitimate desire. Shortly after the 1908 Revolution, in an article published on 16 November, Seniha Hikmet, one of the writers of *Kadın*, complained that “even” women who were seen as “long in hair, short in intelligence, soft of heart, naive and ignorant” were aware of the situation in which the motherland found itself and because of this they therefore believed in the need to fight.⁶³

Apart from their role in war, women were also seen as having a significant impact on society, an impact which was increasingly acknowledged. In a series of articles published in 1913 in *Halka Doğru*, a journal with CUP links, Ahmed Ağayef (later Ahmet Ağaoglu) discussed the role of Fatima in the adoption of Islam by her brother Umar, the second rightly guided caliph. He set out to demonstrate how a ‘humble’ woman with belief and conviction could change the course of history. Fatima was one of the first women to adopt Islam. Upon hearing that she and her husband had become Muslims, her elder brother Umar, a violent opponent of the religion, threatened to kill her with a sword. Fatima, however, remained fast and, impressed by her bravery, Umar himself converted and became the most powerful defender of Islam. In this account, Fatima thus opened the way for the creation of the great Islamic state of the seventh century.⁶⁴

In part related to this social importance of women, the period of the late empire also saw a drive for female education. According to Şemseddin Sami, the education of women meant the educating of society as a whole. The advancement of society and the attainment of civilisation were only possible with the education of women.⁶⁵ Education, however, could only reach the mass of the population through schools. Female schooling was not a new

62 Quoted in Duman, Haluk Harun, *Balkanlara Veda. Basın ve Edebiyatta Balkan Savaşı (1912–1913)* (Istanbul: DUYAP Yayıncılık, 2005), p. 115.

63 Quoted in Kılıç Denman, Fatma, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Bir Jön Türk Dergisi: Kadın* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2009), p. 82, note 173. Woman did fight in the Turkish National War of Liberation, Tansel, *İstiklâl Harbi’nde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız*.

64 Ahmed Ağayef, “Hazret-i Fatma’nın Kahramanlığı”, *Halka Doğru*, 1/1 (11 Nisan 1329/ (24 April 1913)), pp. 3–4; 1/3, (25 Nisan 1329/(8 May 1913)), pp. 18–20.

65 Ş. Sami, *Kadınlar*, pp. 33–5; Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar*, pp. 36–8.

phenomenon, for schools for girls already existed, such as the *sibyan mektebi* (primary school) for girls in Tripolitza in the Morea, whose expenses were met by a *vakıf* endowed by Osman Paşazade Ahmed Paşa and whose teacher was a woman.⁶⁶ But what was important now was the changing concept of schooling, which introduced women to a new way of socialization and provided them with opportunities for politicization. Although the curricula of the schools for girls were different from that for boys, giving less space to positivist sciences and focusing on more practical skills like sewing, there were classes, apart from those on Turkish and religion, on subjects such as history that introduced girls to knowledge not merely deemed necessary for them. In family life, in the search for wives, men, or at least those who adopted the views of intellectuals such as Namık Kemal and Şemseddin Sami, required educated women. Even before this period there had been men, though perhaps not that many, who preferred to have literate wives.⁶⁷ Now, however, the concern was not merely about literate women but about the integration of women into the political agenda. Ayşe Nazlı Hanım, mother of the author Halide Nusret Zorlutuna, was tutored in politics by her husband Avnullah Bey, for whom she read, and summarised, articles on politics published in the Ottoman press. When Avnullah Bey was imprisoned in Sinop for his political views, Ayşe Nazlı Hanım continued to follow daily newspapers, kept her interest in politics, tutored her daughter in anti-Abdülhamidian political views and taught her to recite Namık Kemal's poems at a very young age.⁶⁸

One impact of female education was to provide women with an occupation. Women had clearly worked in earlier periods in a whole range of jobs, as servants, laundresses, street vendors, factory workers and agricultural workers, *hocas* (reciting the Quran and washing the bodies of dead), administrators (*mütevellis*) of *vakıfs*; midwives, teachers, surgeons (performing operations even on men),⁶⁹ but what had now changed was the concept of the working woman, for she was now a part of the political agenda and her labour was seen as contributing to the progress of the nation. Women now demanded to work

66 Doğramacı, Emel, "Osmanlı Devletinde Kadın Eğitiminin Genel Görünümü", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1 (1978), pp. 2–3.

67 Örik, Nahid Sırrı, *Eski Zaman Kadınları Arasında. Hatıralar* (İstanbul: İnkilâp Kitabevi, 1958), pp. 32, 62–3.

68 Zorlutuna, H. Nusret, *Bir Devrin Romanı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1978), pp. 17–18.

69 Yıldırım, Nuran, *Türkiye'nin İlk Kadın Doktoru Safiye Ali* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011), p. 2; see also Svetla Ianeva's chapter, "Female actors, producers and money makers in Ottoman public space: the case of late Ottoman Bulgaria", in this volume.

and to have occupations, not simply because of economic necessity or need, but because of the conviction that the development of the country would only be possible when women worked, too. Clearly economic necessity was still an important factor. The pupils of female professional high schools which were established in the second half of the nineteenth century were orphans or those without any income, the aim being to ensure that such women gained a profession and thus a means of livelihood.⁷⁰ But in the final analysis, here too the state's education of women and desire to ensure that they could stand on their own feet, formed part of its perception of the need to take responsibility for its own citizens and was the outcome of a new and developing concept of the role of the state, of how it should exercise its function and of what its duties were. Now the state sought solutions to the problems of poverty not through measures such as social assistance through *sadaka*, ad-hoc provision of work to individual women or the marrying off of women who were alone, but through a direct and systematic system of support which it attempted to implement.

For some women gaining work was a political struggle, exemplified by Bedriye Osman Hanım's fight to get employment at the telephone company in Istanbul. Her struggle was recounted by Ruşen Zeki, who wrote an article "Bizde Hareket-i Nisvan" (The women's movement among us) in *Nevsal-i Milli* (National Youth) published in 1914, in which he explained how Bedriye Osman Hanım, a Muslim woman, had applied for work at the telephone company but had been rejected. As a result of this, she began a campaign in the press and in the end forced the company to employ her and other women as well. According to Ruşen Zeki "the most notable thing" was that Bedriye Osman Hanım, who was from a very distinguished family and therefore not in need of income, was motivated to do this because "in other countries both men and women work. But with us only men are working to secure the economic and social development and the progress of the country. Naturally, if we walk thus only on one leg, it will not be possible in the economic competition of this century for us to succeed".⁷¹

The struggle of women in the period after the 1908 Revolution to be not just midwives and nurses but doctors as well,⁷² was part of this same struggle exhibited by Bedriye Osman Hanım. In the crisis in which the empire found itself at this time it was not surprising that education, profession and

70 Kurnaz, Şefika, *Yenileşme Sürecinde Türk Kadını 1839-1923* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2011), pp. 58-3.

71 Ruşen Zeki, "Bizde Hareket-i Nisvan", in *Nevsal-i Milli* (Dersaadet: Artin Asaduryan ve Mahdumları Matbaası, 1330), p. 347.

72 Yıldırım, *Safıye Ali*, pp. 8-10.

patriotism should be closely linked. Wars made volunteer nursing an acceptable job, while teaching became identified as a patriotic profession, as exemplified, for example, by Aliye, the heroine of Halide Edip [Adivar]'s novel *Vurun Kahpeye* (Strike the Harlot), which was set in the Turkish National Liberation War.⁷³ This also represented a further step in the development of female participation in the political realm, for it was no longer simply a matter of having a profession but of the use to which that profession was put. The best example of this new perception is the contrast between the heroine of Reşat Nuri Güntekin's Novel *Çalkuşu* (Goldcrest Kinglet), Feride, the daughter of a patriotic soldier, who received a positivist and modern education at a missionary school and who then became a patriotically-driven teacher in a remote village of Bursa, and Hadice Hanım, who had been a teaching assistant there for years and who only filled the children's heads with thoughts of death and hell.⁷⁴

In the late period of the Ottoman empire, women had, therefore, encroached further and further into the political arena and had become visible and vocal participants whose presence was not only more socially accepted than had been the case earlier but was also regarded, at least by some, as necessary for the well-being and progress of the state. The women who, during the Balkan Wars, made rousing speeches in the conference hall of Darülfünun, the first Ottoman university, and in many other political arenas, were able to make their voices heard by the hundreds of women who listened to them in such public spaces. Thanks to the coverage in the Ottoman press, these speeches reached a far wider audience, further serving to legitimise public female political presence.⁷⁵ Women joined demonstrations in Istanbul under occupation in 1919 and 1920, at which Halide Edip and Şükufe Nihal [Başar] spoke. In her novel *Ateşten Gömlek* (The Shirt of Flame), which was set during this period, Halide Edip describes the young women who were among those who attended the Sultan Ahmed meeting of 1919 held to protest the occupation of İzmir and who "had forgotten the black Kohl of their eyes and the paint on their cheeks, so that a colored stream of tears flowed over their cheeks".⁷⁶

73 Adivar, Halide, Edip, *Vurun Kahpeye* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1977).

74 Reşad Nuri, *Çalkuşu* (Istanbul: İkbal Kitabhanesi, 1338).

75 Kurnaz, *Balkan Savaşlarında Kadınlarımız*, pp. 44–8.

76 Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, with an introduction by Florence Billings (New York: Duffield & Company, 1924), p. 35.

Conclusion: Innovation, Negotiations and Limitations

Three days after the declaration of constitution on the 10th of July 1908, Halide Edip described the scene she observed on the Galata Bridge:

The next day I went down to see Istamboul. The scene on the bridge caught me at once. There was a sea of men and women all cockaded in red and white, flowing like a vast human tide from one side to the other. The tradition of centuries seemed to have lost its effect. There was no such thing as sex or personal feeling. Men and women in a common wave of enthusiasm moved on, radiating something extraordinary, laughing, weeping in such intense emotion that human deficiency and ugliness were for the time completely obliterated. Thousands swayed and moved on.⁷⁷

From Halide Edip's description it would appear that the political change had swept away the barriers between men and women. In reality, however, the role of women in politics had constantly to be negotiated and opposition to female participation, among both men and women, remained significant. In a piece published in *İkdam* only a few months after the scene described above, another woman, Keçecizade İkbâl Hanım, after arguing that "men must be superior to women because men have this superiority by birth" wrote that there was no place for women in political life "because equality in political rights necessitates equality in duties. For example, women cannot be soldiers and even if, supposing the impossible, female armies were established, it would be of no use. If women were to secure their livelihoods by being officials, engineers, labourers or postmen, for example, it would be better that they stay hungry".⁷⁸

In adopting this view, and incidentally in so doing, herself entering into the political arena, İkbâl Hanım was by no means isolated but in tune with the logic adopted by others. In an article, "Kadınları Karıştırıyorlar" (They are inciting women), published on 27 September 1912 in the pro-CUP Bursa newspaper *Ertuğrul*, the author came out vehemently against Rıza Nur, from the Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası (Freedom and Entente Party), for organizing a political meeting for women in the Şark Theatre. The language the author used and his reasoning showed the limits to the changes in the position of women in the area of politics:

77 Halide Edip, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (London: John Murray, 1926), p. 258.

78 *İkdam*, 1 September 1908, quoted in Akgül Karal, Seçil and Murat Uluğtekin, *Hilal-i Ahmer'den Kızılay'a* (Ankara, 2002), p. 144.

Taking into consideration the temperament of women and given that they are the delicate guardians of our homes and need to live inside the house, what is going on that woman, who should be occupying themselves with the work of washing laundry, cooking food and cleaning and sweeping the house, are being got together in the theatre and spoken to about politics? While women [in England] cannot join the election because even the English have not given them the right to vote, is the Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası by its year-and-a-half long struggle to carry us ahead of the English and give the vote to our women, I wonder?⁷⁹

The politicization of women was, in effect, a double-edged sword for the existing political authorities, for, on the one hand, they wished to see an increasing political role for women, but on the other, they wanted to ensure that such political activity was kept under control and that women only voiced the opinions the authorities required.

In September 1915, the newspaper *Bolu* published an order from the office of governor of the town of Bolu, in the north west of modern Turkey, warning the citizens not to become involved in sedition and containing a clause, clause six, directed specifically at women, who were ordered to refrain from talking about politics: “In particular it is absolutely forbidden for women, discussing the work of the government, to create demoralization with their lying and inaccurate words and gossip”. In this clause it was also made very clear that “in *şeriat* and *kanun* women are no different from men in punishment and obligations”. Hence, the following clause noted that “in that time when everybody needs to perform their patriotic duty” anyone, regardless of sex or age, caught creating sedition and negatively influencing public opinion in the town or villages would be courtmartialled.⁸⁰

It was not only women joining political activity that could create a problem, even their attempts to earn a livelihood could run into difficulties. Members of the new government, which sought to remove the traces of the CUP after the First World War, applied great pressure to Refik Halid Karay to sack the women who worked at the Post and Telegraph Administration, to which the government had appointed him as head, claiming that their presence was giving space to immoral relations.⁸¹ Such a reaction was in fact hardly surprising. In February 1916, both Houses of the Ottoman Parliament discussed the draft

79 Quoted in Kaplıanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa (1876–1926)*, pp. 222–3.

80 Makam-ı Livadan, “Beyanname”, *Bolu*, 28 Zilkade 1333/ 24 Eylül 1331 (7 October 1915).

81 Karay, Refik Halid, “Solmuş Hâtıralar: Kadınları Korurum”, in *Bir Ömür Boyunca*, Yusuf Turan Günaydın (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011), p. 302.

Passport Law which had been forwarded by the cabinet. The discussion in the Ayan Meclisi (Senate) about the second paragraph of the eleventh clause of the draft law opened a can of worms about Ottoman women's travel abroad. What was at issue was whether unmarried women over 20 years of age should or should not be given passports, whether they should be allowed to travel to Europe unchaperoned or not, and whether or not women could get passports without the permission of their husbands. The discussion turned into a heated debate about protecting Muslim⁸² Ottoman women's honour by limiting their travel to Europe and thus preventing the corrupting effect of Europe on Muslim Ottoman women whose "knowledge" ("irfan") was not sufficiently developed and whose freedom of movement was limited by religion, traditions and public morality.⁸³

Such views were called into question by Ahmed Rıza Bey, who opposed this rather condescending approach, and Damad Ferid Paşa, who asked members of the house if they really meant to say to women: "You still do not possess the capacity to protect your honour and dignity. Do not compare yourselves to European women. If you go alone to Europe, this will be a violation of your honour. I, the Government, do not give you permission".⁸⁴

Ottoman women, always visible in the public space as active and at times passive participants in the political arena, emerged more forcefully onto the political scene in the late period of the empire. Their progress and the speed of change in both the level of their participation and the acceptance of their new position owed much to the dire circumstances that the empire found itself in in that period and to certain changes, in particular the emergence of the press and the development of female education. However, such shifts in female political participation were by no means unopposed, and the role of women in the public political sphere was constantly challenged and the legitimacy of their actions continually subject to negotiation.

82 Interestingly these discussions deliberately exempted non-Muslim Ottoman women.

83 *Meclis-i Âyan Zabıt Ceridesi*, Otuzuncu İnikad, 2 Şubat 1332 (1916), Perşembe, Devre: 3, Cilt: 1, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 456–62.

84 *Meclis-i Âyan Zabıt Ceridesi*, Otuzuncu İnikad, 2 Şubat 1332 (1916), Perşembe, Devre: 3, Cilt: 1, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 461.

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